

GAP YEAR GUIDE

What exactly is a Gap Year? A Gap Year is a planned period of time after graduation and before a full-time career or graduate school spent traveling, doing volunteer work, or exploring career options. Think of it as a time where you can get to know yourself, clarify your personal and career goals, and gain varied experience for your resume.

Taking a Gap Year might be a consideration if you...

- ❖ Are unsure about what to do after graduation...No full-time career path or plan to attend graduate school
- ❖ Feel like you need more time to figure out your next step in life; to clarify your goals, values, and skills
- ❖ Need time to gain more experience or build up your resume
- ❖ Are up for a new or adventurous challenge

However, a Gap Year is not for everyone. Taking time off after graduation may not be for you if you...

- ❖ Already have a good idea of why they would like to do after graduation
- ❖ Are ready for full-time employment or graduate school
- ❖ Are tired of “living like a student”

*** A challenging and rewarding Gap Year will not be achieved while sitting at home. To make the most of this experience, plan wisely to maximize how your time is spent. The options are limitless!

If you are interested in taking a Gap Year, here are a few suggestions to help you begin planning:

Service/Volunteerism

Taking part in a service or volunteer project is a great way to spend your Gap Year. It will allow you to contribute to society or your community, develop real-world skills, and narrow down a career focus. Many programs offer a modest living stipend, loan deferment, tuition assistance and training activities for their volunteers. There are several established service programs that you can partake in during your time off, here are just a few to look into:

Mercy Volunteer Corps

In partnership with the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, lay women and men of Mercy Volunteer Corps, enter into relationship with people who are economically poor or marginalized. In a spirit of mutuality, volunteers cultivate mercy and justice in the world by embracing compassionate service, social justice, spirituality and a simple lifestyle in community. Mercy Volunteer Corps offer 1 year domestic and 2 year international opportunities. To contact a representative at GMC contact: Marian Uba, Director of Mercy Volunteer Corp, uba.m@gmc.edu, 215-646-7300 x245 or John Farley, Recruitment & Publications, Coordinator Farley.J@gmc.edu, 215-646-7300 x479

Peace Corps

The Peace Corps is one of the most recognized service programs out there. The Peace Corps is a 2 year commitment with projects in 76 countries around the world. Service projects could include: Education, community development, health awareness, agriculture, environmental issues.

AmeriCorps

Each year, AmeriCorps offers 75,000 opportunities for adults of all ages and backgrounds to serve through a network of partnerships with local and national nonprofit groups. AmeriCorps members address critical needs in communities all across America. As an AmeriCorps member, you can: Tutor and mentor disadvantaged youth, fight illiteracy, improve health services, build affordable housing, teach computer skills, clean parks and streams, manage or operate after-school programs, help communities respond to disasters.

Catholic Network of Volunteer Service (CNVS)

Offers service 200 domestic and international service projects. Publishes RESPONSE magazine, a handbook of lay mission volunteer opportunities. Copies are available in the Career Services office, or by contacting 1-800-543-5046 or cnvsinfo@cnvs.org.

Public Allies

Is a program that identifies diverse young adults and prepares them for leadership through paid full-time nonprofit apprenticeships and rigorous leadership training. Public Allies partners with local universities and nonprofit organizations to meet the needs of specific communities.

*** These are just a few of the many service programs out there. Try looking into specific religious organizations and other local volunteer opportunities. Keep in mind that you can also split your time doing volunteer work in a field that interests you while also working part-time (retail, serving, childcare).

Working Abroad/Internships

Going overseas for a specific period of time to do an internship is a great way to get experience, clarify career interests/skills, and travel to a new place. Opportunities are out there, but it requires a good amount of research ahead of time to secure a position, make living arrangements, and get work permits/visas, etc.

Teaching English Abroad

Teaching English abroad allows you to gain teaching experience overseas and is a great way to:

- Gain valuable experience enhancing your teaching and language skills
- Experience a new culture
- Travel to other locations abroad

Travel

While some have the ability to take time off to just travel, it can be costly depending how long you go and where. Keep in mind that many of the established overseas service, teaching, or working programs allow their employees to take a designated amount of time off to travel.

Adventure Jobs

Taking a Gap Year could also include doing something a little out-of-the-ordinary. For example, if you have always wanted to work at a dude ranch or teach snorkeling lessons, a Gap Year might be the perfect opportunity to do so. You can find adventure here in the US or overseas. Here are a few sample Adventure Jobs to look into:

- Tour guide
- Teach adventure lessons (surfing, snorkeling, skiing, etc.)
- Au Pair/Nanny for a family abroad
- Work at a resort or on a cruise ship

*** A meaningful Gap Year experience doesn't have to mean traveling abroad to an exotic location. There are many great opportunities available here in the US.

Prep work

Things to keep in mind before heading off on your Gap Year adventure...

- ❖ Be thoughtful about what you would like to get out of your Gap Year and how you can use this time to clarify interests and goals, while also further developing skills.

- ❖ If you are at all considering the possibility of graduate school in the near future, we suggest taking any required standardized tests (GRE, MCAT, LSAT, etc.) sooner rather than later. That way, the material is fresh in your mind and your scores stay valid for a few years.
- ❖ It would also be a good idea to look into securing letters of recommendation for the same purpose. Most graduate school applications require recommendations. It would be helpful to have these secured by professors and/or former employers/supervisors before leaving for your gap year.
- ❖ Look into health benefits if you are not going to be employed full-time. If you are covered by a parent, check to see when coverage runs out after graduation.
- ❖ If you have student loans, you will need to think about payment plans and/or deferment. Contact your loan provider for more information

Life After Gap Year

You want to be able to explain or describe your Gap Year experience in a constructive way to potential employers, grad school admissions counselors, etc.

- ❖ What did you learn about yourself?
- ❖ What skills did you develop?
- ❖ How did it help clarify future goals?
- ❖ What do you have to offer this position/company/graduate school program?

ONLINE RESOURCES

General Gap Year info

www.gapyear.com
www.gapwork.com

Teaching English Abroad

www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/work/esl/index.shtml
www.teachabroad.com/search.cfm
www.teflcertificatecourses.com
www.footprintsrecruiting.com

Service Opportunities

www.peacecorps.gov
www.publicallies.org
www.americorps.gov
www.mercycorps.org
www.mercyvolunteers.org
www.cnvs.org/aboutus/index.php
www.volunteermatch.org
www.idealists.org

Adventure Jobs

www.coolworks.com
www.lookingforadventure.com/adventurejobs
www.backdoorjobs.com
www.transitionsabroad.com/index

Working Abroad/Internships

www.jobsabroad.com/search.cfm
www.goingglobal.com
www.internabroad.com/search.cfm

Travel

www.startbackpacking.com/travel
www.statravel.com
www.letsgo.com

These are just a few sites to help you begin thinking about and/or planning a potential Gap Year.

***** Make the most of your Gap Year by planning ahead...but also be open to new and different opportunities!**

For help planning your Gap Year, contact Career Services at:
 (215) 646-7300 x230 or careerservices@gmc.edu