

The Gap Year Experience

What is a gap year?

A gap experience for a high school student is when a student takes time off between graduating high school and entering college to follow a structured plan. This experience can vary in length and include travel, study, work or any combination of experiences, often with a college's permission.

Types of Gap Experiences

- Internship, Paid or Unpaid
- Travel Abroad
- Paid Job
- Language Immersion
- Volunteering
- Taking Classes
- Experiential Learning
- Adventure/Outdoor Programs



Top 5 Reasons to be a “Gapper”

*“Find yourself” and learn more about your direction
Have a different or “out-of-the-box” experience
Take a break from the pressure of full time study
Get skill or experience you can’t get on a college campus
Use experience to inform choice of college study or career*

Questions to consider:

1. What is your goal: work experience, acquire language or skills, adventure, credits that may transfer - all of the above?
2. Is cost a prime factor? Many programs are costly, would you work or fund raise to afford your experience? Would you consider a college providing a scholarship or bridge program for a gap? (E.g. Tufts, UNC Chapel Hill)
3. How far away would you travel and do you want certain living conditions?
4. What is the social setting: living with a host family; on a campus; with other students of similar ages or backgrounds, “going local”?
5. Does your college have limitations or special requirements on gaps, like deadlines to submit your plan, impact on housing or course registration when you return, choice of major, etc.?
6. Length – do you want a more in-depth single experience or shorter programs with variety?

How to request a gap year from a college

**Most students who want to enter college following their gap time will want to apply to and be accepted to their college of choice as a high school senior, following the regular application timeline.*

1. Identify your college’s policy on allowing gap experiences before enrolling.
2. Find out what the special deadlines and application or approval requirements are for your school. Students must often request the gap year by June 1 following the May 1 national reply date, submit a deposit, then officially “re-activate” their offer in the fall. Some schools require more detail/documentation about your plans than others. *Example:* <http://www.wm.edu/admission/undergraduateadmission/how-to-apply/freshmanapplicants/gap-years/index.php>
3. Be sure to document or capture any part of your gap experience that may earn you credit or can be used in your job search or career portfolio, using journals, forms, a resume, etc.

Popular Sites (most of these are for-profit businesses and are not sorted for quality or cost):

*<http://americangap.org/> (accredited programs) <http://www.interimprograms.com/>
<http://www.nacacnet.org/studentinfo/articles/Pages/Gap-Year-.aspx> <http://www.gooverseas.com/articles/101-ideas-your-gap-year>
<http://usagapyearfairs.org/> <https://www.teenlife.com/category/gap-year/>
National Service: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/amicorps> (run by U.S. Government)