Taking Time Out after Graduation
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Taking a Gap Year between school and university or as a graduate has been going on since the 1960s. The old notion of adventurous and dangerous expeditions in far off places and costing a fortune has more recently included activities closer to home and within even the smallest of budgets.

**Gap year options**

- Get involved in local volunteering in the community. [www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/experience/volunteering](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/experience/volunteering)
- Learn a new skill (teaching, IT, a foreign language, first aid or sign language for example).
- Set up some work shadowing.
- Extend your part-time job to increase your earning power.
- Take a graduate internship, like our Manchester Graduate Internship Programme (MGIP), its paid and will help you gain skills and commercial awareness. [www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/mgip](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/careers/mgip)

A break between study and work (or more study) is an opportunity to do something different for a while. Not a time to switch off and relax necessarily. They say “a change is as good as a rest” so use your time wisely to develop your career. Planning early and setting objectives based on future career ambitions or possibilities could be crucial.

There are a range of reference books available in the Careers Library which give further information and advice on taking a gap year, volunteering and on information on working and living in different countries.

**Time-line guide for planning your Time Out**

(Other specifics may apply depending on nature of activities or programme)

**2 years ahead**

- Assess your career plans and ascertain personal benefits to taking a gap year.
- Do your target employers or further study providers approve your taking time out?
- Find out what other joiners who deferred have done?

**18 months ahead**

- Explore activities which enhance your employability and be attractive to employers.
- Attend Taking Time Out workshops and read up on possible opportunities.

**1 year ahead**

- Check out visa requirements if not arranged for you by the exchange programme.
- Be clear about all the costs of travel, accommodation, living expenses & emergencies.
- Apply to organisations which permit deferred starts. Sell gap year positively.

**6 months to go**

- Your final project, dissertation and exam revision is the priority. Don’t get distracted.
- Review your arrangements (applications, visas, travel, accommodation, money, insurance).
- Set objectives for your time away (see end). Important for “defer” interviews.
3 months to go
- Check health requirements (e.g. injections and first aid kit including insect repellent).
- Attend assessment centres and final interviews for your deferred job.
- Use any company links in the country being visited for contacts or even work.

1 month to go
- Finalise arrangements for your Time Out activity (tickets, visas, contracts, hotel, jabs).
- Accept job offer and negotiate starting date. Review objectives in light of future job.
- Familiarise yourself with new location on web (customs, transport, weather, politics).

2 weeks before
- Think about security (personal alarm, padlocks, money belt).
- Health and safety (identify suitable First Aid kit items).
- Identify necessary items. Buy or borrow.

Final week
- Remind employer of your whereabouts and leave contact details if necessary.
- Packing Check List: [www.prospects.ac.uk/planning_your_gap_year.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/planning_your_gap_year.htm)
- Check arrangements for travel to and from airport.
- Employer presentations and careers fairs are useful for market/opportunities research.

Applying for jobs or courses while on a gap year

Points to consider:

Over the summer
- Research preferred sector
- Employers
- Location and role.
- Confirm deferred start policy.
- Get to know closing dates or when likely to fill their places.

September
Recruitment directories for next year entry will arrive in careers services. Use:
- [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)
- [www.targetjobs.co.uk](http://www.targetjobs.co.uk)
- [http://targetjobs.co.uk/uk300/home](http://targetjobs.co.uk/uk300/home) [http://top100graduateemployers.com](http://top100graduateemployers.com)

October
- Employer vacancies will appear on the Careers Service website. Employer presentations and autumn careers fairs too. Check [www.manchester.ac.uk/careerslink](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/careerslink)
- Postgraduate study opportunities and funding details available from now onwards.

November
- Many Graduate Programme closing dates this month. Allow time to work on these.
- Research company websites for training scheme details, latest news and career paths.
- Careers Service website for employer-led Careers Forums or presentation slides.
December
- Take stock of applications made. Practise online tests via Careers Service website.

January
- First interview invitations. Take advantage of telephone or Skype alternatives.
- Practise selling your skills, experience & knowledge, commitment for role/employer.
- Postgraduate providers have Open Days. Explore virtual engagement possibilities.

February
- If successful at interviews you may be invited to take part in assessment centres.
- Familiarise yourself with the range of activities you will be involved in.
- Interviews and presentations may be possible remotely. Travel may be needed if not.

March
- Take stock of your job search to date. Seek feedback from any rejections.
- Email Careers Service if you need a pep talk or ideas of next steps.

April
- Final interviews may be a feature of this time of year. Well done, stay focused.
- Be very clear about why you want to work for this company and role suitability.

May
- Multiple offers (jobs or postgraduate courses) could be an issue at this stage.
- Weigh up initial reasons for applying. List pros and cons to help you decide.

June
- Summer fairs happen all over UK this month and into July.
- Could be a good time to return to pick up final places.
- Create an impressive story of your time away to dazzle your employer or study provider. This could help you stand out and clinch you a place.

What did you gain from your gap year?

When talking to prospective employers about your gap year either before, during or after you need to have a clear idea of how you will sell the benefits. E.g.

- What skills did you gain?
- If you volunteered – what was the benefit to the organisation?

Be clear about your motivations Set some objectives. Have a good story to tell.
Use this table to map out your motivations, objectives and key selling points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations Before</th>
<th>Objectives During</th>
<th>Sales pitch After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key goal</td>
<td>Eg. Improve water supply to remote parts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Project brief)</td>
<td>of Peru by assisting local population and professional engineers to build supply network</td>
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<td>----------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td><strong>Eg. Languages</strong>&lt;br&gt;Self-reliance&lt;br&gt;Team working&lt;br&gt;Survival&lt;br&gt;IT&lt;br&gt;Commercial awareness</td>
<td><strong>Eg. Blog</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Journal</strong>&lt;br&gt;List of contacts&lt;br&gt;References&lt;br&gt;Photos&lt;br&gt;Folder of materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
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<td>Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remote job search</td>
<td><em>(earlier pages for points to consider)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintain labour market /sector knowledge</td>
<td>*<em>Eg. Check employer/course provider website weekly. Make a note of positive news stories. Professional association and industry journal website checks too.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-engagement plans</td>
<td><strong>Eg. Back home or stay with friends. Locate near new job or course and find a part-time job. Confirm start date and any pre-start activities.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tell us your story for the Careers Service website.</strong></td>
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