



**Considering Your Options:
A Guidebook for Investigating Gap Year Opportunities**

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Section One: Purpose of this Guidebook

What is a Gap Year?

You may be asking yourself, what exactly is a gap year? The truth of the matter is individual gap years can look drastically different and may be defined by various experiences. The overarching definition of a gap year is a “Break from formal education in order to become more immersed in another culture, to volunteer domestically or abroad, to gain experience and maturity, to improve your skills in a sport, language, the arts, or academics, or take on some combination of any of these things. During a gap year the learning process continues, but in a different format and venue that will inspire and excite a student” (White, 2009, p. 7).

Please know that a gap year is not the best fit for every student; it is not something students need to do. As you know, no two experiences are ever the same; there are many students who attend college younger than the traditional age of 17 or 18 and do rather well. However, if you are a younger student, who could benefit waiting another year before leaving the nest to go live on a campus full time and by yourself, then a gap year may be for you. If you have not decided what it is you want to study in school, a gap year may be wonderful way to discover and explore your passions and interests.

Common Reasons Why Students Take a Gap Year

Reaching the decision to take a gap year is different for every person. For many, it is not an easy decision and should be done with thoughtful consideration. Some common reasons we students decide to take a gap year are:

- To gain maturity and resourcefulness, which will help make the transition to college much smoother.
- To pursue a particular interest, passion or project of some sort.
- To clarify an interest and become aware of strengths and weaknesses.
- Financial reasons; some students work for a year to help save for college.
- Some students are simply too young; while they are academically ready, they may not be socially ready.
- Many universities have a policy that students under a certain age are not allowed to live in the dorms.
- The student may not have been accepted into their top choice university and would like to focus on a particular interest to strengthen their resume for future college applications.

- To take a breather after a stressful, busy senior year.

Do any of these sound like reasons you would like to consider? If so, a year may be just what you need to prepare for the next big life transition.

Section Two: Should You Consider a Gap Year?

1. The pros and cons of a gap year
2. Signs that you may want to take a gap year
3. What do colleges think of students who take a gap year?

As mentioned, deciding whether or not to take a gap year is a big decision that should be done with careful consideration. Generally speaking, taking a gap year as a last resort can be stressful for families because students probably didn't have enough time to plan their gap year adequately. If you are considering a gap year, this section will help with the decision making process by shedding more light on the pros and cons of pursuing a gap year.

What are the Pros and Cons of Taking a Gap Year?

As you will discover, determining whether or not a gap year is right for you is a personal decision for you and your parents. Think of contemplating a gap year as a collaborative decision making process. Putting together a pros and cons list is something that you and your parents should do separately and then meet to discuss the reasons behind your list. To help you get started, here are some potential pros of taking a gap year:

- A gap year gives students the opportunity to take a step back and "recharge" after years of the daily academic grind.
- More institutions are offering financial incentives in the form of grants and credit towards tuition for students who take a gap year.
- Work experience (as well as volunteer and goodwill projects) are great résumé builders and can result in meaningful learning experiences.

For some students, taking a gap year can be an unproductive experience, which can do more harm than good. Remember that not all gap year experiences are created equal. Exceeding your all-time video game score for the year does not count as a gap year experience. Here are some potential cons for taking a gap year:

- For students who fail to develop important work habits, it is easy to lose focus and "fall out" of the academic routine.
- Watching friends and classmates move on to college before you do can be upsetting.
- Your gap year could potentially not go according to plan.

To help keep your pros and cons organized please visit <http://www.proconlists.com/list/new>.

To view more articles on the pros and cons of taking a gap year please visit:

- [The Gap Year Weight the Pros and Cons of Taking Time off Before College](#)
- [The pros and cons of taking a gap year, is taking a gap year really for you?](#)
- [Pros and Cons of Gap Year](#)
- [‘Gap year’ before college gives grads valuable life experience](#)

Signs That You May Want to Take a Gap Year

As mentioned earlier, a gap year is not the best fit for every student, and there may be some red flags present that you may want to work on before you pursue a gap year, or leave for college. For example, we have seen some students go full throttle their junior and senior year to get into the college of their dreams, which takes a lot of hard work and determination. Sometimes these students work so hard that their personal well being suffers and they are “burnt out” before they even get to college.

