

BRIDGING THE GAP

If you don't want to rush into the next stage of your life, think about taking a gap year. It's a chance to have great experiences, meet new friends and make some money.

WHY TAKE A GAP YEAR?

Still haven't figured out what you want to do? That's OK. Lots of people feel the same way.

Plenty of them take some time out to make a decision about their career while on a gap year—as well as getting to know themselves a bit better.

Taking a gap year doesn't necessarily mean filling your backpack and heading off around the world (although if you have the money to do that, it can be an option). The whole idea is to get away from those situations you're used to and comfortable with—your family, school and home—and discover a bit about yourself. You can do it in your own country or home town, or you can do something really exotic like volunteer in an overseas program. You can use the experience to learn new skills or earn some money. The key is to do something productive—watching television on the couch for 12 months doesn't really count. There are no rules about when to take a gap year, but somewhere between finishing school and starting further education makes the most sense. Universities will let you defer your degree once you've been accepted, but you have to ask them—don't just accept and then not turn up.

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

There are three common options: travelling, volunteering or working. The last two might involve some extra study, but it's nothing like doing your HSC again.

There are lots of organisations that will help you find volunteer work both in Australia and overseas, and that can be a very satisfying option. You can help people in other countries build better lives, or work in communities here. And you don't have to live in third-world conditions to do it—you can go to New Zealand and volunteer in the Stop Child Poverty campaign



A world of adventure awaits those who want to take a gap year.

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headquarters in Wellington. Check out the websites in the box on these pages for more information.

Or if you're after something different, there are organisations that can help you line up working holidays, including being a jackaroo or jillaroo on an outback property or working in a pub in the UK. In the end, it's up to you as to how you spend your time—just be sure to make the most of it.

DID YOU KNOW?

If you have a criminal record, that is, if you've had any charges against you, like shoplifting or DUI (Driving Under the Influence), you might not be allowed to enter some countries. Los Angeles (USA) and London (UK) are two common ports where Australians have been turned around and sent home for past offences.

Working it out

Toni McDonald
AGE: 17

Had a full time job before starting uni in Canberra.



"I decided to take a gap year for a couple of reasons. I was the youngest in my year at Shoalhaven High, and I hadn't got a car or my driver's licence yet. So I decided to get a full time job and save for a car. I'm also planning on going to New Zealand for a holiday at the end of the year, so I'm saving for that too. I decided on New Zealand because it was close and is an English-speaking country—and I also have some family living over there.

"I also wanted to see what it was like working five days a week, doing the nine-to-five. I was already working a casual job at a bakery in Sussex Inlet, and the boss there offered me a full-time position. It's pretty tiring, but it's good to have that money."

Getting away

NAME: Nanda Jarosz
AGE: 19

Travelled through Europe before going to uni in Sydney.



"After school, I didn't know what I wanted to do in my career or even if I wanted to go to university—even though I'd been accepted into a Bachelor of Arts. But I did know that I really wanted to go back to Europe.

"My parents are from Poland, and I'd visited for a month when I was in year 10, so it was always my dream to go back there.

"On my gap year, I travelled all through Western Europe—Germany, France, Spain, Italy and the UK, plus more. It didn't really give me a clearer sense of direction, but made me see what I could do with what I have here. I got back in January and started university nearly straight away. The culture shock of coming back wasn't so bad, because I immediately jumped into something new."



James Bradfield Moody

GENERAL MANAGER, INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, CSIRO; *THE NEW INVENTORS*, ABC.

"You have an amazing amount of potential ahead of you when you leave school—life is the journey of turning that potential into real experiences. The best way to do something extraordinary is to be true to yourself, step outside your comfort zone and follow your passions. Good luck!"

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Find travel tips and must see hot spots to visit at www.backpackeressentials.com.au

Find up to date travel advisories from the government at www.smartraveller.gov.au

All the health info you need can be found at www.travelclinic.com.au

Book cheap accommodation around the world and access great traveller deals at www.yha.com.au

TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT

For a huge range of working holidays or volunteer programs, go to www.owh.com.au

Get paid work on cruise ships through www.cruiseplacement.com.

Organise a bar job in the French Alps through www.anyworkanywhere.com

Be a ski instructor in Canada. Check out the details at www.launchpadaustralia.com

Be a nanny in Europe with www.aupair-plus.com.

Volunteer in Peru, Kenya, or Nepal through www.worldyouth.com.au

Become a camp counsellor in the USA. Go to www.ymca.org.au and find out how.