



Gap/Bridge Year Advice from Recent Hopkins Graduates

As gleaned from the Gap/Bridge Year Survey of Recent Graduates, fall 2015. See:

<http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/Forms/Gap.Bridge.Year.Survey.12.2015.xlsx>

- 1. Do something you are passionate about.** A gap year gives you an unfounded opportunity to add color to your application and pursue something you are truly interested in. Engage in an experience that matters to you, instead of doing something just because it “looks” good. If research is what you find enjoyment in, find an opportunity to study something you’re passionate about, but don't be afraid to pursue something bolder.
- 2. Choose an opportunity based on the skills you want to learn.** While your gap year will bring new challenges, it will be an opportunity for you to build credentials and mature as a person. Think about pursuing opportunities that you may not have previously considered and push yourself to gain new insight and learn new skills from these experiences. It is important to remember that your gap year is a step toward a greater goal, so step out of your comfort zone and use it to develop yourself as both an applicant and a person.
- 3. Use the additional time to increase the quality of your application.** After GPA and MCAT scores, personal experience is the most important aspect of your application. Use this time effectively to make yourself stand out as an applicant. In addition, your gap year will allow you to spend more quality time on secondaries and preparing for interviews, without the stress of classes. Most employers are very understanding about the application process and your professional goals, so you can take off time for interviews without having to worry about missing class or exams.
- 4. Recognize your weaknesses and strengthen those areas.** If your undergrad GPA is not very competitive, your gap year can be a great opportunity to seek out graduate school programs to show academic improvement. This additional time can also be utilized to prepare for or retake the MCAT. If other areas are lacking on your application, use this time to find experiences that strengthen those areas, whether that means getting involved with research or teaching students.
- 5. Explore medicine and your reasons for pursuing the field.** Whether you want to engage in medically-related work during this time or simply volunteer with patients, your gap year can be your chance to gain perspective on why you want to pursue a career in the medical field. The opportunity to learn from health care providers and to interact with patients can be helpful to both those who are certain and those who are still unsure about whether a medical profession is for them.
- 6. Be open and committed.** Once you have found the experience you want to pursue during gap year, commit to it wholeheartedly. What you get out of the experience will depend on what you put in, so work hard, be kind to those around you, and be open to taking advantage of new opportunities that come along the way.