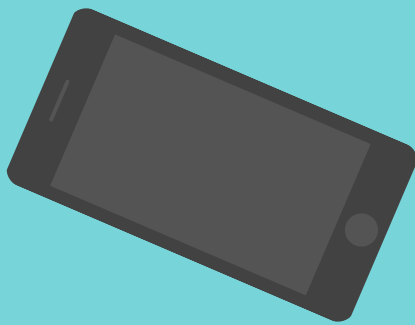




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THE GRADE 11 SUCCESS GUIDE

*What You Need to Know About
Admission & Scholarships in Grade 11*

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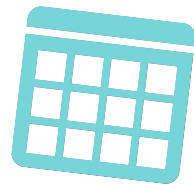
Why is grade 11 so important?

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

Grade 12 is when you **apply**. But grade 11 is the most important year to **prepare** for university admission and scholarships. Why? A lot of it 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. 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 early admission and scholarship offers.**

If you don't have enough grade 12 courses to use for admission at the time of admission (which most students don't), 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 scholarship funders--both universities and external funders like community organizations--use extra-curricular activities, such as volunteer work, to make their scholarship decisions. They value depth of commitment to a cause over time in at least one activity. If you don't have some solid meaningful activities already completed by the start of grade 12, you won't have much to write about on those applications in grade 12!

Also, many university scholarships, and some of the biggest external scholarships in Canada have deadlines *before January*. If you're applying for scholarship early in your grade 12 year, you haven't had much time in grade 12 to do amazing things. So, again, your application will be based mostly on **grade 11 activities.**



Takeaway: 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 to take action in grade 11!

Now that we know why grade 11 is important for admission and scholarships, let's look at what you can do to ensure you're getting the right kind of prep!

Here are some ways you can make your grade 11 prep impressive ...



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 university 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 average, although it's usually lower than university requirements. External awards generally also assess on involvement in extra-curricular activities.

Identify any academic problems early and seek extra help or tutoring at the first sign of struggle. Don't wait until exam time! If you cannot get a tutor, Khan Academy is a free online academic learning tool that might be able to help.

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



Takeaway: Some grade 11 marks may be used to make early admission decisions, so try to maintain solid ground in your academics. Get help early if you think you'll need it.

CAREER EXPLORATION

Grade 11 is a perfect time to consider potential careers and how they relate to university programs and their admission requirements. You don't want to rush through this process in grade 12 when you're super busy and feeling stressed about making decisions. You will make a much better, more informed decision if you start this process in grade 11.

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

Start with career assessments. Do a few online career assessments, 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 My Blueprint platform, which has lots of useful career exploration 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? Making decisions? Being creative? Teaching? Earning a high income?

Value the process, not just the results. Traditional career assessments are sometimes more helpful in the process than in the results. That's because the results are based on static information. Keep in mind that it's likely you'll have more than one career in your lifetime, jobs are always changing, and many career options aren't even created yet.

However, there is great value in the process of the assessments in that they "force" you to slow down and answer some specific questions about your values and interests. This is often the first time busy students are able to think deeply about things like, *What matters to me?*, *What are my skills?*, *How do I like to work?*, *What kinds of problems do I want to solve?*, and *What contribution do I want to make?*

Talk it out with people. Chances are you'll find out more about what you want as you discuss it with others. Some students may do informational interviews with people in the careers they are considering. Some families may also seek out interest testing with a career practitioner.

The purpose is exploration. Remember that this process is not about choosing what you will do for the rest of your life. This is about exploring possibilities. It's about finding information on potential paths. In grade 12, after more research, you'll make an informed decision that will start you on your first step along the path.

That path may change in the future. You might change. And that's OK. That's normal. By keeping an open mind, trusting your feelings, and talking it out with people who know and support you, you'll feel in a much better place to make these decisions as they present themselves.

EXPLORING UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS

In grade 11 it's important to keep options wide. Grade 12 is when you will start to narrow your options and then apply. In grade 11, it's all about exploration and preparation.

Here are some of the best ways to gather information so you can make the most informed decision possible next year.

#1. Explore university websites. All university websites are different, and that can make finding information a bit challenging. But here are some of the things you should be looking for:

a) Information on their programs. Do they have the programs you're interested in? If so, what are the admission requirements? Sometimes the same kind of program can have different requirements at different universities. Does the program have a co-op option or other kind of experiential learning experience? This can be an excellent way to gain marketable experience in your area, earn money, and make valuable connections in the field. Again, some universities have co-op in their program and sometimes it doesn't at another university. Compare similar programs at the different universities and considering and note the differences between them. Which one is a better fit for your wants and needs?



b) Information on the size, location and "fit" of the school. The university website should have some good overall information on both the facts and the "personality" of the school. How big or small is it? Is it urban or rural? What kinds of traditions does it have? Does it have the facilities you're looking for? What are the feelings you get when you look at the pictures of the campus, and read the text? What appears to be the school's main themes and foci? How do all of these things match with your wants and needs?

c) Note application and scholarship processes and dates. Find information about how and when to apply. Make a note of the application deadlines (a spreadsheet comes in handy here!). Note that admission deadlines can be different for different programs. Are there any requirements for admission beyond grades, such as a personal statement? Some of the more competitive programs in Canada require more than just marks for admission; some require certain kinds of experiences and activities that you discuss on a personal statement for admission.

Also note scholarship deadlines. Scholarship deadlines can be different from admission deadlines; they are often earlier. Also, some scholarships require a school nomination.

