

Organising a Gap Year

A Gap Year is typically the year between the end of your Sixth Form studies and the start of a Higher Education course or employment/apprenticeship. Students can use the year as an opportunity to experience life outside of education and gain skills and experiences whilst taking the time to reflect on their next steps:

- A Gap Year can enhance your Higher Education studies – you could tailor your gap year to relate it to the subject area you plan to study
- A Gap Year can be valuable on your CV – many employers value the experiences students have gained and evidence that they have actively managed their time, set themselves goals, and undertaken new challenges

However, a year out is not for everyone; for some it is not advisable to take a break between studies at Sixth Form and university/college/employment. There are both pros and cons:

PROS	CONS
The chance to take a break from studying, gain work experience and travel	Could distract you from the pursuit of your longer-term plans
The opportunity to develop confidence and key transferable skills to enhance your CV and employability	An unstructured year may not add value to your future and actually reduce your competitive edge over other applicants
You can view your experiences in the wider context of your chosen area of study	Some uni's may not encourage a break from study for certain subjects as you may find it hard to re-engage with your studies after a prolonged break
A chance to save money which will help fund your future plans	A Gap Year can be expensive and you could actually find yourself worse off by the end of it

It is vital that you plan your Gap Year well in advance:

Step One - Make a list of the goals you would like to achieve, the skills you would like to learn and the experiences you would like to enjoy.

Step Two - Consider the implications on your future plans, whether this is further study or employment.

Step Three – Tackle the logistics for realising your goals; applications, budgeting, fundraising etc.

Gap Year Ideas

Paid Temporary Employment

The opportunity to develop your skills and funds (!) or try out a sector of industry for a short period of time – this could be at home, elsewhere in the UK, or even abroad.

Internships

An internship is a period of professional learning/work experience with a host organisation, lasting for a fixed period of time. They provide an opportunity to gain valuable industry experience, network with industry professionals and boost employability. Not all internships are paid although there may be the option to seek compensation for associated costs such as travel.

Educational Short Courses

Undertaking short online courses is an inexpensive and flexible way to explore a subject/career, build new skills, obtain professional accreditations and/or develop a new hobby.

Volunteering

Volunteering provides the chance to give back to a community and make a difference to the lives of others whilst developing new skills and/or building on existing skills/knowledge which you can take into your future career.

Teaching English Abroad

The global demand for English teachers provides an opportunity to combine travel and cultural immersion with improved communication and organisation skills AND teaching experience. This usually requires the completion of a short course to obtain a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) qualification.

Travel

Foreign travel offers not only the chance to see the world and experience different cultures but to mature and learn valuable life lessons through stepping out of your comfort zone, such as increased independence and responsibility, managing finances, problem solving and networking and forming new relationships.

Conservation Programmes

A Gap Year project provides the opportunity to work with endangered species and environments and develop your understanding of the issues facing local communities.

Cultural Programmes

Aimed at students who are passionate about the performing arts there are specialist projects available which give you the chance to teach arts and crafts or drama and music to underprivileged groups both at home and overseas while developing your own creative skills and abilities.

Healthcare, Social and Community Projects

Engaging in activities within caring professions such as hospitals, clinics, immunisations centres, youth projects and care homes provides first-hand experience of working with those in need and the challenges these industries face. This can be particularly valuable for those students looking to pursue a caring career.

Gap Year Companies

If you are considering travelling abroad for work, volunteer, study or travel, you may prefer to plan this with a Gap Year company which can offer the reassurance of a supported, structured placement. The programmes are typically focused on experiential learning and combine intern or volunteering opportunities with adventure travel activities. There is a vast amount of Gap Year organisations to choose from and so it is important to undertake your research before you commit to one. Within this, it is important to consider the following factors:

- ✓ Programme Costs
- ✓ Programme Selection Criteria
- ✓ Programme Content
- ✓ Programme Support
- ✓ Company Reputation

Useful Websites

[EDT Year in Industry](#)

[Internships](#)

[Find an Internship](#)

[NCVO Volunteering England](#)

[Volunteering – Harrogate and District Community Action](#)

[Year Out Group](#)

[International Citizens Service \(ICS\)](#)

[BUNAC](#)

[I-to-I Teach English Abroad and Online](#)

[Gap Year Organisations](#)

[Gap Year Association](#)

Please contact the Careers Department at careersstaff@staidans.co.uk if you would like individual information, advice and guidance – we are happy to help.

Careers Department

St. Aidan's and St John Fisher Associated Sixth Form