Harvard’s Office of Admissions wrote an insightful article called [Time Out or Burn Out for the Next Generation](#) that really puts the idea of “burn out” into perspective. Authors Ducey, Fitzsimmons & McGrath state that, “Summer vacations have become a thing of the past. The pace of the day and the year allows little time simply ‘to be a kid’- or, to develop into a complete human being.” If you’re already feeling “burnt out” and are moving to a college environment think about if you will be ready to give it your best.

[Making the Transition to College: A Guide for Parents](#), suggests that students may want to consider a gap year if they demonstrate:

- An expressed need for help.
- Prolonged sadness or depressed mood.
- Loss of energy and fatigue.
- Falling behind in school work or failing classes.
- Missing class often.
- Trouble concentrating or making decisions.
- Tearfulness, crying, and frequent emotional outbursts.`

Before a student heads off to college, it is essential that they are ready to leave their home and take on the responsibility of going to college. It is important that the student feels that he is ready and his parents are supportive of his decision. Going away to college is a big decision: a family decision. There may be times when the child feels that he is ready, but his parents are not exactly in the same boat. If you are a student or a parent reading this Guidebook, you may

want to hold a family meeting and discuss your point of view. To learn more about how to run a successful family meeting, please read excerpts from *Positive Discipline* and from *Our Family Meeting Album*, an e-book by Dr. Jane Nelsen please visit http://store.positivediscipline.com/Family-Meetings_b_2.html.

According to the College Board, “Nearly 30 percent of all students who enter college don’t return for their sophomore year, thereby losing the first year’s tuition.” Losing this tuition is difficult, but is only one of the downfalls that may occur if a student transitions to college before he is ready.

What Do Colleges Think About Students Taking a Gap Year?

While taking a gap year is a common rite of passage in Australia and the United Kingdom the concept is finally gaining more popularity in the United States. “The reason behind higher education’s support of the gap year is clear: Better-prepared students mean higher completion rates” (Wood, 2008, p. 2). With the rate of college applicants increasing, as well as the increasing educational options available to students, universities are offering one to two year deferments to students interested in pursuing a gap year. According to the Christian Science Monitor, more than 80 colleges and universities have started offering some tuition matching grants to students who pursue a year of public service. As stated in the article, “Most colleges are saying they value a gap year,” said President, Holly Bull the Center for Interim Programs “because kids arrive more mature and focused and can take greater advantage of what a college has to offer.”

In our experience with college guidance, universities do not want students who are too young on campus; this doesn’t mean that they do not want the student to attend their university some day, just when they are mature and ready for the challenges that often come with college. We understand that some students are academically ready, as well as socially ready to live on a campus. Because universities do not want students to attend college before they are ready, colleges are becoming more and more accepting of students taking a gap year. Princeton has even created a gap year program called ‘Bridge Year’ that will help students find social service work in a foreign country before they begin their freshman year. Princeton’s President Shirley Tilghman said in an interview that, “Such a program would give students a more international perspective, add to their maturity and give them a break from academic pressures. She called it a year of “cleansing the palate of high school, and giving them a year to regroup.”

Proponents of the gap year say it allows students to discover themselves and the world before they enter adulthood. Once you are an adult, you are an adult for a very long time. Taking a year or two off can allow you to gain some awareness about yourself that you did not even

realize was there. White (2009) found that, “Colleges and employers know that students who have finished a structured gap year are young adults who have direction, maturity and a unique view of the world” (p. 7). Harvard’s admissions page reported that, “Each year, between 50 and 70 students defer their matriculation to College.” If you visit Matt McGann’s blog on the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s website there is a thread “On taking a ‘Gap Year’” that goes into great detail about a gap year at MIT.

