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Can You Break an Early Decision Agreement?

They may be breakable, but the consequences are extreme

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In the college admissions world, [Early Decision](#) agreements are binding. So it is critical that applicants and their families make absolutely sure that particular college is the teen's first choice, and that they have considered their own finances, the school's academics and student life thoroughly before applying. It is not impossible to break an Early Decision contract, but the consequences can be extreme.

An insufficiently generous financial aid package, for example, is not deemed grounds for breaking an Early Decision contract. Families were supposed to have taken finances into account before applying. And students who try to negotiate a better financial offer by holding out a promise from another school, do so at their peril. Although Early Decision applicants are welcome to apply to other colleges under [Early Action](#), [rolling](#) or regular admissions, those applications should have been withdrawn the moment an Early Decision acceptance arrived. Hence, there should never have been another financial aid offer.

Colleges say that they do not want a student - even an Early Decision applicant - who does not want to come, so a call to the admissions office may be sufficient to be released. Be warned, though, that such a move risks losing every other college acceptance as well. Early Decision information is shared among many schools, and it's a rare college that wants a student so untrustworthy he will renege on a binding agreement. Your child may be better off attending his Early Decision college and transferring later.