Gap Year Information Template

Feel free to pick and choose this information below to add to your informational email – or better yet – build out a section of your counseling office’s website to make this information available year round!

**Email Template:**

*Dear Students and Families,*

*This February is Gap Year Exploration Month! We at [insert school name] believe that students deserve to explore multiple paths to success after high school. The information below will give you information to better understand the gap year as an option post high school.*

**Gap Year Information**

**Gap Year:** Also called a “bridge year,” is a deliberate period of time typically taken between high school and college in order to deepen practical, professional, and personal awareness. Popular activities on a gap year include volunteering, interning, traveling, learning a skill or a combination of these elements.

**Useful Gap Year Statistics:**

- According to recent studies, gap year students perform better, academically, than traditional students once they arrive at college.

- 90% of gap year students begin college within a year of starting their gap year time.

- 88% of gap year graduates report that their gap year had significantly added to their employability.

- 98% of gap year graduates report their gap year helped them develop as a person and allowed valuable time for personal reflection.

- 60% of gap year graduates report that their gap year experience either set them on their current career path/academic major or “confirmed their choice of career/academic major.

References to these statistics can be found [here](#).
Why Take a Gap Year?

Today’s students need to be more deliberate than ever before about their post-secondary path. Intentional gap time allows students to grow personally and professionally before accruing college debt, starting their careers, and choosing a life-path, in order to facilitate perspective, purpose, and maturation.

- **Maturity & Independence:** Exploring comfort zones and the self by doing something challenging. Pushing comfort zones allows one to better understand the self and truly know what they are capable of.

- **Clearer career focus:** Gap year students have an opportunity to apply the past 12 years of academic classroom knowledge to relevant experiences and studies. Gappers go to college with a purpose, not arbitrarily because it is what society recommends.

- **Relieves academic burnout:** Gap years often solve issues of academic burnout or disinterest in formal education by providing real-world and experiential learning opportunities that satisfy all types of learners.

- **Personal growth:** A well-structured Gap Year program can be part of the lifelong education process and can induce a profound contribution to an individual’s personal development.

- **Life Skills:** Creative problem solving as a form of taking any challenging situation and turning it into an opportunity – much like a broken down bus in transit, a cultural misstep, or simply being sick while on a Gap Year.

- **Global citizenship:** Students learn what it means to be a global citizen and own the responsibility that it means in an increasingly multicultural landscape.

- **Practical experience:** Whether it’s an internship, field work or learning a language, Gap Year options include many opportunities for continuing the learning process in a way that builds a resume, offers choice and is experiential.

Source: [Gap Year Association](http://www.gapyearassociation.com)
**Frequently Asked Question:**

**Will a Gap Year student actually end up at college?**

According to the most recent data available, 90% of Gap Year students with intentions to go to college ended up matriculating within a year of graduating high school.

**Is a Gap Year expensive?**

In short, a meaningful Gap Year can be planned within just about every budget. Students can often offset the costs of programs or travel by working or fundraising. Gap year organizations are increasingly offering scholarships and financial aid. Parents can also use funds from a 529 Plan towards many Gap Year programs. Because Gap Year students have been shown to graduate from college in less time than traditional students, some argue that it could end up saving families money in the long run. See a comprehensive list of [Gap Year scholarships here](#).

**What can I do with my Gap Year?**

There is a huge variety of things one can do on a Gap Year. Students choose activities and programs based on their personal goals, budget and interests. There are structured programs for gap year students, such as service learning or volunteer projects, but other students will do something on their own, like intern for a company, hike the Appalachian Trail or work on organic farms.

**Do I have to travel and go abroad?**

Not at all! There are many opportunities here in the US. You can volunteer with governmental programs like [City Year](#) or [NCCC](#) (National Civilian Community Corps), intern at a local business, work on a political campaign, take a road trip and so much more!
How to Plan a Gap Year:

1. Seek out your guidance counselor for advice. If you are college bound, think about applying to colleges that allow deferrals so you can secure your college acceptance before you start your Gap Year.

2. Ask yourself the following questions to jump start planning:
   - What are my reasons for taking a Gap Year?
   - What do I want to get out of my time out?
   - Where would I like to travel?
   - What is my budget?
   - What kinds of activities would support my goals?

3. Visit a local USA Gap Year Fair to meet programs and learn more about the gap year option. View this list of gap year informational events in February. Seek out print and online resources, previous gap year students or gap year counselors to help you plan.

4. Design your itinerary and aim to have a plan in place before high school graduation. Here is a free gap year planning guide for students.

5. Defer your admission from your college of choice. Check out this guide for tips on how to write your deferral letter.

6. Get ready for an amazing year!
Resources:

Books:
The Complete Guide to the Gap Year by Kristin White, 2019
Gap Year: How Delaying College Changes People in Ways the World Needs by Joseph O’Shea, 2013
Gap Year, American Style: Journeys Toward Learning, Serving, and Self-Discovery by Karl Haigler, 2013

Articles/Interviews:
NYTimes: The Four Secrets of Success
Forbes: Here’s Every Reason You Should Take a Gap Year Before College
TEDx: The Higher Education Crisis – and How the Gap Year Could Help Solve It
US News & World Report: How a Gap Year Prepares Students for College
NYTimes: How Taking a Gap Year Shapes Your Life
Boston Globe: Is Taking a Gap Year Before College a Good Idea?
PBS: Why More Teens Are Taking a Gap Year

Websites:
Gap Year Association (GYA)
USA Gap Year Fairs
Teen Life
Go Overseas

Podcasts:
Gap Year Radio
Where There Be Dragons
How Not to Travel
Do Gooder Podcast