

The Disadvantages of a Gap Year After High School

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A gap year is an alternative for a graduating high school senior who either is unsure about college or doesn't want to continue school at that point. Students often elect to take a year off for a breather, to study abroad or to work to save money for school. Despite these motives, a gap year can have some significant drawbacks.

Lost Friendships

A common drawback of delaying college is that you may get left behind when all your friends head off to school. You can keep in touch by phone or e-mail, but you may find that a year is a long time at age 18 or 19. Your good high school friends can easily make new friends at college and get acclimated to the experiences of college life. This may make it difficult to talk on the same level or about similar interests when they return home. In some cases, friends don't ever fully reconnect after one takes a gap year.

Lost Momentum

You may also lose your academic momentum. This is one of the major drawbacks of a gap year, according to Options Solutions Educational Consultants. Nine to 12 months away from the structure of a classroom and the rigor of academics can lead to loss of study skills. It can be difficult to get motivated for a return to school after a year and to get comfortable in the classroom once you do.

Costs

Gap years may have costs as well, depending on how you use them. Students who work during the year away from school may benefit financially. However, a number of students participate in study abroad or other academic learning programs that are sometimes expensive. Additionally, you have an opportunity cost in that you delay your college education by a year, thus delaying increased income potential after graduation by one year.

Career Delay

A gap year delays your transition from adolescence to adulthood by at least a year. Some students experience even longer delays because they take lighter class loads to ease back into school. If you want to get a master's degree, for instance, you would typically have six to seven years of school to complete after your gap year. Medical school or law school would mean another eight to 10 years of school after the gap year. Again, this delays your ability to get into a career.