

Important Terms for College Planning

Safety School: This is a school that you know you'll be accepted at, either because they accept all students (such as a community college) or because your grades and SAT scores are so much higher than what they typically accept. It's also a school that you know you can afford.

Target School: This is a school whose typically accepted students have SAT scores and GPA's in the range where yours are. However, you can't count on being accepted.

Reach School: This school is a reach! Your SAT scores and grades are somewhat below what they typically accept. You may have other characteristics they are looking for, so you want to give it a try.

Common Application: Allows you to fill out one application and send it to more than one college. Colleges that accept the Common Application are listed on their website: www.commonapp.org.

Rolling Admissions: College will review complete applications (transcripts, fee or fee waiver submitted, etc.) as they are received and will return decisions within a few weeks or months. Since the college is making admissions decisions continually, it is best to submit your application to these schools earlier rather than later.

Regular Decision: College doesn't start to review applications until their deadline (usually end of December or beginning of January) and decisions are sent out in March or April.

Early Action: With a deadline in the fall, the college reviews these applications and sends decisions "early" (often by December or January), but students have until May 1st to make their decision. If students are not accepted, they may either be "deferred" to the regular application pool OR denied admission, so check the college's admissions information so you understand their process. NON-BINDING

Early Decision: When a student applies to their first choice college, usually by November 1st of their senior year, and the student agrees by contract to enter that college if offered admission. The college's decision is made by early December and this is usually a BINDING DECISION, meaning the student has legally committed to attending this school, even though financial aid amounts have not yet been received. Some colleges now allow students to get out of the agreement to attend if they don't receive the financial aid needed, but you must READ CAREFULLY and ask questions to fully understand that college's process.