

mycampusGPS.ca

THE GRADE 11 SUCCESS FORMULA

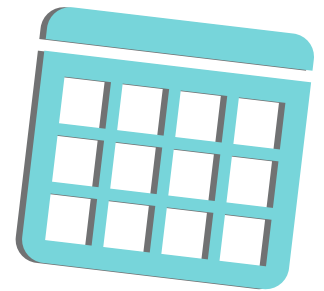
*What to do in Grade 11
to CRUSH IT in Grade 12*

Why is Grade 11 so important?

While Grade 12 is the time when you actually apply to university and write your applications for scholarships, the information from Grade 11 (your marks and activities) is often what's used -- at least in part -- to make admission and scholarship decisions.

Grade 11 is the most important year to **prepare** for university admission and scholarships. And it all has to do with **when** you apply for university and scholarships.

Timing is everything.



As far as university admission and scholarships go, the first and fundamental thing to understand is that all universities have their own admission and scholarship timelines, policies, and procedures. There is no one, single process that all universities follow. Also, some of their processes and deadlines change from year to year. For this reason, I can't give specific instructions, only things to consider and be aware of.

Some universities start accepting applications from Grade 12 students in November. If you apply this early, your admission is usually based on Grade 11 marks, because you don't have Grade 12 final marks yet.

Depending on their admissions deadline, many universities in Canada use a combination of **Grade 12 first semester final marks and Grade 11 final marks for BOTH admission and scholarships.**

If you don't have enough Grade 12 courses to use for admission at the time of admission, then a combination of Grade 11 and 12 marks will be used. See, now you're getting it -- Grade 11 matters!

In addition to marks, many universities and community organizations also use extra-curricular activities, such as volunteer work, to make their scholarship decisions. Many universities scholarships, and some of the biggest scholarships in Canada have deadlines before January. If you're applying for scholarship early in your Grade 12 year, you really haven't had much time in Grade 12 to do amazing things. So, again, your application will be based mostly on **Grade 11 activities.**

Don't wait until Grade 12 to ramp up your admission and scholarship game!

The best opportunity for you to make an impact on your Grade 12 year is in Grade 11!

*Here are some ways you can make your
Grade 11 awesome ...
(so you can totally crush it in Grade 12!)*



ACADEMICS

Grade 11 marks matter! This year's academic record will very likely have a direct impact on admission to your schools of choice, and for scholarships too.

Now is the time to get help from a tutor if you've been struggling. Or, if you're doing well, keep up the good work!

*Marks are still the most important criteria
for admission to Canadian universities.*



University admission and entrance scholarships are often based on a combination of selected Grade 12 first semester finals, and selected Grade 11 finals.

Some external awards (those offered by organizations other than a university) also require a minimum GPA. These awards generally also assess on involvement in extra-curricular activities.

Work on writing, mathematics, and reading skills. Identify any problems and seek extra help or tutoring at the first sign of struggle. Don't wait until exam time! Resource: [Khan Academy](#), a free online academic learning tool.

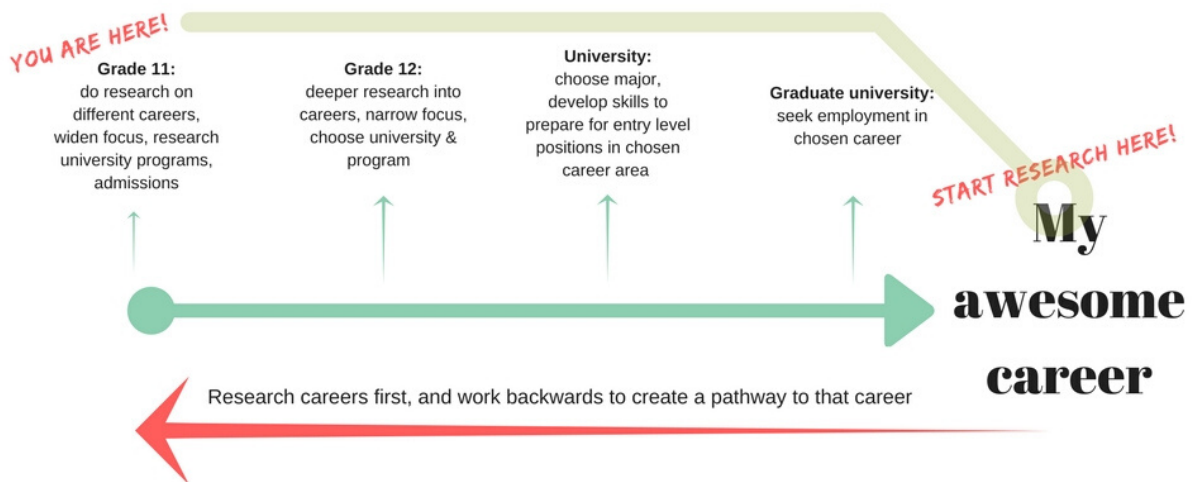
Practice good study skills habits and learn how to manage your time.