To read more about colleges and their view on taking a gap year, please visit their admissions webpage and search for gap year or deferment. Here are a few schools that have something to say about taking a gap year:

- [College Taking Time Off](#)- Office of Admissions Harvard
- [“Taking a ‘Gap Year’”](#) Matt McGann’s MIT blog
- [Princeton Plans for an Early Year Abroad](#)
- [Dickinson College Introduces Affordability Initiative For High-School Graduates Committed To Public Service](#)
- [Harvey Mudd College Deferred but not Deterred](#)

Section Three: How to Plan and Finance Your Gap Year

1. What students do during their gap year
2. What students should not do during their gap year
3. Gap year options and college applications
4. What to do after your gap year

After much debate and close examination you may decide a gap year would be a wonderful and valuable experience for you. It is now time to think about the details. What exactly do you want to do? And how much will it cost?

Research, research, research! Be sure to thoroughly research all your options. Before you make any decision what program is going to help you achieve exactly what you are looking for? How do you plan to spend the entire year? If there are costs involved, how are you going to finance it? Talk with others who are familiar with the programs or organizations you are looking into. What were their experiences? What was their favorite part of taking a gap year? What was their least favorite part about taking a gap year? It is best to have all of your research completed before making a commitment.

What Students Do During Their Gap Year

For the most part, many students participate in a structured program with other young adults throughout their gap year; while often students plan the year by themselves, exploring distant lands, or publishing a novel. No matter what you decide, have your goals outlined and a plan to achieve those goals. We suggest short, manageable goals and a way to measure those goals. Some ideas about other ways to spend your gap year may include:

1. Study abroad – spend a year studying a language and culture you’re interested in
2. Travel – some students may do this independently and others with organizations.
3. Volunteer in schools as a tutor and mentor
4. Work – Spend the year working and saving for college
5. Intern – find an internship in the field you are interested in studying. This will allow you to get some hands on experience without committing a year of college tuition

What Students Should Not Do During Their Gap Year

Just like most things in life, the “shoulds” are always accompanied by some “should nots.” Taking a year off from formal education does not mean there is not any purpose or goal in what you are doing this time should not be an opportunity to just hang out. Thus, there are some things students should refrain from while taking time off. In our experience, playing video games for the majority of the day, while parents cook and clean for you, or aimlessly communicating on social networking websites is not a gap year. Video games and social networking sites are a great way to unwind, but this is something that needs to be done in moderation.

Lounging around for a year is not going to enhance your resume’ nor are you going to walk away thinking, “Wow, that year really changed my life.” Pursuing a gap year is a collaborative process. This is your time to really make your gap year what you want it to be. You should not settle on doing something you are somewhat interested in – find something that really speaks to your interests and passions.

What to Do After Your Gap Year

After you have spent a year traveling, working, or volunteering you should be refreshed and ready to return to the school routine; however, this may take more adjustment than originally anticipated. If you have spent a year traveling or in a less developed part of the world you may experience reverse culture shock and have a difficult time adjusting to college life. However, if you can begin preparing yourself mentally, physically, and emotionally before you complete your gap year the transition should go smoother.

Moreover, if you spent time preparing yourself to go to college before starting your gap year, you should have been accepted, submitted your deferment notice, and now all you need to do

is register for your classes and determine your residential accommodations. If you did not apply to colleges before you left for your gap year or you want to reapply to a school you did not get accepted to, you may have some work to do. [College Confidential](#) has some great tips if you are applying to colleges after your gap year.

No matter where you go to college plan for ways you can use what you learned during the gap year to the benefit others and yourself. Join or start a club on campus which reflects one of your new passions. Volunteer part-time at an organization near your home. Become involved in your new community. Share your experiences and seek out others who participated in a gap year to learn about their experiences. In essence, there is so much you can do once you have a year's worth of life-changing experiences, create ways to remember and reflect on it.

