



Gap Year information

A gap year involves taking time out either before going to university, during your course or afterwards. You can travel, work or volunteer in another country or in the UK.

In the current economic climate, it is important to make productive use of your time out, with a focus on developing your skills and gaining valuable experience to further your career.

Taking a gap year can help you to:

- Gain relevant work experience, either by paid work or volunteering;
- Improve your employability by developing skills such as organisation, communication, teamwork and using initiative. For a list of transferable skills that can be gained from gap year experiences, see Real Gap Experience;
- Improve existing skills, e.g. foreign languages or IT;
- Learn new skills, such as Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), scuba diving, skiing or snowboarding;
- Stretch yourself by trying a new challenge or experience, such as trekking or volunteering in a developing country.

'Free' or cheap gap-year ideas:

Not everybody will have endless funds in order to finance their gap year plans. Whilst some will organise years ahead and therefore build up their finances through working or fund-raising, for others this may not be a possibility.

At the high end of gap year costs come things such as projects which are located in distant places (e.g. Australia, Thailand) where much of the costs will be in the flights. Others are expensive due to the type of activities pursued during the gap year. Scuba diving or mountain climbing for example will incur high costs as well as the funds needed by the organisers to fund the projects themselves.

Choose a project closer to home. You would be surprised how much there is to see within the UK and if you have friends that are at university and are willing then it is possible to stay for a few nights in their halls of residence. Not only does this allow you to get a glimpse of what it means to live in halls, but it also cuts out the cost of a hotel, allowing for more travel for the same amount of money or more money left at the end of the year.

Within Europe many budget airlines will fly you for less than £50 to nations such as Italy, Greece, Spain or France. This is an excellent time for getting places for cheap, and really taking advantage of the budget ethos in which the travel industry operates - airlines are in a bidding war for your money, and this will invariably mean cheaper and cheaper flights.

The cheapest kind of activity is the kind where you actually earn money. Many placements will pay you for your work, which may offset the costs of your travel. Furthermore, you could even find a job

abroad not attached to a gap project and earn money that way whilst still experiencing life in another country.

Volunteering must be considered another excellent and rewarding option. The following websites are an example of volunteer organisations which are more than happy for your time:

Volunteering England www.volunteering.org.uk

NCVO www.ncvo.org.uk

Do-it www.do-it.org.uk

Vinspired <https://vinspired.com/volunteer>

Tips for finding work on your Gap Year abroad

Before you travel make sure you have the correct visa and all necessary documents to work in the country.

- Do some research on where the best areas to find work are at your destination.
- Think out-side the box! - If your current employer has a franchise or partner organisation in the destination country, check if you can apply for a transfer.
- Get some experience in bar and restaurant work before you travel as this will give you skills that you can use almost anywhere.
- It's all about who you know so if you have contacts anywhere don't be afraid to use them!
- Bear in mind that some countries will expect a different layout of CV. You should also tailor your CV depending on what type of job you are applying for, for example have a retail CV as well as a bar/restaurant CV. Have a few versions of your CV saved in your email account so you can access them anywhere.
- Seasonal work is usually easier to come by but it is also possible to gain career-relevant experience.
- Do some research before you leave and contact potential employers to ask about the jobs market in your industry.
- Learn the local language to increase your chances of employment
- Don't become disheartened if you don't find work immediately.
- Be flexible and motivated and apply to lots of different employers.

Further information

Gap Advice www.gapadvice.org

Independent travel information, research, ideas and advice for prospective gappers of all ages. The Placement Search provides links to a host of organisations offering voluntary and paid work.

Gapyear.com www.gapyear.com

A comprehensive site comprising more than 3,000 pages of ideas, contacts and advice for prospective gappers. The site's most popular destinations include Australia, Canada, Mexico, Thailand and Peru. Around the world helpline:

Year Out Group www.yearoutgroup.org

A good place to find inspiration for gap year pursuits. In 2009, 54,000 people took a trip with one of the 37 member companies of Year Out Group, which operates in over 90 countries.