For further reading, and for more detailed information on how Grade 11 marks are factored into the admission and scholarship decision, check out my blog post, "[Yes, Grade 11 Marks Matter](#)" on my award-winning blog at mycampusGPS.ca/blog.

CAREER EXPLORATION

When thinking about what university programs to consider, I suggest you start at your destination and work backwards. Kind of like planning a vacation – first you decide where you want to go, and then you decide how you’ll get there.

Here’s a basic timeline:



So how do you find out what kind of career you might like?

Start with career assessments. Do a few online career assessments, such as the ones at [California CareerZone](#), and save your results. Take time to go through the results, and dig a little deeper into the ones you’re interested in. Many high schools subscribe to the [MyBlueprint](#) platform, which has lots of useful resources all in one place.

Look for patterns – what are the similar features of the careers you're interested in? Helping people? Travel and adventure? Being in charge? Being creative? Teaching? Earning a high income?

Discuss your career interests with parents and friends. Chances are you'll find out more about what you want as you discuss it with others.

Look for patterns, or common threads, when thinking about careers that interest you.

THE GRADE 11 SUCCESS FORMULA

Consider the employability of the careers you're interested in.
Are they in-demand careers? Where are most of the jobs located?
Are you willing to move if you had to? Or perhaps you'd like to move?
How important is the job market to your decision?

What degrees or programs do you take in university to prepare for these careers? Often the career assessments will provide a list of possible post-secondary education options or pathways for each career. Sometimes the online assessment tools have interviews with people in the career, and this is a great way to learn more about it.



*Start to pay more attention to people's jobs,
their lifestyle, and work-life balance.*

Think about your personal values and what matters most to you in life. What careers match well with your values? For example, if helping others is important to you, careers in health care, social services, teaching, or law might interest you.

Find out about as many different careers as possible before you start to narrow them down.

MATCHING PROGRAMS WITH POTENTIAL CAREERS

Go to university websites and read about the programs that lead to the careers that interest you. Look for information about the kinds of classes you'd take in the program, and the careers of people who completed the program (often this is a student profile or alumni profile). Make sure to check to see if co-op work placement, or other kind of hands-on learning experience, is part of the program.



Look for university programs that have a co-op option, or any kind of hands-on experience, built into it; they offer the best opportunity for you to gain marketable skills so you'll be more employable when you graduate.

Co-op, or any kind of work integrated learning, also helps you make connections in your chosen field: people who may be able to help you find a job in the future. You can also get a reference, and possibly make some money to fund your education.

Make sure you're on track academically

Check the admissions information for these programs and make sure you're on track. If you're not sure you have the necessary pre-requisites for the programs you're interested in, make an appointment with your guidance counsellor right away. If you're missing a pre-requisite course there may be time in second semester, or over the summer, to make it up.

Let your high school counsellor know your possible career aspirations, schools you are considering, etc. Guidance counsellors can be a valuable resource, and next year you may need to ask him/her to be a reference for a scholarship, so make sure they know who you are.

