Gap Year

What Is a Gap Year?

If you don’t know what you want to do after you graduate, or if you do know what you want to do, but aren’t ready to start doing it, then taking a gap year might be the solution for you.

A gap year is a short-term opportunity for graduates who have not yet decided upon a career, want to do something for a year or two before going to graduate school or starting a career, or simply want to take time off to explore opportunities that the world has to offer. Gap years may be as short as a few months or as long as several years. During this time you may explore interests, develop new skills, find direction, make a meaningful contribution to the community, or just take a break and have fun.

Some examples of gap year opportunities include:
• volunteer work
• working for a temporary agency
• working on a ranch or cruise ship
• enrolling in a publishing or business institute or advertising portfolio program
• joining the military
• acquiring an internship or fellowship
• traveling
• teaching

Gap years can also be a great way to enhance your resume, gain experience, increase your marketability, and develop new skills. Gap years are a good time to do something fun or rewarding like travel or volunteer work without having to worry about financial or relationship obligations you might have later.

At the same time, taking a gap year might not be right for everyone, if you have student loans or other financial concerns, an opportunity that offer little or no compensation (volunteer work) or have fees (traveling, business institute) might not be financially plausible. Also, your future employers or graduate school admissions officers might question you about your decision to take time off to travel for a year or work on a cruise ship, so be prepared to explain why this experience was necessary for
A Sample of Gap Year Opportunities

International
See International handout for more listings

**BUNAC**  www.bunac.org
Work in countries such as England, Australia, or New Zealand for up to twelve months

**Cultural Embrace**  www.culturalembrace.com
Work, teach, intern, or volunteer

**Educational Services International**  www.teachoverseas.org
Christian organization which offers opportunities to teach English all over the world

**International YMCA**  www.ymca.net/worldservice

**Peace Corps**  www.peacecorps.gov
Volunteers serve overseas communities by giving their time, skills, and energy to help people help themselves

**JET**  www.jetprogramme.org
Teach English in Japan

**United Nations Volunteers**  www.unv.org

**Projects Abroad**  www.projects-abroad.org

**United Planet**  www.unitedplanet.org

**Peacework Development Fund**  www.peacework.org
Domestic and international volunteer opportunities

**Gap Daemon**  www.gapdaemon.com
Social networking site for students who are interested in participating in an international gap year. This site has a variety of helpful resources for students such as country guides, travel advice, etc.

Educational Programs
*Summer programs in business for liberal arts majors:*

**Dartmouth Tuck Business Bridge Program**  www.tuck.dartmouth.edu/bridge

**UVA McIntire Business Institute**  www.commerce.virginia.edu

**WFU Schools of Business Summer Management**  http://business.wfu.edu/default.aspx?id=1184

*Summer publishing institutes:*
**Columbia Publishing Course**  www.jrn.columbia.edu

**NYU Summer Publishing Institute**  www.scps.nyu.edu/pubcenter

**University of Denver Publishing Institute**  www.du.edu/pi

Technical:
**International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience**  www.iaeste.org
Exchange programs for technical students looking to intern outside the United States and companies looking for international technical interns
Environmental/Outdoors

Environment America  www.environmentamerica.org
Two year environmental advocacy program

Student Conservation Association  www.thesca.org
Provides national and community conservation service opportunities, outdoor education, and career training in national parks, refuges, and urban areas

Outdoor Adventure Professional Network  www.oapn.net

Student Action with Farm Workers  www.saf-unite.org
A nonprofit organization created to build a network of campus-based projects focusing on farm worker issues. Projects include summer internships and various year round oppor-tunities. Spanish is helpful.

Nonprofit

Also see Nonprofit handout

Americorps  www.americorps.gov
Opportunities to help communities across the country in various capacities

Teach for America  www.teachforamerica.org
National corps of outstanding recent college graduates of all academic majors. Participants commit two years to teach in public schools in low-income communities.

Catholic Network of Volunteer Services  www.cnvs.org
Over 230 faith-based, full-time volunteer programs

City Year (youth program)  www.cityyear.org

HealthCorps  www.healthcorps.org
One year opportunity working in schools to promote healthy living

Volunteer Connections  www.pallotticenter.org
Volunteers are linked with communities in need. The countless areas include: volunteers as case workers in social service agencies and teachers in schools. Volunteers are supported in a variety of ways.

Universal Giving  www.universalgiving.org

Idealist.org  Great source for nonprofit information and opportunities

Post-Graduate Internships/Fellowships

DeaconSource  career.opcd.wfu.edu
Information about employers recruiting at Wake Forest and job and internship listings. (Requires registration)

UCAN/Internship Exchange  career.opcd.wfu.edu
Listings of national internship opportunities

WFU Scholars Program  www.wfu.edu/scholars
Listings of competitive post-graduate scholarship opportunities
Temp Resources
Also see cities handouts and New York and Washington DC staffing agencies handouts

Temporary, temp-to-hire, and direct hire positions in accounting and finance professions

Carolina Legal Staffing  www.carolinalegal.com
Permanent and temporary legal staffing opportunities in North and South Carolina

In-house temp agency for all TBS divisions in Atlanta. Available positions depend on levels of education and experience.

Miscellaneous

Cool Works  www.coolworks.com
Links to seasonal jobs at national parks, theme parks, resorts/lodges, cruise lines, and other tourism related companies

Back Door Jobs  www.backdoorjobs.com

CampStaff  www.campstaff.com

Camp Channel  www.campchannel.com

Opportunities in the Education Field
If you are interested in teaching and aren’t able to get a full-time position, you might consider starting out as a substitute teacher. To be a substitute teacher in Forsyth County, call 727-2861 or apply at the Office of Substitutes, located at 1605 Miller Street.

Many private schools do not require that their teachers be certified. The following organizations visit Wake Forest to recruit private school teachers:

• Carney Sandoe & Associates  www.csa-teach.com
• Southern Teachers  www.southernteachers

Part-Time Pays

Transitioning
Using part-time work to build skills isn’t relevant merely to the first-time job seeker. Today’s twenty-somethings hold an average of four jobs, and often those jobs are within different industries. Whether you’re prepping to swap industries or companies, or feel that you need to build skills before you’ll be able to land that coveted full-time position, think about part-time work. After all, part-time pays. In essence, part-time work can be used in much the same way that we now use internships—as a trial offer of sorts. Without committing to a job in the way conventionally required of full-time employment, a part-time job allows you to try out a career for size. It’s a chance for both employees and employers to get a feel for one another.

Resume Builder
Nothing makes a resume shine more than job skills and experience, and a part-time job is a great opportunity to build both skills and experience. Before you apply for a part-time job at the Gap, think about part-time employment as a paid internship. If you’re looking to hone interpersonal and customer service skills, for example, a sales job at the Gap might be a great fit. If you’re hoping, however, to develop conflict resolution and crisis-management skills to better prepare you for your human services career, consider peer counseling at your university or administrative work at a local drug rehabilitation center. If you have your sights set on biotech, think about part-time work at an academic or government lab. You get the idea—you need the cash, but what can you learn?

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