Please visit [African Gap Year](#) for great tips on ways you can prepare for post gap year life and additional things you can do once the years is over:

Things to do Before or During Your Gap Year to Prepare You After Your Gap Year

- Keep a journal/diary to record your experiences, thoughts, and ideas, and to write down/record the contact details of people you meet. Low tech is probably better than high tech if you are going to a less-developed country (i.e. a paper journal and pencil is more reliable than a cell phone, laptop or PDA as no batteries are required)
- Regularly think of how your experiences that day/week can be of use to you in the future, and write your ideas down.
- Record the details of places you would like to visit one day, and record ideas of career opportunities or ways to give back during your gap year.
- As you identify new-found passions, interests and abilities as a result of your gap experiences write them down (a common theme!) so that you can later reflect on how to plan your career and life to pursue those passions and interests, and to use the talents and abilities that you have.
- Write down/record the names of people in your photographs – you will not be able to remember everyone.
- Be open to change, whether in terms of what you had planned, or to take advantage of opportunities that come along.

How to Use Your Gap Year Experience to Your Advantage

After your gap year there are simple steps and strategies to follow to ensure the knowledge and experiences you have gained are actively used to promote your studies and/or career.

- Schedule reminders in your calendar to stay in touch with the people you met during your gap experience. They will be a source of friendship and opportunity.

- Is there something you have learned that you can teach to others? Perhaps working for a gap year organization using the skills you have acquired? Don't be afraid to ask, good organizations often make space for people with the right talent and attitude.
- On your resume stress what you have done and learned as a result of your gap year experience, and briefly explain how those skills would benefit any organization.
- Continually develop, practice and refine your people skills.
- Compile an album/develop a blog to share photos and writings of your gap year experiences with your friends and family.
- Be a mentor to others who are thinking of taking a gap or who are already on a gap.
- Plan your holidays so that you build upon the experiences of your gap year. Plan to share your holidays with people you met during your gap year, to build upon the existing relationships and pursue potential opportunities. Visit the places you could not go to during your gap year due to a lack of money or time.

The Gap Year and College Applications

When should students apply for a gap year? In our experience, the earlier you plan and organize the better the outcome will be. Some students know from the start they want to take a gap year and begin planning their junior year. However, in reality many students do not contemplate taking a gap year until after college acceptance letters have arrived in December through April and sometimes even the end of June if a student has been wait-listed. When it comes to college applications and deciding if a post graduate gap year is for you, "It is recommended that students apply to post graduate programs at the same time their classmates are applying to colleges" (White, 2009, p. 43). A post-graduate year is a gap year taken right after a student graduates high school. Depending on your high school and the number of guidance counselors available, this may not be an option for you. In our experience, having at least six months to one year to prepare for a gap year opportunity is a enough time to successfully plan your gap year.

If you are of a traditional age when graduating from high school (17 or 18) then it is best to fill out your college applications according to plan and then defer your enrollment if you should choose to take a gap year. Most colleges have a deferment policy already in place. For example, MIT's policy states "If you are admitted, you may defer enrollment for one or two years by putting in a formal written request to the Dean of Admissions. Common reasons for deferment include employment, travel and military or religious service. Please note that you may not defer enrollment at MIT in order to enroll in courses at another college or university; taking such a step would cause you to forfeit your admission to MIT." To read more please visit: http://www.mitadmissions.org/topics/apply/deferring_enrollment/index.shtml.

When deferring enrollment be sure to connect with the University's admissions office before the notification deadline. When you talk to the admissions office provide your specific plans and goals with regard to your gap year. Calling unprepared may result in your deferment being denied. Some colleges prefer a one page letter with your gap year plans; Grinnell and Occidental are colleges who would like written notification. Not all colleges will grant you permission to take a gap year and not all colleges advertise taking a gap year as an option. When in doubt always contact the office of undergraduate admissions of that particular college to make sure you are following protocol.

What happens when a gap year is not your first choice? Unfortunately, sometimes things do not go according to plan. Just remember you can only do the best that you can with what you have to work with. Some of the common reasons why a gap year may not be student's first choice are:

- The college the individual was accepted to may not be a student's first choice and they want to re-apply later.
- The student is not old enough to live on a college campus.
- The student may find out that they have been admitted to their college of choice, but their enrollment has been deferred for one year.
- The student was wait-listed and may end up not getting a spot and then decide to pursue a gap year.