Speak with university representatives

In the fall, university and college representatives will start to visit your school. Attend both the post-secondary fairs and the separate information sessions. It will help you get an idea of the programs universities offer. It will also help you to compare offerings -- what schools have programs that are basically the same, and what ones have programs that are different or unique?



Read my blog post "[3 Tips to Help your Student Prepare for University Rep School Visits](#)".

Speak with the university and college representatives who visit your school. Tell them about your career interests and ask about programs to help prepare for those careers.

Compare similar programs at different schools. Is there anything particularly interesting about their program vs. another university's program, e.g. does it offer co-op, internships, or study abroad?

For more information on how to compare programs, read my blog post "[Mama Told Me to Shop Around, and Here's Why](#)".

Start to visit university campuses. You can set up a campus tour, or take advantage of camps, such as science or drama camps, leadership camps, etc. during March Break or summer. These camps are great additions to scholarship applications as well.

Read more about the value of the campus tour on my blog post "[Are Campus Tours Really That Important?](#)".

Job-shadowing & information interviews

Once you've found a few careers you're interested in, set up (or have someone help you to set up) opportunities to job-shadow people in the careers you're considering.

You can also do information interviews with people in the careers you think you might like. An information interview is a 20 minute meeting between you and someone who has a job you're interested in. You go to their place of work and ask them a few questions about their job, such as what are some tasks they do day-to-day in their job? What do they like about their job? What do they dislike? If someone wanted to get a job in this field, what's the best way to do so?



Parents can help you find people to interview by asking people they know. Or perhaps a teacher, or a friend's parents can help.

Seeing a person's work environment is an excellent way for students to picture themselves in that career.

Both job-shadowing and information interviews are much better ways to research careers than to just read about them online. Since both job-shadowing and information interviews are done at the person's place of work, you see the work environment first-hand, and you can ask questions to find out what you really want to know.

Career information is great for admission and scholarship applications too!

Do you know that having a good idea of what you want to do for a career, and what program(s) you might want to pursue can be a great advantage for admission and for scholarships too?

As part of the admissions process, especially for more competitive programs, you may be asked to write a personal statement about why you want to join the program, or why you want to pursue a career in a particular field.

Read more about personal statements on my blog post "[Personal statements for admission and scholarships](#)".

THE GRADE 11 SUCCESS FORMULA

Likewise, there are scholarships for certain kinds of programs, and for people who are interested in pursuing certain kinds of careers. And, generally speaking, scholarship committees look favourably on students who have put some thought into their career aspirations.

So when it comes time to apply for admission and scholarships, it can really pay off to know what you want to pursue and why.

Doing research now means you'll be able to discuss the reasons for your choice later in an application. It'll give you an edge over other applicants who appear to just be "winging it".

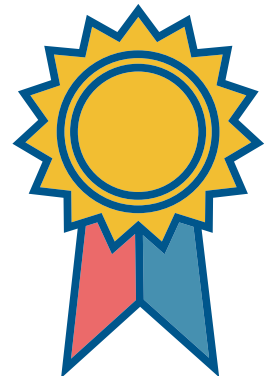
SCHOLARSHIP PREPARATION

Awards, contests, certifications

Some awards and prizes are available for students in Grade 11 so keep an eye out for them (ask your guidance counsellor, check guidance bulletin boards/webpage, do web searches, sign up for email alerts, etc.).

Opportunities for Grade 11 students to win monetary awards are often, but not always, in the form of essay contests. Some essay contests don't get a lot of entries, so your chances of winning may be good.

Other types of awards are great too, such as awards for music festival competitions, sports events, or science fairs. Certifications are another way to show you've mastered something, e.g. lifeguard certifications, Royal Conservatory of Music certifications, etc.



Find a way to set yourself apart.

The scholarships you apply for in Grade 12 generally reward students who have gone above and beyond, so anything you can do to set yourself apart from the crowd now could be used as an entry on a scholarship application next year.

THE GRADE 11 SUCCESS FORMULA

Extra-curricular Activities:

Extra-curricular activities are fun, they develop important skills most regular academics can't, and they're important for scholarships.

