

# GAINING FROM THE GAP YEAR

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The first time you go over to your parents to tell them that you have decided to take a gap year after finishing your HSC or A Levels, you're most likely to be met with death stares.

It's almost as if you had just committed one of the most heinous crimes on the planet. You're immediately put under immense scrutiny and your parents demand proper explanations for why their beloved child has decided to ruin his/her life.

For the major part, the myths surrounding the gap year are incorrect – no, it does not by any means serve as a sign of incompetence and ineptitude but rather, it can actually boost your chances of getting in your desired institute. Moreover different students have varying reasons for taking a year off. For some, it can be due to monetary issues, whereas for others, it can merely be because they are still uncertain about what they want to pursue in college and so investing some time into working it out makes sense.

What does matter though is what you do within these 12 months. As you do have the freedom to decide what activities you'll be devoting

your time to, bear in mind that selecting the right undertakings is the most critical bit. You do not want to waste a lot of your time doing meaningless chores which will not contribute to your intellectual or personal growth. If you're taking a year off and all you intend on doing is to sit at home and binge watch shows on Netflix, that's unlikely to add anything of value, except perhaps, a few additional pounds to your being.

Now the question arises: what actually are the things you should be investing your time into during this period? Well, there aren't any definitive rules or boundaries concerning it. Do what you enjoy and what resonates with who you are as a person. Take your time to explore new things but don't neglect what you're already skilled at and so spend some time improving those further.

For example, you could learn a new language. Not only is it a useful skill to possess but at the same time, it'll increase your options of the places you can attend for higher education. Or perhaps you can take up an internship closely related to the field you want to major in, something that

showcases your passion for the subject. You can even set up your own start-up if that is what fascinates you – not only is it a great way to test your skills but it can also be an impressive source of income.

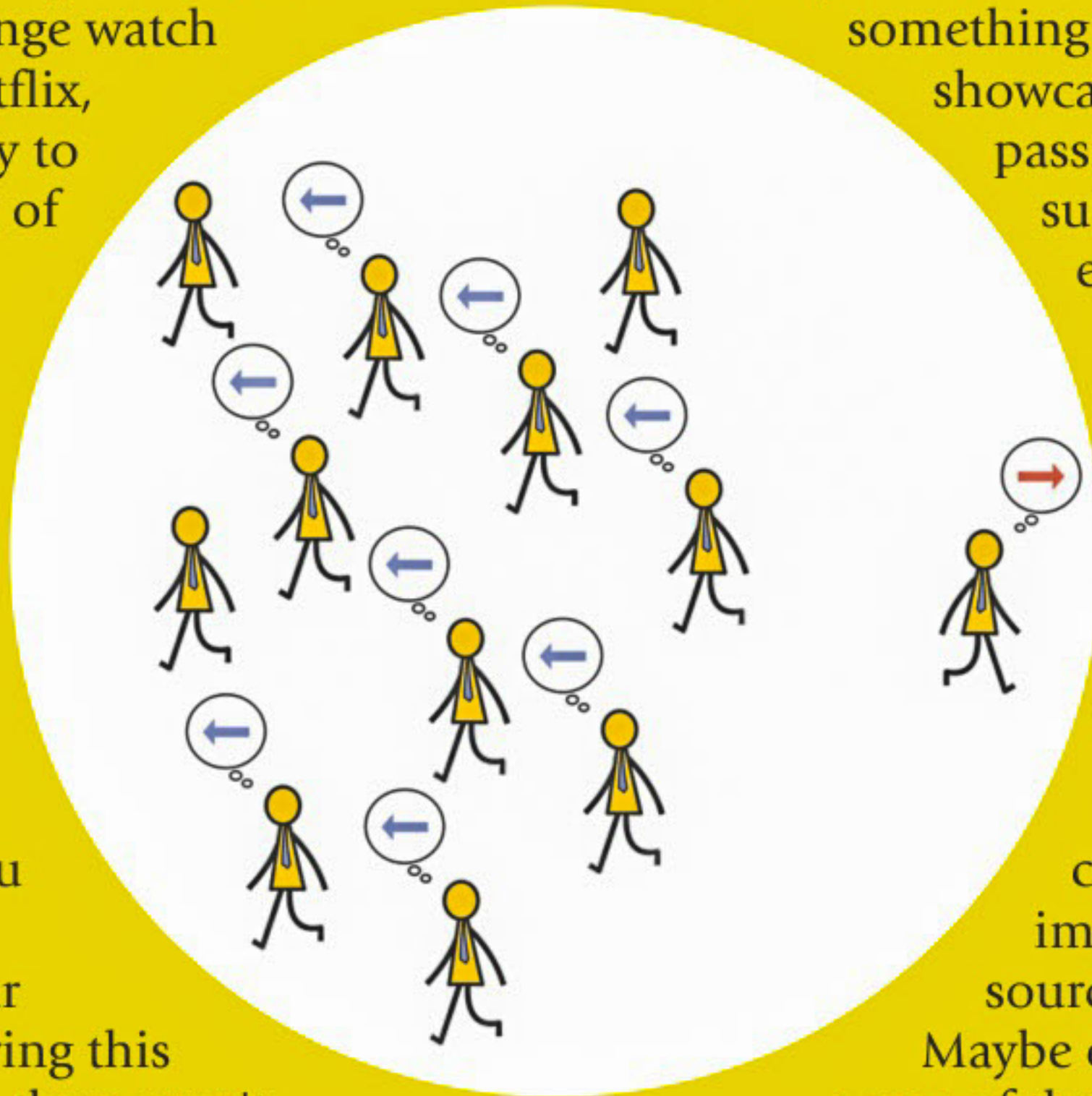
Maybe even take some of that time and use it to learn basic life skills such as cooking and sewing which may otherwise seem mundane at first look. The possibilities are endless.

A few researches in the US indicate that gap year students are more "college ready" as they tend

to be more firm on their footing, making them better decision-makers and more reliable in general. Don't get me wrong, I'm not by my means undermining those who go straight into college after high school; they can be equally capable. You need to take your time and assess whether a gap year would be the right option for you or not.

Life isn't a race, as we are made to believe early on in life. The intense 12 years of school can cause academic burnouts to even the most devoted of learners. So, don't worry what the aunty next door is going to say about it; you won't even remember it a year from now. Slowing down and evaluating how far you've come and where you'd want to head from here, can actually be a wiser and quicker method as you're more likely to be confident of your disposition and be rejuvenated enough to be all fired up to embark on the next phase of your life.

*Khadiza Karim Chowdhury is a part time science junkie and a part time sports enthusiast who anxiously swings from one to another and never walks alone, occasionally transitions into a Panda or a Cat. Hear her ramblings at [rodellachowdhury@gmail.com](mailto:rodellachowdhury@gmail.com)*



**1 YEAR**

**GAP**

A large, bold, black graphic of the word "GAP" is centered at the bottom of the page. A stylized white figure of a person with arms crossed is leaning against the letter 'A'. Above the 'A', a red and white striped horizontal bar is positioned under the text "1 YEAR". The letters and figure cast soft shadows on the yellow background.