



## College Admission Definitions

College admission can sometimes seem like it has its own language. This “cheat sheet” has some common terms and what they mean.

### **WAYS TO APPLY:**

**Rolling Admission:** Ongoing review of applications in order of submission. Admission offers are extended on a rolling basis until the spots are filled, at which time most schools will still accept applications for the waitlist.

**Early Decision (ED):** A binding agreement where a student will commit to enrolling if admitted. Many colleges offer two rounds of Early Decision, ED1 usually in early November and ED2 in early January. A few colleges allow applicants to apply Early Decision on a rolling basis, meaning that at any time during the admission cycle an applicant can decide to enter into a binding agreement in consideration of their candidacy. Students can apply to other colleges simultaneously, through non-binding plans.

**Early Action (EA):** A non-binding admission plan with deadlines typically between mid-October and late November. EA decisions normally released in December or January.

**Restrictive Early Action (REA)/Single Choice Early Action (SCEA):** A hybrid admission plan allowing students to apply and receive decisions early under a non-binding application. In doing so they agree not to apply to another school under a binding ED plan at the same time.

**Regular Decision (RD):** The standard admission plan with deadlines usually in early January or February and notification in late March.

**Priority Deadlines:** A decision plan (often November 30<sup>th</sup> or December 1<sup>st</sup>) allowing a student to be considered in the school’s first round of review. This is often found at large state systems such as The University of California.

**Priority Applications:** Also called VIP applications, “snap apps,” “fast apps,” and a range of other names, they refer to streamlined applications (pre-populating biographical information) designed to encourage students to apply early. In many cases, schools using these applications waive application fees and essay requirements.

## **TESTING:**

**SAT:** A standardized test used in college admission (with two primary sections: Evidence-Based Reading and Writing; and Math. Each subscore has a maximum score of 800 for a total possible score of 1600)

**ACT:** A standardized test used in college admission (with four primary sections: reading, writing, science and math. Each subscore has a maximum score of 36 and the highest total score composite a student can earn is a 36)

**TOEFL:** Test of English as a Foreign Language that measures reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills necessary to perform academic tasks. Each section has a maximum score of 30.

**IELTS:** A test of English as a Foreign Language that uses a nine-band scale to clearly identify levels of proficiency, from non-user (band score 1) through to expert (band score 9).

**Superscoring:** The use of individual subscores from different test administrations to represent the highest combined score.

**Test Flexible:** The combination of individual subscores from different assessments (ie: SAT math, ACT writing, AP Biology) in consideration for admission.

**Test Optional:** Standardized test scores are not required for admission. Note: some colleges will require additional essays or other information if a student is not submitting scores.

**Test Free/Blind:** Standardized test scores are not used at all for admission and will not be considered if sent.

**CEEB Code:** College Entrance Examination Board Code assigned to each high school and college. This code will be listed on the high school profile and can be obtained from a school's guidance office or through searching online.

## **FINANCIAL AID:**

**Need-Based Financial Aid:** A combination of federal, state, and institutional grants/scholarships, loans, and other financial assistance offered to a student based on their ability to pay for their education, as determined by the FAFSA (and the CSS Profile, for schools that use it).

**FAFSA:** Free Application for Federal Student Aid is a requirement for any form of federal financial aid, as well as state aid (in most cases). It is also used by many colleges/universities to determine eligibility for institutional (school based) aid.

**CSS Profile:** College Scholarship Service Financial Aid Form required by many (mostly private) colleges in addition to the FAFSA.

**Net Price:** The amount of money a student will pay out of pocket after financial aid.

**Net Price Calculator:** A federally mandated tool that each school has on their financial aid website. This resource allows families to see an estimated financial aid package for which they might be eligible.

**Estimated Expected Family Contribution (EFC):** The amount of money that the federal and institutional aid formulas determine a family can afford to pay for college.

**Demonstrated Need:** Cost of Attendance, minus the Expected Family Contribution, is the student's Demonstrated Need.

**Cost of Attendance:** The total cost for an academic year, this is a federal requirement for the amount of money that a student will pay for a year of college, including tuition and fees, room, and board, as well as averages costs for books, supplies, transportation, and personal expenses. Financial aid cannot exceed the Cost of Attendance.

