

How to Give Yourself an Unfair Advantage by Having Fun!

The idea of having a break after finishing 'A' levels and before going to college or University has always been around and become increasingly popular over the past few years. More and more young people are taken with the idea of the 'gap year' as it has become known.

There are advantages to having a break before going onto further/higher education; but there are also some drawbacks to it too.

A major advantage to having a gap year is that it breaks the institutional learning pattern. Most people have been in a school from the age of 5 and some continue without a break on the educational path until they graduate at 21 or 22. This is a long time. What a gap year will provide is the opportunity to experience life outside education establishments. Some people refer to it as experience of the 'wider world'. This may help you see things from a different perspective. Whatever you do whether its travel, voluntary work or paid employment it will give you a different view of things, and provide you with a range of experiences which will benefit you in the future.

Colleges and Universities are sometimes keen for applicants to have a gap year. They reason that after a year of doing something else you should be absolutely certain about whether you want to study further and take up your place. They also argue that the year's experience will be likely to have a maturing effect and that can only be good.

There are some downsides to the gap year though. The principle one however is that you will graduate a year later than your contemporaries who do not take a gap year. If, for instance, you are keen to get on a career ladder you could well be below the non gap year students.

Another important factor is to ensure that your place is secure. You should again agree with the college/university that the criteria for your acceptance on the course will not change and that the qualifications and grades you have achieved will still be valid in 12 months time. There have been cases where students have returned after a gap year only to find that the entry levels requirements have altered and they are no longer able to take up their place. This is rare, however, and most colleges/universities make it very clear that your place is 'on hold' until you return.

So you see, taking a year out can give you an advantage over your contemporaries.

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