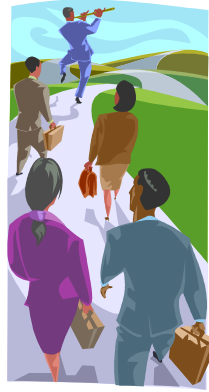


## The GAP Year...



## Alternative

### Why are you interested in the Gap Year?

Most students say things like “I am undecided about my career, or I’m interested in doing something unique such as travel, or I haven’t found a job yet, or I need to get some experience before I apply to grad school,” etc. Or maybe you are considering the road less traveled.

### Gap Year Defined:

- **Gap:** (gāp) n: An interruption of continuity.

...a similar word:

- **Furlough** (a.) Leave of absence. Etymology: Dutch *verlof*, literally, permission (to lay off from work).

...a similar word:

- **Hiatus:** suspension, respite, reprieve, abatement -- *an interruption in the intensity or amount of something.* .....like for instance, no homework due?

### This is an important component of The Gap Year discussion.

The Gap Year is about doing something with the “in-between” time from graduation to a larger/longer commitment to work or grad school. Most seniors that haven’t made commitments think about waiting for one year before applying to grad school or full time career employment.

### Why do people take a Gap Year?

- Not sure about career direction
- Not enough experience in a career field to make a strong commitment to it.
- Job opportunities recently dried up, the economy tanked.
- Change in situation such as finances, geography, health, etc.

- Just plain tired
- To earn lots of money before next step or pay off loans
- Too busy (procrastinated) until it was too late to go get the ideal situation
- Want to join your boyfriend or girlfriend who has a job in New York
- The reasons are as individual as you are.

## There are 4 ways to think about the Gap year:



### 1. A time off to literally rest, relax, goof off.

In the classic movie “The Graduate,” Dustin Hoffman hung out until he almost got into plastics, but he got into other things instead. If you can find room and board and want to do nothing. Why not? To do this you must successfully resist your lifelong acculturated imperative to “accomplish something.”

Is this a legitimate way to spend time? What are the benefits of rest? What are the costs? How long can you really do nothing?

### 2. A time to pursue a special interest, skill, knowledge, information

Is there something you always wanted to learn, such as carpentry, scuba, a foreign language, public speaking, art, cooking, etc.? You may want to spend some time developing a skill or knowledge base in something you thoroughly enjoy unrelated to traditional academic or serious career pursuits.



### 3. A time to pursue a specific experience, personal growth, or self-development

**Is there an experience you always dreamed of doing?** Or have you wanted to work in a situation that is not career related? Ideas include things such as working on a ski slope in Montana, coaching a sport, living overseas, biking across country, joining Peace Corps/Vista/Teach for America, write a novel, etc.

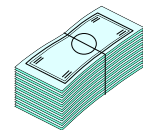


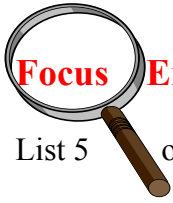
### 4. A time to do TWO or more of the above.

One of the GapYear advantages is that you can do **more** than just one of these things. You could work at a job just for pay for 6 months, then bike across Europe for 4 months on your earnings. You might study a language at a Community College while you work in Ski shop in Aspen.

## The things you must put in place for a successful Gap Year:

- Resources** – how will you survive during the hiatus?
- Time** – how long would you like to take?
- Interest** – how passionate are you about interests/experiences?
- Support** – who needs to be in your life to support or join you?





**Focus Exercise:**

List 5 of your **favorite activities**: physical, mental, social, spiritual, interpersonal

1

2

3

4

5

List 3 of your strongest **passions/interests**: Groups, hobbies, world issues, subject matter, people, causes



1

2

3

What are some of the more creative things you are aware of that others have done?

## Your Eulogy

Imagine your funeral. You have lived a long and fulfilling life. Now at your funeral there are people who are going to do a eulogy speech about you and your life. Answer the following questions.