**Grant:** Money awarded to a student in "gift aid". These awards come at no cost to the student and do not have to be paid back in the future. (Often used interchangeably with "scholarship".)

**Pell Grant:** A federal grant based on "exceptional financial need" that does not have to be repaid.

**Federal Direct Loan:** Federal loan for students (formerly known as the Stafford Loan.)

**PLUS Loan:** Low interest government loan for parents

**Federal Work Study Program (FWSP):** A form of financial aid awarded to a student who demonstrates financial need through their FAFSA. Typically, this includes an on-campus job.

**Subsidized Direct Loan:** Federal loan available to students with financial need. Amount available to borrow is determined by your year in school and may only go to meet demonstrated need.

**Unsubsidized Direct Loan:** Federal loan available to students regardless of financial need. Amount available to borrow is determined by year in school.

**Merit Scholarships:** Financial awards based on a student's achievement or potential (academic, athletic, artistic, etc.) Typically awarded by the college/university or private organizations. Merit scholarship is non-need based "gift aid" and does not need to be paid back.

**Unmet need:** Also referred to as “gapping”, the difference between a student’s financial aid award (gift aid, work study, need-based loans) and a student’s demonstrated financial need. It is a practice colleges employ when they are unable to meet the full demonstrated need of all admitted students.

**Need-Blind Admissions:** A process of reviewing applicants for admission in which a student’s ability to pay *is not* taken into consideration.

**Need-Aware Admissions:** A process of reviewing applicants for admission in which the student’s ability to pay *is* taken into consideration.

**Tuition Discounting:** The process by which a college offsets its published tuition “sticker” price with institutional grant/scholarship aid. A school’s *discount rate* is the ratio of total institutional grant aid relative to gross tuition/fees revenue.

## **DECISIONS**

**Acceptance/Admit:** An offer of admission to a college or university

**Spring/January Acceptance:** An offer of admission to a college or university with a second semester start date. Often these offers include the opportunity to enroll in a college sponsored program off campus (usually abroad) to earn credit during the first semester.

**Conditional Acceptance:** An offer of admission to a college or university that is contingent upon certain steps a candidate must take, or criteria they must fulfill, in order to ultimately enroll.

**Denial:** An application for admission to a college or university is declined.

**Deferral:** A delayed admission decision for candidates who apply through early application plans. Often an updated transcript/academic form and/or an update on involvement is required or recommended when a student is deferred.

**Waitlist:** Neither an acceptance nor a denial, this means an applicant is potentially admissible but that the college will keep the student on-hold in the applicant pool for later consideration based on enrollment numbers. The student must claim a spot on the college’s waitlist for later consideration-- often after the National Deposit Deadline of May 1.

**Guaranteed Transfer:** An applicant is denied admission as a first-year student but is offered the option to transfer to the college (frequently as a second-year student) provided the student earns a specified GPA at another institution.

## **OTHER TERMS**

**High School Profile:** A document developed by a high school to provide colleges with context for that school's curriculum, middle 50% test scores, grading policies, community, demographics, college enrollment, and other relevant information.

**Rigor:** Degree of challenge demonstrated within a high school curriculum. Often relative to choices/options or overall applicant pool locally, state-wide, or within the applicant pool.

**Holistic Admission:** A method for reviewing applicants that accounts for a student's quality and achievement both inside and outside the classroom.

**Gap Year:** A year-long break between high school and college allowing a student to travel, work, or explore a passion (language, sport, culture)

**Institutional Priority:** Goals set by the college that often drive admission decisions. These could be geographic, demographic, or curricular.

**Legacy:** An applicant with a family connection to the college. Evaluation and definition of legacy varies by school.

**Melt:** The number or percentage of students who pay their admission/enrollment deposit but do not ultimately enroll.

**Search:** A process by which colleges contact large numbers of students to elicit their interest in the institution.

**Admit Rate:** The percentage of applicants who are offered admission.

**Yield:** The percentage of students admitted who choose to enroll at that college

**Demonstrated Interest:** An applicant's level of enthusiasm for, or engagement with, a college as shown through visits, communication and other contact with the admission office. Some school's track these interactions closely and use it as a factor in admission decisions.

**Common Application:** A universal undergraduate application for admission used by over 800 public and private colleges and universities