Getting a handle on this admission and scholarship information now, in grade 11, will greatly benefit you in grade 12 when you're even more busy than you are now. Preparing in advance means you'll already have a good idea of what you need to do and when.

#2. Attend university virtual and in-person events.

All universities have events for prospective students. Some are virtual and some are in-person. Some feature general information, and some are program specific. It is a valuable use of time for both parents and students to attend these sessions for all of the universities you are considering. They will provide you with a different perspective than the website and allow you to ask questions.

At both virtual and in-person events, it's likely you will have an opportunity to ask questions. Sometimes these sessions are busy and your question won't get answered, but at least you'll get to hear the answers to other peoples' questions and that can be valuable too.

These sessions will also help you to **compare offerings**. Many universities in Canada offer similar programs. Your goal is to discover what is unique or different about each one.



Prepare your questions carefully in advance. Seek out information that cannot be found easily on the website.

#3. Take a campus tour. Grade 11 is not too early to start doing campus tours. You can set up a campus tour, or take advantage of camps, such as science or drama camps, leadership camps, etc. during March Break, long weekends, or summer. These university-sponsored camps can make great additions to scholarship applications as well.

Even if the university is not open for in-person tours, it can still be a valuable experience to walk the campus and the surrounding community. Some universities have great self-guided tour maps you can download and use. Look for the residences and shared spaces like the library and the sports facilities. You can still get a good sense of the size and the "feel" even without a guided tour.



Takeaway: Start university and program exploration in grade 11. Explore websites, note deadlines, attend events and do tours. Compare programs. You'll thank yourself in grade 12 when you're even more busy than you are now, and the pressure is on to make decisions!

SCHOLARSHIP PREPARATION

Grade 12 is your best opportunity for scholarships. Ever!

As I mentioned above in the admission section, grade 12 is the time to *apply*. Grade 11 is the time to *prepare*. This goes for scholarships as well as admissions.

Grade 12 is a student's best opportunity to win scholarships! There will never be another time in your life where there are more opportunities and less competition. In fact, there has never been a better time in history for scholarships. It used to be that scholarships were only for top students. That's not the case anymore. Now, there are all kinds of different scholarships for different kinds of students.

There is a "golden window of opportunity" awaiting you in grade 12 and I want you to be ready to seize that opportunity!

Scholarships are based on merit

Even though you don't need to be a top student to win scholarships, we must bear in mind that scholarships are awarded based on merit. That means a student must earn them in some way. That might be through grades. Most universities base some of their awards solely on marks, and others on marks and activities.

But grades may or may not be required for scholarships that are awarded by funders external to the universities, like employers, insurance companies, community groups, etc. These funders might award their scholarships based on volunteering or some other kind of activity. Or, it might be based on some other factor like your heritage or where your parent works.

Having said that, many of 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 will be beneficial on scholarship applications next year.

What to do in grade 11 to prep for scholarships

Here's how to prep the SMART way in grade 11 so you have the most opportunities for scholarships in grade 12:

a) Awards, contests, certifications

Any kind of credential can be helpful to have on your record as it shows you've been evaluated in some way by an external organization. Look for opportunities to enter competitions or complete a program. Examples include awards for music festival competitions, sports events, pitch competitions, or science fairs. Certifications are another way to show you've mastered something, e.g. lifeguard certifications, Royal Conservatory of Music certifications, etc.



THE GRADE 11 SUCCESS GUIDE

b) Extra-curricular activities:

Extra-curricular activities are fun, they develop important skills, and they're important for scholarships. In fact, volunteering is the most common activity requirement on scholarship applications.

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 consider home responsibilities, like caring for younger siblings, or working on the family farm.



However, the best way to maximize your impact, and to put your best foot forward on an admission and scholarship applications, is to take on a **leadership role in a meaningful volunteer activity**. A "meaningful" volunteer activity is one that has some meaning to you; you chose it because the cause is important to you for some reason, or perhaps you simply really enjoy it.

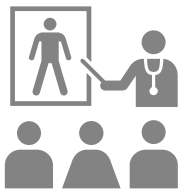
In Grade 11, a leadership role might be as a co-leader of something. Being a co-leader is a great way to start because you can share the responsibilities of leadership with another person, learn what's involved, and prep yourself for another leadership role in the future.

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

Think about what you're already doing now, and find a way to take on some extra responsibility.

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 something is a great way to showcase your leadership abilities, and your willingness to go beyond being a regular member of a group.

Another great reason to volunteer and lead is to **secure a great reference**. Some scholarship applications require a reference from a teacher, or a community member. Being active in an organization will help people get to know you. They can use that information to discuss your skills, personal qualities, and character later in applications.

THE GRADE 11 SUCCESS GUIDE

And here's some good news for students who need or want to **work part-time** during high school: students who work part-time are sometimes looked upon favourably by scholarship committees. Some funders like to see students who are investing in themselves through paid work. Your place of work may even offer a scholarship!

Make sure you're reliable and do a good job. Your employer could be a valuable reference 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.

It's not always about doing MORE. It's about prioritizing, and maximizing your impact in what you're already doing.

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

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



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.



Takeaway: Extra-curricular activities are important for scholarships, but they should never jeopardize your health or your academics. Leadership in a volunteer role is the highest impact activity for scholarships. It also helps you get great references.

THE GRADE 11 SUCCESS GUIDE

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 with finding scholarships and writing your applications? Check out my guidebook, "How to Find and Win Scholarships". You can purchase it on my website at mycampusGPS.ca.

Best wishes!



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