

Gap Year and Spring Semester Admission

Gap Year

What is a gap year?

A gap year is time off from a student's formal education that happens typically between high school and college. Students choose a gap year for many reasons. It is a personal decision for each student and their family. Many see the time before college as a natural break in a student's progression along the academic path. Some reasons why students take advantage of this time are for:

- **Maturity and autonomy:** Students are old enough to travel on their own and it is often the first time they experience and identify themselves as separate from family and friends, an important step in their maturation. It is often the first time a student is exercising a substantive choice regarding what they want to do with their lives. Since students view it as their time away from school, they take more responsibility for it and themselves.
- **Independence:** Students get a chance to focus on their interests and decide what they want to do in college. They develop independence and the ability to work on their own. They create a network of contacts to use in their future and, most importantly, they have a sense of accomplishment and pride in themselves when their gap year is completed.
- **Preparation:** Students are not academically or emotionally prepared for the rigors of college. They need a respite from their studies and the time away from school provides a non-traditional educational experience for them. During this time off, students develop the necessary skills for a successful college experience.

How do I know if a gap year is for me?

Remember that taking time off isn't for everyone. If you already know exactly what you want to major in and you think that you are mature enough for the intense work that comes along with college, then you probably want to proceed to college right after high school. Weigh your options and pick the best choice for you.

A gap year is not just time off, but time used for growth, exploration, and real-work experiences. If you decide that a gap year is for you, be sure to make a plan and set goals. Decide on an activity that will be beneficial for you, such as volunteering domestically or internationally, exploring career paths, or improving your study skills. Whatever you decide to do, one thing is certain: You will enroll in college as a changed person.

Should I still apply to college if I am thinking of taking a gap year?

The College Counseling Office strongly recommends that students apply to college during their senior year of high school when you have access to the resources provided by our office. After you receive an acceptance from a college and confirm that you will be taking a gap year, you can request to have the acceptance deferred for one year; most colleges will allow you to defer.

Gap Year Books

- *The Gap Year Advantage: Helping Your Child Benefit from Time Before or During College.* Karl Haigler and Rae Nelson, March 2025.
- *The Gap Year Guidebook: A Practical Guide for Student and Parents Considering and Planning a Purposeful Year of Growth and Exploration.* Eliza Westfield, 2025.
- *The Complete Guide to the Gap Year: The Best Things to Do Between High School and College.* Kristin M. White, 2019.
- *Gap to Great: A Parent's Guide to the Gap Year.* Andrea Wien, 2018.
- *Gap Year: How Delaying College Changes People in Ways the World Needs.* Joseph O'Shea, 2013.
- *Planning Your Gap Year: Hundreds of Opportunities for Employment, Study, Volunteer Work and Independent Travel.* Nick Vandome, 2013.

Spring Semester Admission to College

I've been offered spring admission. What does that mean?

Increasingly, colleges and universities are offering first-year students' admission for the spring term of the academic year instead of the traditional fall semester—frequently called “January,” “February,” or “Spring” Admission. Why?

- There are more on-campus beds available in the spring than in the fall since more students tend to study abroad in the spring and because colleges can expect a certain amount of attrition each spring.
- With increasingly competitive application pools, spring admission is a great option for students who want to attend a particular school but for whom there wasn't enough space in the class for the fall term.
- Spring admission is offered only to students for whom the adjustment will be relatively easy socially. Because these students will be arriving during the middle of the school year, university administrators are confident that they will be able to handle the mid-year transition.

What are the benefits of a spring admit?

- Spring admits have a refreshing break from school between high school and college.
- If you graduate mid-year with the rest of your spring-admit cohort, it means you get an extra summer before becoming an adult.
- More jobs and internships are available for college students during the school year than in the summer.
- Spring admits are part of a smaller cohort of students who often become very close to each other because they are in a similar situation.

What am I going to do in the fall if I'm not at college like all my high school friends?

- Travel. Take classes overseas and learn a foreign language. Take a road trip around the Pacific Northwest. Go trekking in Nepal or Alaska.
- Start a YouTube Channel or a podcast about your gap year experiences.
- Take classes. Whether you are enrolled at a university overseas, a university at sea (Have you heard of the Seamester?) or the community college down the street, you'll want to make sure the credits transfer.
- Volunteer nearby, or, if you're feeling adventurous, go farther away.
- Get a job elsewhere, perhaps on a fishing boat in Alaska or on an organic farm.
- Get certified as a lifeguard, a Wilderness First Responder, a yoga instructor, or whatever else you didn't have time for in high school.
- Get a job at home for a few months to earn money to support the above activities and gain some extra time to hang out with your siblings or your favorite pet.
- The options are endless, and you won't have any regrets. When else in your adult life will you have such wide-open opportunities?