

# Ten Good Reasons to Take a Gap Year

Application to professional school is best done once and when you are ready. The right time to apply is based on YOUR readiness. The earliest application is typically at the end of your junior year (generally you need 90 credit hours). But not everyone is ready then, and you may have good reasons to wait. Whether you call it a gap year, exploration year, discovery year, building year, etc, it may be something to consider.

1. You can use your final academic year to solidify your GPA. As a senior, you will have another 25% of your grades to provide professional schools. Your final GPA may improve your competitiveness.
2. You'll have more time to study for your entrance exam. You should take the entrance exam in the spring of your senior year if you want your scores before you submit your application. Applying after you graduate means you could spend the previous summer studying, and still have time to retake it if necessary, before applying.
3. You might secure stronger letters of recommendation. Your classes are likely to get smaller in the senior year, and you'll have more opportunity to forge relationships with your faculty. Juniors doing research or internships will have stronger letters by next year, since the bulk of your work will be done this summer and next year. You'll also have this summer to work on getting a letter from a supervisor or volunteer coordinator for your summer activity.
4. You can get your finances in order. Professional school is expensive, as is the process of applying. Taking time away from school means that you will probably have to start repaying any student loans, but working full-time should allow you to make payments on loans while also saving some money to put toward applications and future expenses. If you have poor credit, spending some time rebuilding your credit record may also pay off when it comes to taking out professional school loans.
5. You'll have more time to focus on the preparations required to apply. You have essays to write, letters of recommendations to gather, aptitude tests to study for, schools to research, as well as the rest of real life and figuring out what to do this summer. If you can't spend the time, you need on application prep now (and secondary essay writing this summer), it might be better to start getting organized this year but focus on applying next year.
6. "Everyone else is applying now." Not true. Delaying applications are becoming a national trend. Those who take some time before applying have all found something productive to do during this gap year or years. They may, in fact, be more attractive to admissions committees because of this new experience as well as the maturity they gained from being in the "real world" for a while.
7. You can gain more experience, and practice articulating your career interests. Without having participated in activities that allow you to serve the community and to build the skills you need to be a professional, it will be hard to convince schools that you have a realistic understanding of what you're about to undertake. The more time you spend in these settings, the stronger you will perform on your application since you'll have a more solid goal to work toward. If you need more experiences to back up your "gut feeling" that you "must" be a doctor, dentist, vet, or lawyer, take the time to find those experiences.
8. It's better and easier to become a strong first-time applicant than it is to become a strong re-applicant. For juniors, spending another year improving your candidacy means you can apply at the end of your senior year. Students who are not accepted need to be thoughtful in improving to the point that they are viable re-applicants. This means that if you applied as a junior and did not get in, you might need to take the next year to improve your candidacy and then reapply a year later.

***Preparing for your Giant Leap***

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9. Life is short! Once you get to professional school, it becomes more difficult to take time off – you're more likely to have financial concerns, family concerns, and a professional schedule that will keep you from, say, traveling to Africa for six months, or learning to skydive, or pursuing independent research, or going to culinary school.
10. Additionally, it may be beneficial to give your brain a break from academics after 18 years of school, before facing the rigor of professional school course work. Professional school (and the support Purdue University provides in working with you to get there) will still be there for you after a gap year.

Adapted from “Ten Reasons to Apply Next Year” prepared for NEAAHP by Kate Fukawa-Connelly, Princeton. Spring 2008 and Carol B. Crafts at Providence College.