Activities can take many forms, including taking part in an enrichment opportunity such as a science fair, leadership training, language camp, etc. It could be school based or community based. It could be volunteer or paid work. Some scholarships even count home responsibilities, like caring for younger siblings. These kinds of activities make excellent additions to a scholarship application.



The best way to maximize your impact (and to put your best foot forward on an admission and scholarship application) is to take on a **leadership role** of some kind.

In Grade 11, a leadership role might be as a co-leader of something. Being a co-leader is a great way to start because you can share the responsibilities of leadership with another person, learn what's involved, and prep yourself for another leadership role in the future.

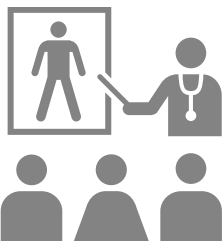
Leadership means taking responsibility & serving others.

Leadership means stepping up to the plate and taking on responsibility for something.

For example, you could lead people or a project by becoming a representative on student council, the junior editor of the school newspaper, or co-coach of a junior sports team. You could volunteer to do social media communications for a school or community fundraising event, organize clothing donations for a homeless shelter for your hockey team, or offer to take responsibility for organizing speakers for a panel on youth employment.

Or, you could also initiate something on your own, like start a club or a project. Nothing shows leadership and initiative better than identifying a need and filling it! Scholarship committees often look favourably on students who start something new, and then see the project through to the end.

The best kind of leadership role is one that **serves others** -- meaning what you do helps other people in some way.



Taking on responsibility for people or a project is a great way to showcase your leadership abilities, and your willingness to go beyond being a regular member of a group.

For more information on leadership, read my blog "[Leadership, High School Style](#)".

*Part-time work builds skills & character,
and it's an excellent entry on a scholarship application.*

Working part-time may be necessary. Good news: students who work during high school are often looked upon favourably by scholarship committees!

Try to find a job that carries some long-term benefits, such as those that provide transferable skills or potential relevant work experience, e.g. swim instructor, camp counsellor, etc. But any type of job usually develops some kinds of skills, such as customer service and handling cash, so all jobs can be an asset on a scholarship application.

Make sure you're reliable and do a good job. Your employer could be a valuable reference for you in the future!

Caution: Get involved, but don't over-extend



Participating in school or community service activities can be a great way to build skills, find out what interests you, and it helps to establish your community involvement for scholarships.

Activities have many benefits but try to keep them in perspective. If extra-curriculars become your focus rather than an “extra”, they can eat up a lot of time that should be used for studying. Taking on too much could jeopardize both admission and scholarship offers, or even your health.

Besides, universities and scholarship organizations often value depth of involvement rather than actual number of activities.

*It's not about doing MORE. It's about prioritizing,
and maximizing what you're already doing.*

Prioritizing is key. Try to limit your activities to the ones that really interest you, and where you can make the most impact.



Read more about balancing extra-curricular activities in my blog post "[Caution: Extra-curricular Activities Ahead](#)".



Quality over quantity.

It's better to have a few meaningful activities you're dedicated to and have shown leadership in, rather than eight or ten one-offs, or activities with only superficial involvement.

References

Another important part of most scholarship applications is a reference. Start to (or continue to) develop relationships with potential referees, e.g. teachers, guidance counsellors, coaches, community leaders, etc., so you will have a few key people to call on later who can speak knowledgeably about your activities and your character. For more information on references, please see my bog post "[How to get a GREAT reference for a scholarship](#)".

Now, are you ready for an incredible year? By following this guide, you can have your most amazing Grade 11, and set yourself up for success in Grade 12, and beyond!

Need help? Get in touch to discuss how I can help you plan your PERSONAL Grade 11 success formula!

Follow me on social media for more free tips and scholarship opportunities!



janet@mycampusGPS.ca



@mycampusGPS



facebook.com/mycampusGPS



mycampusGPS.ca



*Janet MacDonald
Scholarship Consultant*