Sometimes colleges may defer enrollment due to the student's age, as well as to manage the incoming freshman class numbers. Students are applying to more schools, roughly 15 or more, which has made it difficult for universities to estimate the percentage of students who are actually going to attend their institution. More students are applying to college and more students are applying to more colleges, resulting in a larger number of students being wait-listed. Some students will receive an e-mail saying they have been wait-listed and now they have to decide whether to stay on the wait-list and possibly get a spot, or accept another offer elsewhere.

Staying on the wait-list can be a risk for many students as some institutions are able to admit many from their wait-list while other universities are not able to take any. When a student has their heart set on a college, but doesn't get off the wait-list sometimes a gap year begins to sound like a better option. Will taking a gap year get you into the college of your dreams? Will taking a gap year make you a more attractive applicant? You could be a very strong applicant to a particular school and still not get in. The college admissions process changes every year, and it is difficult to predict how it is going to change. There is a lot of research available that says colleges often think highly of the post graduate year, or gap year option, but it really depends on the student and where they are applying.

Keep in mind that a gap year may add to your application, but it will not make up for any deficits and it will depend on how this student chooses to spend their time. “Colleges that reject 80 percent or even 90 percent of those who apply admit that they are denying admission to thousands of excellent candidates; in this environment, a gap year experience might distinguish a student from the pack of talented high school seniors” (White, 2009, p. 26). It is probably not a good idea to take a gap year just because you think it will help you get into a particular university. What if you’re an average student, with no resume’ and you decide to take a post graduate year and then apply to Middlebury, Yale or Princeton? Do you think you will get accepted? As you know, whether or not you’re accepted will depend on the acceptance rate of the universities you are applying to, as well as the number of applicants applying.

If you already know that you want to take a gap year then the earlier you can plan the better. As previously mentioned, gap year planning should not be done as a last resort. Most gap year applicants will have different circumstances before they apply. For example, one may need to apply for scholarships for their gap year, while another student may not have any financial concerns. Whatever the case may be, it is best to plan in advance, preferably six months to one year depending on your situation. To start planning your gap year talk with your school counselor, or visit the program’s website, download an application and check for any program requirements, as well as application deadlines.

Section Four: **Your Safety: What You Should Consider When Taking a Gap Year**

1. Are you ready for your child to take a gap year?
2. Safety concerns
3. Resources on safety and tips for traveling abroad

If you are considering a gap year or have come to the conclusion that a gap year is for you, it is time to think “big picture” and discuss your safety. Whether you are traveling to another country, pursuing an academic competition, or working on a specific project, your safety and well-being is the most important part of this journey.

Are You Ready For Your Child to Take a Gap Year?

In section two we presented the student’s perspective about some of the pros and cons of a gap year, but what about the parent’s prospective? Parents often wonder if their child will return to a traditional educational setting after a gap year. To question whether your child will return to academics after “time off” is very common. To help settle some of your worry, do

your research and help your child plan for this journey. Do you feel that your child is ready for self-discovery and reflection? Is your child a mature and competent problem solver? To help you determine whether or not your child is ready to embark on a gap year, please visit:

- [Should your child have a 'gap year' before college?](#)
- [Parents' Concerns About Their Children Taking a Gap Year](#)
- [Making the Transition to College: A Guide for Parents](#)
- [Life After High School](#)
- [Exploring a Possible Gap Year for Students and Recent Grads - The Parents' Perspective](#)

No matter what the situation may be, parents are going to have concerns about their child's safety and whether a gap year is the best fit. *The Gap- Year Advantage Helping Your Child Benefit from Time Off Before or During College* suggests having "What-if scenarios before deciding where to go and again before departing" (Haigler, & Nelson, 2005, p. 99). When planning for your child's safety during their gap year, questions you may want to consider are:

1. How to handle safety concerns while your child is away on their gap year
2. Health care in other settings
3. Political conflict in the country where your child is staying
4. Terrorism emergencies in the country where your child is staying

Once your family has decided to pursue a gap year, The Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) has a great section for parents that discusses health and safety concerns, as well as how to prepare your child to study abroad. To read more on this topic please visit: <http://www.ciee.org/hsabroad/parents/index.html>.