1. What *activities* would you like them to be talking about? What did you do? How did you spend your time? What talents, interests, programs, did you spend your time on (both career and volunteer)?



I THINK WE CAN DESCRIBE HARVEY IN ONE WORD.  
CURIOUS.

2. Describe the *relationships* you had with others throughout your life. What would have been your ideal in terms of family, friends, associates, colleagues, etc.?
3. How would they describe your *personal characteristics*? What qualities as a person did you exhibit?

Now...take the key elements of your eulogy and apply it to your Gap Year. The eulogy taps in to central values. Did you travel, create art or music, build houses for the homeless, teach children, build a business empire and philanthropy, etc.?

Based on your responses above, write down 2 ways to spend your Gap Year doing things that might satisfy you. What are two steps you can immediately take to start you on your way?

Some things past students have done during the GapYear:

- Elizabeth traveled to Tibet to study Buddhism
  - Tom sang and toured in a US rock group before becoming a McKinsey consultant
  - Cindy took a one year master's degree at Stanford then applied to Princeton for her PhD
  - Sandra joined the Peace Corps
  - Brian taught English in China
  - Spencer traveled to Japan to improve his Japanese and obtained long-term employment
  - Sue worked with an environmental policy group to pass legislation
  - Rebecca volunteered/worked at City of Hope to get into medical school
  - Jeff earned an income playing online poker and traveled to Europe
  - Lynn worked in a lab on campus while applying to graduate schools
  - Dean took a Carson scholarship to study in Europe and now sings opera
  - Robert started an on-line baseball tournament that became a small business
  - Alex took 3 part-time jobs: teaching, research, consulting. Had a baby, started a business
  - Erik and Andrea accepted grad school, postponed admission, got married, volunteered 6 months.
  - Imram studied dance in India, Ireland and Kenya
  - Debi taught English in Japan for two years before enrolling in a Masters in Social Science
  - Ari used his senior research to work with major league baseball
  - Samantha studied geology in South America for her professor
  - Micah taught English in China for a year.
  - Walt taught English in Korea.
  - Eric was a webmaster in London.
  - Cara was an au pair in Egypt.
  - Sam took lessons from a chef while applying to law school
  - Mark Hatfield worked as a tour guide at the State Capitol Building in Salem to meet politicians
- Next? Your name here: \_\_\_\_\_ your activity \_\_\_\_\_



**Resources:**

“Taking a Gap Year” by Susan Griffith (available in the Career Services library)

“The Back Door Guide to Short-Term Job Adventures” By Michael Landes (Career library)

“Teaching English Abroad: A Fresh and Fully Up-to-Date Guide to Teaching English Around the World” Susan Griffith

Work Your Way Around the World, 14th Edition: A Fresh and Fully Up-to-Date Guide for the Modern Working Traveller by Susan Griffith.

<http://www.willamette.edu/dept/csl/students/index.php>

Community Service listings for volunteer opportunities 503-370-6807

<http://www.gapyear.com/> Placements, ideas, jobs, travelmates, etc.

<http://www.travellersworldwide.com/> Volunteer placements overseas

<http://www.payaway.co.uk/> jobs abroad

<http://www.bunac.com> Working Adventures Worldwide

<http://www.ciee.org> Council on International Education Exchange

<http://www.allianceabroad.com> Alliance Abroad for unique opportunities to work, travel, volunteer, etc.

<http://www.globalvolunteers.org/> International service opportunities

<http://www.gvi.co.uk/> Environment/conservation service programs home and abroad

<http://www.idealists.org/> Many opportunities for work, travel, volunteering

Many religious groups sponsor schools, clinics, orphanages, food banks, etc. such as the Sisters of Charity that Mother Theresa began. Check with any religious organization you are affiliated or familiar with.

**NOTE:**

To discuss your future plans, especially if you are interested in doing something “different,” contact the Willamette Career Center and ask for an appointment with a Career Counselor to brainstorm, discuss ideas, and make a strategy. <http://www.willamette.edu/dept/careers/> 503-370-6413