

4.6 Case study Gap years and career breaks


Internet research

Search for the keywords *gap year* to read about some of the ways students (and other age groups) are using their gap years.

Brainstorming

1 Brainstorm the advantages and disadvantages of taking a year off before or after university or in mid-career. How many different ways of spending a gap year can you think of?

Listening

2  2:19–2:24 Listen to six interviews with people who took a gap year and answer the questions.

- 1 When and where did they take their year out?
- 2 Were their experiences positive, negative or mixed? Why?

Scan reading

3 Read the advertisement and answer the questions.

- 1 Who can apply for a gap-year placement, and when?
- 2 What are the four benefits of a gap-year placement mentioned in the advertisement?
- 3 What kind of work is available?
- 4 Do you get paid / have to pay?
- 5 How do you apply?

Want to change the world, or just want a change?



Whether you are still a student or already in work, a gap-year placement is a unique opportunity to broaden your horizons, enhance your CV and **step back** from your studies or career to decide what you want to do with your life. Perhaps more importantly, a gap-year placement is the chance to do something concrete and **tangible** to help people in need in underprivileged areas of the world.

Placements are designed for people over 17 years of age, and run for six or nine months throughout the world. All placements begin with an intensive orientation course to help you **find your feet**; for some countries, an optional ten-day intensive language course is recommended. Participants work as volunteers in sectors such as education, conservation, medical support and care work. Food and accommodation are provided, but participants pay their own travel costs.



To apply, choose your destination and complete and send in the application form (downloadable from our website www.gapyearplacement.org) together with your CV. Please note that, due to an increasing number of applications, places cannot be guaranteed. **Short-listed** candidates will be invited to attend a selection interview in their country of residence.

Reading and discussion

4 Read the four descriptions of gap-year placements. With a partner, explain which one(s) you'd prefer to go on, and why. Why wouldn't you like to go on the others?

Writing and roleplay

5 You are going to take turns interviewing and being interviewed for www.gapyearplacement.org. First complete the application form, then follow the steps below.

application form

www.gapyearplacement.org

Name: _____

Current occupation: _____

A Describe your previous participation in any organization, your experiences in other countries and your contact with persons of other nationalities, races and cultures.

B What are your main reasons for spending a year abroad and why have you applied for a gap-year placement?

C What is your preferred destination and type of voluntary work?

- 1 Divide into A Groups and B Groups of four students each.
- 2 Three students from Group A interview one student from Group B. At the same time, three students from Group B interview one student from Group A. Use the completed application forms above (and CVs, if available) for the interviews.
- 3 When the first interview is finished, a different person from each group goes to the other group to be interviewed. The interview panel will, therefore, be slightly different each time.
- 4 When all the interviews are finished, decide in your groups which candidates have been successful.
- 5 Group A and Group B join together and give the candidates feedback on why their applications have or have not been successful.

Care Work in South Africa

Population: 45 million
Official Language: 11 official languages, including English and Afrikaans
Placement: Schools for 4 to 18 year olds with special needs

Job: Classroom assistant in a special needs school, providing classroom support and working on an individual basis with children with mental and physical disabilities.

Working week: 45 hours, some evening duties.



Conservation in Malaysia

Population: 24 million
Official Language: Bahasa Melayu
Main Religion: Islam
Placement: Conservation work

Job: Various conservation projects: construction and maintenance of trails, identification of species, eco-tourism projects, organic farms, animal sanctuaries, turtle-conservation projects. Work is physically demanding.



Care Work in Costa Rica

Population: 4 million
Official Language: Spanish (Indian languages and Patois also spoken)
Main Religion: Roman Catholic
Placement: Care work

Job: Care-work placements in homes for children with disabilities or orphanages: assisting individual children, organizing activities, helping with lessons or assisting at meal times. Intensive Spanish language course recommended.



Teaching in Tanzania

Population: 37 million – over 129 tribes
Official Language: Swahili and English
Main Religion: Christianity and Islam

Placement: Teaching in primary or secondary schools
Job: Teaching five days a week: all subjects, including sport and drama. Participants must have excellent English. Four weeks' school holidays per year.