Safety Concerns

We strongly encourage all individuals who pursue a gap year to research all possible health and safety issues. It is essential that parents, as well as students be aware of the potential dangers that may occur while taking a gap year. Generally speaking, taking a gap year is not a reasonably dangerous activity, but students may be in an environment where they do not speak the language, become ill, or they may be volunteering in areas with higher crime rates, or experimenting with new laboratory equipment that may be dangerous. Whatever the case, every organization is unique, and they may have their own policies with regard to student's safety. Before you commit to a gap year opportunity, it is best to do your research with respect to health and safety considerations.

While taking a gap year can be a wonderful and rewarding experience, it is always important to be aware of your surroundings. When working with your child on planning his or her gap year,

make sure to establish regular check-in times, and research whether the organization you may be working with has specific safety policies. According to Holly Bull, the Director of the Center for Interim programs, working with a gap year counselor is especially helpful. She states that, “For parents in particular, this is a prime concern: Will my child be safe on this program or in this location? Gap-year counselors research programs through on-site visits, meetings with the people who direct programs, and provide feedback from alumni who have recently attended the program a student is considering. Also, most gap-year counselors do not receive money from programs when they make a student referral; they are, therefore, more impartial judges of quality.”

In case of an emergency it is essential that your child knows who he or she can contact. According to TRAVEL.STATE.GOV, “Consular personnel at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad and in the U.S. are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. Contact information for U.S. Embassies and Consulates appears on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website at <http://travel.state.gov>. Also the Office of Overseas Citizen Services in the State Department’s Bureau of Consular Affairs may be reached for assistance with emergencies at 1-888-407-4747, if calling from the U.S. or Canada, or 202-501-4444, if calling from overseas.”

Resources on Safety and Tips for Traveling Abroad

To research about health and safety concerns while abroad please visit:

- [The Centers for Disease Control](#)
- [The Council on International Educational Exchange](#)
- [The U.S. Department of State Travel](#)
- [TRAVEL.STATE.GOV](#)
- [Travel insurance](#) (I Next Card)

Section Five: The Gap Year: Up Close and Personal

The following reflections are from individuals who the Davidson Institute has worked with who have agreed to share some information with regard to their gap year experience.

A gap year can be taken before college, during or after. The individual below decided to take their gap year after they were admitted and had been in a college for awhile. Many universities offer junior year abroad programs.

“My gap year was taken my junior year of college. I think anytime can be a good time for a change. Three morals: Investigate your exchange groups. Have a back-up plan and money reserves. Be positive and flexible.”

“This year, I’m spending nine months in Urubamba, Peru (near Cusco) doing community service as part of Princeton’s new Bridge Year program. So far, my main projects have been community diagnostics (including interviews with community members, school directors, and doctors) and the cleaner-burning stoves project run by ProPeru, our partner organization. These have both been incredibly rewarding, but even more exciting will be the projects we start in December. These are designed based on the needs we identified in our diagnostic activities, but the community members will choose the projects they want to prioritize. I really love this model because we get to learn about different aspects of development work, while building relationships in the communities. I think having participated a gap year of hands-on service and cultural immersion will help me so much in college, because all of my studies and activities will take place inside the context of my new global perspective.”

“I was an exchange student between high school and college through the AFS Intercultural Programs USA program AFS/USSR 1990-1991 in the Russian Republic in the city of Krasnodar. The experience was amazing. Travel abroad is incredible but *living* abroad with a host family and experiencing the culture as a lifestyle is like no other experience. Foreign exchange is an amazing way to learn a language and to see just how differently from you people can live and still be happy and friendly. I knew I wanted to take a year off between high school and college because life experience is irreplaceable. School is educational, but life is lived outside the classroom.”

