

Taking Gap Time

Taking gap time after high school offers a student a chance to explore a new direction or opportunity. Gap time can be a rite of passage as you develop confidence and skills, a sense of the world and a sense of yourself.

If you plan to take Gap Time – a month, a school break, a quarter, a semester, a summer, a year - between high school and college or during your college years, then you're choosing to do experiential education.

Structured, intentional time is what makes this experiential learning opportunity so profound.

Reasons to take gap time might include a desire to:

- do community service and help others either at home or abroad
- travel abroad
- take a language immersion to gain fluency, or learn a new language
- do outdoor environmental/conservational work
- avoid burnout and postpone college for a planned time frame
- explore career interests
- pursue experience in interest areas such as scuba diving or rock climbing
- or to have an extraordinary experience!

Whatever your reasons, plan wisely. Find a program that fits your unique needs. Here are questions for students to consider when planning their time off:

- What do I want to learn?
- How much structure do I want or need?
- Where in the world do I want to be?
- What kinds of things do I want to do?
- Colleges: What does your chosen college think about taking gap time? Go ahead and complete the college application process. It's best to inquire *after* acceptance into the college to see if you can defer your admission.
- References: Ask for three current references in each region of interest
- Cost: Can I earn money, or is there a cost? Is financial aid available? Budget is a big factor. Talk to your family about your plans and about what you can afford. Some programs cost very little; others can be very expensive. Don't forget to plan for living and travel expenses as well as program fees. Students on a limited budget could consider working full-time for a summer or semester to pay for a semester-long program later in the year.
- Other considerations: What will I do when things get very difficult? What happens if I get sick? Is there a communication system in place for emergencies?

Visit these websites for more information on gap time programs:

- ✓ Check out over 30 gap time organizations at:
www.usagapyearfairs.org/pages/gapyearprogram.php

Taking Gap Time

✓ www.timeoutassociates.com	Time Out Associates
✓ www.takingoff.net	Taking Off
✓ www.leapnow.org	LEAP NOW
✓ www.dynamy.org	Dynamy
✓ www.americorps.org	Americorps
✓ www.thinkingbeyondborders.org	Thinking Beyond Borders
✓ www.interimprograms.com	The Center for Interim Programs
✓ www.wheretherebedragons.com	Where There Be Dragons
✓ www.elcasalbarcelona.com	El Casal
✓ www.seamester.com	Seamester at Sea

Resources for Planning Your Time Off

Gap Year Fair

Each February there is a Gap Year Fair at The Northwest School in Seattle. Tried and true programs have representatives available to answer questions, and there is a presentation on taking gap time. For more information, go to: www.USAGapYearFairs.org.

Books

- *The Gap-Year Advantage: Helping Your Child Benefit from Time Off Before or During College* by Karl Haigler and Rae Nelson (parents of a gap year student)
- *Taking Time Off* by Gail Reardon
- *Taking a Gap Year* by Susan Griffith
- *But What If I Don't Want to Go to College? A Guide to Success through Alternative Education* by Harlow G. Unger
- *The Back Door Guide to Short-Term Job Adventures: Internships, Extraordinary Experiences, Seasonal Jobs, Volunteering, Work Abroad* by Michael Landes (not specifically for high-school students)
- *Alternatives to the Peace Corps: A Directory of Third World and U.S. Volunteer Opportunities* by Joan Powell (Editor) (check for latest edition)

Additional Web Site

- www.GapYear.com: Website with information on time-off opportunities