

The Warriner School Sixth Form – Gap Year Information

Gap year participation has continued to increase both before and after university. A well-planned and structured gap year can greatly enhance your skills base and employability, and have a positive effect on your CV and confidence levels. Universities and employers appreciate applications from gap year completers and place a high value on the interpersonal, organizational and communication skills and maturity which students can acquire through a well-structured gap year experience.

REASONS WHY PEOPLE TAKE A GAP YEAR

- To travel and see the world before starting university – it's a good opportunity to experience different ways of life.
- To have time to do something completely different and learn what it is that you want to study at university or pursue as a career.
- To do something for other people – volunteering gives you the chance to develop teamwork and leadership skills, and learn how to use your initiative, as well as understanding the problems other people face and learning to listen. Successful volunteers are often good at organizing and motivating others. It's important to find a project you can commit to and contribute to effectively.
- To gain work experience – some competitive careers will require you to have some work experience to show that you are committed and capable. It's a valuable way to learn about an industry and may even lead directly to employment after university.
- To gain the self-confidence to approach new situations at university or at interview/in employment and make the most of the experience.

WHAT IS THERE TO DO?

There are plenty of options open to you if you are considering how to use a year out in a fun, constructive and challenging way. For example, you can:

- Improve on or learn a new skill
- Live abroad on a cultural exchange
- Be a volunteer in the UK or overseas
- Join a structured work experience opportunity
- Participate in an expedition.

Deciding what to do is half the battle – getting yourself organised is the real clincher. Use the same strategy as you would when choosing a university course: consider what to do, where to do it, accommodation and travel costs. Explore all the options and plan ahead.



IS IT RIGHT FOR YOU?

Do take advice and listen to the arguments – but only you can make the final decision. Having a break from study is appealing to many, and there are other advantages of taking a gap year if you are planning on going to university. Your experiences will boost your UCAS application, and you will be applying knowing your A level grades. There is some evidence that you will be more focused and committed at university and therefore less likely to drop out, and you will have given yourself more time to make sure that you are applying for the right course. Disadvantages include your study skills diminishing during the year, and being a year behind your friends who will have moved on. During a gap year many students find they change their mind about the degree course they want to study or their future profession, and some ultimately decide that going to university is not for them.

WHAT UNIVERSITIES OR EMPLOYERS THINK ABOUT GAP YEARS

Some subjects at university are less keen on gap years that are outside of the field of study and may prefer students to maintain their relevant study skills; these include subjects such as maths and science.

A university's policy on gap years should be available in the prospectus but do also check with Admissions Tutors. In many cases employers see taking a gap year as advantageous, but the most important advice is to plan it carefully as lack of prior organization may mean that you end up doing nothing constructive which is not recommended. It's a valuable opportunity to gain more independence and meet and work with people of different backgrounds and outlooks; a gap year can help you to gain all sorts of experience that school/university can't provide but do make sure you record your experiences and reflect on what you have learnt.

THE GAP YEAR AND TUITION FEES

If you are considering a gap year you should ensure that you understand the funding regulations and any fees which will apply in your proposed year of entry into HE. Refer to the Government website www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance for detailed information and downloadable resources regarding financial issues such as Tuition Fee Loans, Maintenance Loans and university schemes for new students.

USEFUL WEBSITES

There are many companies offering volunteer placements in both the UK and overseas, and there's a great deal of advice online to help you choose the right one for you. Some of the websites worth exploring are:

www.actionaid.org.uk – volunteering opportunities on community building projects overseas



www.adventureshow.com – comprehensive event featuring specialist adventure travel companies, usually held in London in January each year and includes advice on gap year travel

www.aventure.co.uk – offers travel and volunteering opportunities in Africa and Asia

www.bestgapyear.co.uk – range of gap year courses, paid working holiday and volunteer placements

www.bigbeyond.org – offers volunteering placements in Africa

www.bunac.org – range of work abroad and volunteer abroad programmes including summer camps

www.campamerica.co.uk – cultural exchange programme

www.christianaid.org.uk – volunteering opportunities

www.culturalcare.com – offers opportunity to live with host families in USA as an au pair

www.do-it.org.uk – directory of UK volunteering opportunities

www.e4s.co.uk – temporary and gap year jobs

www.endsleigh.co.uk – offers gap year travel insurance

www.frontier.ac.uk – for volunteering on conservation projects abroad

www.gap360.com – offers travel programmes in 50 countries

www.gapadvice.org – independent general advice

www.gapforce.org – offers gap year volunteering programmes abroad

www.gapguru.com – range of gap year volunteering, teaching, travel and internship opportunities

www.gapwork.com – opportunities for working holidays and gap year work overseas

www.gapyear.com – offers lots of ideas on how to spend a year off

www.gapyeardirectory.com – offers country guides for key information

www.globalvolunteerprojects.org – offers conservation and teaching projects abroad alongside medicine and journalism placements

www.gov.uk/knowbeforeyougo – Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice for safe travel

www.gvi.co.uk – offers volunteering abroad on community development and environmental conservation projects

www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk – volunteering opportunities on overseas build sites

www.hostelworld.com – backpacking information

www.igapyear.com – includes a wide range of volunteering opportunities

www.lattitude.org.uk – international volunteering and gap year placements overseas for 17-25s

www.lovetheoceans.org – volunteer with a marine conservation organisation

www.medicalprojects.co.uk – overseas hospital work experience placements for medicine, dentistry, midwifery and nursing

www.nationaltrust.org.uk – organizes conservation projects in the UK



www.notgoingtouni.co.uk – volunteering opportunities in the UK and abroad

www.originalvolunteers.co.uk – offers budget volunteering programmes abroad

www.outreachinternational.co.uk – overseas volunteering programmes

www.oysterworldwide.com – offers volunteer projects in animal welfare

www.planmygapyear.co.uk – volunteering abroad programmes

www.projects-abroad.co.uk – offers overseas volunteering programmes

www.projecttrust.org.uk – gap year volunteering overseas

www.prospects.ac.uk/links/gapyear - general information

www.raileurope.co.uk – to book rail tickets through Europe

www.raleighinternational.org – environment and community projects around the world

www.realgap.co.uk – overseas volunteering opportunities

www.statravel.co.uk – arranges gap year travel and backpacking

www.studentmoneysaver.co.uk – gap year ideas and inspiration

www.takingagapyear.com – guide to gap year courses and work placements abroad

www.tcv.org – Trust for Conservation Volunteers organizes environmental projects in the UK

www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/gap-year-travel/gap-year-100-companydirectoryvolunteering - lists the top 100 companies offering gap year and volunteering programmes

www.theleap.co.uk – organizes gap year volunteering and internship programmes

www.vergemagazine.com – volunteering opportunities at home and abroad

www.volunteerics.org – overseas volunteering programme for 18-25s led by VSO

www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk – volunteering opportunities in the UK

www.world-challenge.co.uk – expedition organisation

www.wse.org.uk – advice on working or volunteering in international development

www.www.org.uk – extensive database of volunteering opportunities

www.xtremegapyear.co.uk – gap year travel on a budget

www.yearoutgroup.org – information, advice and contacts

www.yini.org.uk – Year in Industry scheme offers paid placements for students on a gap year