“I learned how many things are part of the human situation, the things we all share regardless of culture, in the process of going about our everyday lives. I also learned to better appreciate the value of family and friends. No two exchange years are the same so I would encourage anyone who wants to go out and see what you can learn for yourself. Take the opportunity

now before other parts of life get in the way. Just make sure to choose an established and well-regarded exchange program.”

“I highly recommend gap years, as a way for youth to explore the world and discover a little more about who they are, what they are passionate about and to return refreshed and ready to return to formal education with more gusto. When I was in college, I spent a semester abroad in an immersion program. I was interested in International Business, so I joined a program that offered a family to live with that had no English speaking skills, and also allowed me to take business courses at a prestigious university.”

“I found a job and an internship on my own. This was not even part of the program. I taught English as a foreign language. I translated documents and informally taught business English and culture to a freight forwarding company and they allowed me to observe their operations. I am sure I had the best experience in the group. Some of them went home right away, and some of them connected to groups they had connections to for help. But I did this on my own. This was a life-changing experience for me and the confidence I gained has helped me accomplish many things, but it really made me the entrepreneur that I am.”

Section Six: Gap Year Options

With gap years becoming more common, options have expanded greatly. Most of us picture a gap year as visiting another country, or taking part in some sort of exchange program. Now, gap years can consist of community service opportunities in another country or within the United States. Students can take part in specific causes, interests and academic opportunities. There are programs that range from three weeks to a full year in length. Unfortunately, some gap year options cost as much as first year’s tuition at a university or only apply to students over the age of 18.

With any gap year option, it is important you take into account your safety. Some programs are run more efficiently than others and it is important to plan very carefully. If you are under the age of 18 it is important that your parents be involved in this process. The options below are opportunities available to students under the age of 18. In addition to these resources there are many additional opportunities that you may wish to investigate. In the meantime, here are a few resources to help you get started:

Gap Year Search Engines & Consultants

- Gapyear.com

- [The Center for Interim Programs, LLC.](#)
- [Gapguru.com](#)
- [Taking Time Off](#)
- [The Council on International Educational Exchange](#)
- [The Learning Traveler](#)
- [AYUSA International](#)
- [Central Cultural Exchange](#)
- [Carpe Diem International Education](#)
- [USA Gap Year](#)

Educational/Studying Gap Year Opportunities

- [National Security Language Initiative for Youth](#)
- [Youth Exchange and Study Program \(YES\)](#)
- [French Language Study Abroad for High School Students](#)
- [Youth for Understanding](#)
- [LEAPNOW](#)
- [AmeriSpan Study Abroad](#)

Specific Interest Gap Year Opportunities

- [AFS Intercultural Programs USA](#)
- [Future Leaders Exchange \(FLEX\) Program](#)
- [American Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange \(A-SMYLE\)](#)
- [Semester at Sea](#)
- [Sojourn to the Past](#)
- [NYU Film School](#)
- [CESA Languages Abroad](#)

Volunteering Gap Year Opportunities

- [Learning Programs International](#)
- [Earth Watch Institute](#)
- [Global citizens network](#)
- [Global Routes](#)

Homestay Gap Year Opportunities

- [Rustic Pathways](#)
- [El Casal](#)
- [SPI College Credit Study Abroad Homestay Immersion](#)
- [School Year Abroad \(SYA\)](#)

- [STS Foundation](#)
- [Abbey Road Programs](#)
- [The Experiment in International Living](#)

In addition to the resources mentioned above, there are many boarding schools across the country that offer *Post-Graduate* opportunities for students. As mentioned in Section Three, a post-graduate year is a gap year taken right after a student graduates high school. To read more about the opportunities offered at various boarding schools, please visit the Association of Boarding Schools' webpage <http://www.boardingschools.com/home.aspx>. Here is a brief list of schools to consider:

Avon Old Farms School, CT
Masters School, NY
Peddie School, NJ
Blair Academy, NJ
Phillips Exeter Academy, NH
Wyoming Seminary, PA

Northfield-Mt. Hermon, MA
Vermont Academy, VT
Worcester Academy, MA
Loomis-Chaffy, CT
Bridgton Academy, MA
Deerfield Academy, MA

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