

# The way to a PRODUCTIVE GAP YEAR

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Taking a gap year is a decision that's far from simple. An unconventional route after wrapping up high school, a gap year can prove to be a major turning point in your education and career.

On one hand, a gap year can offer some much-needed time for a student to delve deeper into their interests and recognise the career they want to pursue. Engaging in recreational activities, travelling, and nurturing your creative sides can also mean that you begin the next chapter of your education with a reinvigorated spirit and are able to perform better.

On the other hand, taking a gap year can bring restlessness and uncertainty as you watch your batchmates advance to the next stage, leaving you behind. Additional issues like familial expectations and financial problems may make you rethink your decision along the way.

However, if you have decided to take a gap year or are currently considering it, it is important to plan it out instead of aimlessly sailing through it. Alongside browsing university course catalogues and preparing for admission tests, here are a few things you can do to emerge from your gap year as an improved version of yourself.

## Learning new skills through online courses

One of the best things you can do during your gap year is to enrol in online courses that teach you a new skill. Popular platforms like Udemy, Coursera, MIT OpenCourseWare, and edX offer courses from top institutions about every topic under the roof.

A few obvious suggestions would be to elevate your technical abilities by learning coding, web development or graphic designing. Search engine optimisation, project management, and product management are also great additions

to your skill set if you are looking to start earning. For those interested in business and entrepreneurship, Coursera's courses from the Wharton School of Business and Khan Academy's Economics and Finance courses are a few suggestions to consider. Coursera's Google IT Support Professional Certificate is a stepping stone for those intending to join the technology sector. If you struggle to get used to online course materials, YouTube is always a great place to start learning.

## Starting an internship

An internship is one of the most useful things you can add to your gap year to-do list. Besides gaining much-needed experience which gives you an edge over other applicants in the eyes of recruiters, you get an opportunity to learn the do's and don'ts of a workplace. The key to get an internship is to always be on the lookout for opportunities on places like LinkedIn, and utilise the connections you might have. With both large and young companies offering internships, it is safe to say that everyone can find something they're interested in.

## Volunteering

Volunteering is another extracurricular activity perfect for someone on a gap year. You can volunteer for a charitable organisation working towards a cause you resonate with, and come back home with new connections and the fulfilment of doing a good deed. Or, you can volunteer to help organise events, concerts, and university fairs which will help you develop soft skills like problem-solving and time management.

## Learning a new language

Whether you plan to study in a country where the primary medium of communication is not English or intend to work and settle down somewhere outside your own

country, the ability to speak a new language will be an important tool in your arsenal. After choosing a language to be more proficient in, you get to pick between enrolling in classes at a language learning institution or learning it online through platforms like Duolingo. Either way, learning a new language will give you the satisfaction of being trilingual and be a great source of mental stimulation.

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## Increasing your financial literacy

If you have started earning and have the privilege of being able to save a portion of it, it's important to plan out a savings scheme. Being able to make informed financial decisions is something too many people learn too late in their lives so the earlier you learn, the better. Reading books and articles while accumulating financial advice from people around you can be a great start. Investing your money to grow the amount and

investing your time to learn how to manage your money are two choices that you will never regret down the line.

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