A gap year ! A few years ago this phrase was casually thrown around, but now the word's « gap year » seem to be on every young person's lips. It seems that every time a gap year is mentioned it's met with ideas of beautiful beaches, beautiful people and a wonderful time. But what are they like in reality ? Are gap-year programs really all sunshine and daisies or is there a little more to them ? This list details the pros and cons of taking a gap year to help you decide if it's really right for you.

### The pros :

**It'll make your resume look pretty snazzy.**
A gap year can provide a person with valuable new skills that any employer will be impressed by. Cultural awareness, organization, and an ability to work independently are just some of the skills that are gained by taking a year out.

**You'll meet new people.**
On a gap year it's impossible not to meet new people. Throughout school and college we are surrounded by the same folks but taking a gap year allows us to discover others, make new friends, and interact with people from all walks of life.

**You'll have tons of stories.**
After spending a year away the stories will mount up ; these can be great conversation starters in the interview room, at parties or, simply just to look back on and remember.

**It's a very long holiday.**
A gap year, for most people, is the longest holiday they will ever have. It is often a once in a lifetime experience and the chance to escape the daily grind.

**It's a great way to learn.**
A gap year will provide you with much more than any classroom setting ever can ; sometimes an experience during a gap year can knock you a bit but you'll learn just how much you can deal with when you really have to. Whether volunteering, studying, or just travelling, you're bound to learn a ton.

**You'll look after yourself.**
Some people might put this in the cons list; who wants to look after themselves if they can rely on Mom and Dad to help them out ? But we've all got to stand on our two feet at some point and the sooner we can learn how to do this the better. Going on a gap year can also help us get used to life on a budget, which is great preparation for college.
It's a break from traditional education.
Many people who enter college straight from school regret their choice of course within the first two years. Taking a break from education and going away for a while gives us the chance to really consider what the right course is. Not only this, but a gap year can provide a renewed vigour for study and a more focused approach to learning.

You'll learn a new language.
There's no better way to learn a new language than to live in the country that speaks it. Being immersed in a foreign language means that all of the new words that are learned can get put into practice straight away. People who live in native speaking countries are able to pick up the basics much faster than people who stay at home.

It doesn't have to be a year.
A gap year can be as short or as long as people want them to be. Some choose to take some time out, get a job and save some cash before heading off, this way they can have a great experience without worrying too much about their funds. Others want a longer time away and leave as soon as they have a feasible amount - this means they're always watching what they spend but they're able to travel longer and fit more in.

You'll become more mature.
People who take gap years often report that their family and friends say 'you've changed' when they return home, but it's never in a bad way. A gap year introduces a person to so many new ideas and experiences it's probably impossible not to change in some ways. Taking a gap year can put you in situations that many people will never face.

• The cons :

You'll be a year behind.
This can be a tough one for many people. They wave as their friends all trek to college and start their new lives and they are left behind. They can't start their new adventure yet because they don't have the cash. This is easily offset by working hard and saving cash quickly in order to jet off as soon as possible.

You'll be homesick.
It's something that hits most of us at some point. Whether you're missing family, friends or home, you may find yourself wondering why you chose a life on the road. But fear not ! The joy of travel is that there is always somebody to meet and something to do. Power through and you'll be glad you did.

It's a risk.
Sure it is ! But where do we get in life if we aren't willing to take risks ? This is what makes a gap year so exciting; not knowing what to expect is all part of the adventure. The key is to take care and travel with common sense. Fun fact: I've yet to meet a gap year traveller or career breaker who « regretted » their decision to hit the road.
It can be expensive. This depends on the destination and the duration of the trip but, chances are, when taking a gap year you're going to spend quite a bit of cash. The best way to fund a gap year is to work and travel at the same time. It's also a good idea to plan trips independently as this will cut costs dramatically.

It can be stressful. Booking vaccinations, getting tickets and insurance, visas and accommodation sorted. It does get easier as you get used to life on the road but there will always be situations that will test your stress levels to the max.

There's the potential to waste a lot of time. Many people think their trip will begin as soon as they finish school and kind of just wait for things to happen. This is not the case - as soon as the decision to have a gap year is made, the planning and saving needs to begin. However, by not planning carefully many people find weeks and months passing by before they can even step onto that first plane.

You're no longer a student. It's a pretty big deal, going from school into the real world. It can be a big shock getting used to this new way of life. Many people prefer to take this transition a little more slowly by studying or doing an internship abroad.

1. a) Translate the following sentence: « by taking a year out. »

b) What is this type of phrase called in French?

c) Find two other occurrences in the text.

a) La traduction de cette phrase est : « en prenant une année sabbatique ».

b) On appelle cette tournure le gérondif.

c) Les deux autres occurrences sont :
- « However, by not planning carefully »
- « more slowly by studying or doing an internship abroad »

2. Find the equivalents of the following words in the text:

The pros
- attractive (§1)
- permits (§2)
- accumulate (§3)
- routine (§4)
- at once, immediately (§7)

The cons
- difficult (§1)
- happy (§2)
- money (§4)
- to take place, to occur (§6)
**The pros:**
- attractive → snazzy
- permits → allows
- accumulate → mount up
- routine → grind
- at once, immediately → straight away

**The cons:**
- difficult → tough
- happy → glad
- money → cash
- to take place, to occur → to happen
- challenge → deal

(2,5pts)

**Exercice 2**

(7,5 points)

Detailed comprehension

1. Answer the following questions.

Which paragraph is about:
- a) two types of travellers, those who leave immediately and those who wait until they are ready
- b) a better curriculum vitae
- c) a difficult transition
- d) money you are going to spend on such a journey
- e) new encounters
- f) the fear of taking the right decision
- g) the numerous recollections when back home

- a) *It doesn't have to be a year* (0,5pt)
- b) *It'll make your resume look pretty snazzy* (0,5pt)
- c) *You're no longer a student* (0,5pt)
- d) *It can be expensive* (0,5pt)
- e) *You'll meet new people* (0,5pt)
- f) *You'll be homesick* (0,5pt)
- g) *You'll have tons of stories* (0,5pt)

2. True or false? Justify by quoting the text.

- **The pros**
  - a) Employers do not pay attention to gap year travellers.
  - b) Taking a gap year rarely occurs in a lifetime.
  - c) You learn more on a gap year than at school.
  - d) No experience can be gained from a gap year.
**Exercice 3**

Expression

Would you be interested in a gap year? Why or why not?
(150-200 words)

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Even though I would probably feel homesick in the beginning, I think I would enjoy such an experience because there are more pros than cons I suppose.

How great and enriching it must be to meet new people and to discover new cultures! Of course, I would have to save quite a lot of money but this too can be exciting. Indeed, getting money to achieve a dream is the very start of the experience, the passage from childhood to adulthood, from dependence to independence.

And I suppose you are not the same when you return: you have seen so many new things, you have met so many interesting people that you have changed a lot! You leave as an ignorant and you return as a learned person. How proud of you your family and friends must be! I can imagine all the questions they ask you...

Last but not least, going abroad for a while is also the best way to learn a new language because you have to use it all the time, you cannot cheat.

Consequently I would definitely be interested in a gap year, there is no doubt about that.