

Why take a gap year?

A gap year is more than just taking time off from one's academic career. It is a period of time for experiential learning, developing new skills, expanding horizons, and culturally diversifying oneself. It can take many forms, from trying out new career options and internships to independent travelling and volunteering in social work. Needless to say, despite being uncommon in our society, a gap year offers more clarity and newfound structure in one's life.

Avoiding an academic burnout

Our academic system demands that we stay at our sharpest at all times and that we are continuously working hard to get our desired outcomes. A period of prolonged study can cause exhaustion, frustration, lack of motivation, and enthusiasm and affect school performance. This is known as an academic burnout.

The tremendous pressure put on students to pick a career path impairs their judgment and clouds their minds. So, a gap year not only provides a well-needed break from all these stresses, but also opens new doors for self-exploration and opportunities for clearing one's mind. Furthermore, doing so will help in making these decisions more confidently and with vigour.

Performing better academically

Although some might assume that a gap year would hamper one's studies, the reality is quite the opposite. Taking a break from the hectic life of being a student and being overwhelmed with classes and assignments is necessary. Taking the time to seek out a career path at one's pace and also discovering one's career passion, understanding their own skills and satisfying curiosity will provide more clarity



and help one decide what they truly want to do with their lives.

Increasing job satisfaction

It is difficult to maintain a job while being in school. Due to time constraints and juggling between school and work hours, it is difficult to explore any career options. But with a gap year, one can take up paid or unpaid internships or jobs, engage in volunteer work and community service to explore multiple career paths. In doing so, having understood where one's interests and skills lie, it will be easier to aim for a job which will provide more happiness and a sense of fulfilment.

Cultural exposure

Given that the opportunity arises to travel abroad or within the country, a gap year can be used to become more culturally aware. This will help one understand

and experience cultures, traditions and ideas which they often read in textbooks. These experiences will assist in grasping how societies are different in their own unique ways but are yet so alike. Providing perspective into new cultures, languages, communities and ideologies, a gap year will also contribute to becoming aware of one's unique place in the world.

Becoming more financially aware

Be it during individual travel or in employment, managing one's own finances is a crucial skill. During a gap year, when one has to handle their expenses on their own with no one to monitor their spending, it provides perspective into how to divide finances better.

Cultivating soft skills

Cross-cultural communication, empathy, adaptability, quick thinking, and problem

solving skills are some of the soft skills which can be nurtured during a gap year. These skills are only useful in everyday life, but also increases employability. Additionally, being able to practically implement and exercise these skills is something that cannot be taught inside a classroom.

Having a good time

Life is not just about academic success. We often forget to enjoy the limited time we have in this universe and drown ourselves in studies and in the pursuits approved by society. A gap year is crucial to make up for these experiences and make one's life even fuller. Having fun, new experiences, meeting new people, discovering oneself — are all just as important as having an outstanding transcript.

Academics have become a dominant



force in our society. Being associated with socially approved success and honour, our studies is something we fear to go easy on. However, taking a gap year can offer more self-improvements, skill development and also newer experiences which will help one's mind to go beyond the information on a textbook and numbers on exam scripts.

By Puja Sarkar
Photo: Collected

HOROSCOPE



ARIES (MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Make changes in your home. Mingle with people of similar interests. Luck is with you this week. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



TAURUS (APR. 21-MAY 21)

Your partner will be annoyed with you. Get into creative hobbies. Take a break. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



GEMINI (MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Lay all your cards on the table. Communicate with your partner about your needs. Opportunities for romance will develop. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



CANCER (JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Trips will be more than adventurous. Don't stretch the truth. Socialise with as many people as possible. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



LEO (JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Control your temper by staying busy. Put an effort into a new skill. Make plans with loved ones. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Voice your opinions. Your partner won't get you. Make changes that will raise your self-esteem. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



LIBRA (SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Make plans for a romantic getaway. Do things you enjoy doing. Channel your energy into professional endeavours. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



SCORPIO (OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Your high enthusiasm will inspire others. Control your emotions. Sort out any differences in an amiable manner. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Get involved in projects with moneymaking potential. Family members can be difficult this week. Social events will be rewarding. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Avoid arguing with your partner. It's time to review your motives. Don't overextend yourself. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



AQUARIUS (JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Stick to yourself this week. Accept the inevitable. You will not impress others by being foolishly generous. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



PISCES (FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Win points by presenting your ideas. Consider applying for a job elsewhere. Make plans for a vacation. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.