

# Your Planning Checklist

Grade 11

From **First in the Family: Advice About College from First-Generation Students – Your High School Years**, by Kathleen Cushman (Next Generation Press, 2005)

At the start of the year, make a special folder marked “College.” Keep everything connected to your college planning here—information, schedules, forms, and anything else.

Check test schedules for PSAT, SAT or ACT, and register yourself for tests on “My Organizer” at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

**TIP** Many college entrance tests like these charge a fee. If you cannot afford the fee, ask your counselor to help you apply for a waiver, so you can take the test anyway.

Find out where “test prep” courses are given, and sign up for them.

**TIP** The more familiar you are with college admission tests, the better you will do on them. Take practice tests as often as you can.

Attend a college fair to get more information about colleges. You can also write, telephone, or use the Internet to ask colleges to send you materials.

Don't delay college planning because your family cannot afford to pay for college. Low-income students receive funding—from the government and sometimes the college—to help meet college costs.

Colleges want to see demanding courses on your grade 11 schedule. Use this space to list the most challenging courses that you can take this year:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_

Junior year grades are very important in college admissions. If you are having trouble with your schoolwork, ask for help. If the teacher does not have time for you, ask another adult or a student who is doing well in that class.

At the end of your junior year, you will need to ask two teachers to write you a letter of recommendation to go in your school file. Choose the teachers who know you the best (even if you didn't have them this year), and write their names here:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

**TIP** Don't be shy about asking for a recommendation. Just say, “You were an important teacher for me, and I wonder if you would consider writing me a college recommendation and giving it to my guidance counselor.” (Only the college and the guidance office, not you, are allowed to see the recommendation.)

Stay involved in the activities you most care about—at school, after school, and in the summer. Which ones do you most care about this year? List them here, along with any leadership role you have in them:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

**TIP** Colleges also will look at recommendations from adults who know you through your job or other out-of-school activities.

If you know someone like this, write his or her name here. Ask that person to send a letter to your guidance office, too.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

- Keep reading as much as you can. Make a list of all the books you read this year. Put a star next to the ones you liked the best, and make a note as to why.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_

- Narrow down your list of colleges to six—two “safety schools” that you think will probably accept you, two “top choices,” and two in between. If possible, talk over your choices with your parents at this point.

TOP CHOICES

IN BETWEEN

SAFETY

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

- Look for summer opportunities that give you a taste of the college experience. One of the colleges on your list might have a program for high school students—call and ask! (Don’t forget to tell them that you will be the first in your family to go to college.)
- Ask your school if they arrange a “college visit” trip for juniors and seniors. If they don’t, plan your own with family or friends over the summer.
- Make a folder or large envelope marked “Grade 11 Portfolio” and save your best work in it, so it won’t get lost. This should include class assignments, but don’t forget to include poems, artwork, or evidence of other things you do outside of school.