

# Taking Time Out After Your Degree

After an intense period of study, you might be considering taking some time out before you study at a higher level or start the next step in your working life.

This document will help you:

* decide if it’s the right thing for you;
* consider how long to take, what your aims for the time are, and how to achieve them; and
* how to be ready for the next step after the break.

## Is taking time out the right thing for you?

Here are some things to consider, to help you decide:

### How are you feeling?

* Coming to the end of a stage of your life, such as finishing a degree, can lead to a rush of emotions, some of them contradictory.
* If you are feeling much more positive than normal, then you may decide to do something that is more risky than you’ll later be comfortable with. If you are feeling more down than normal, then you may decide to do something that won’t be challenging enough.
* So check in with yourself, and if you are really not yourself maybe wait until you are past this heightened state before you decide your next steps.

### Do you need to earn some money?

* Life can be expensive, so most of us need to earn our way, at least to some extent. So how will you earn the money, what’s your goal and where do you need to be whilst earning it?
* If you need to save up to fund later plans, then how can you maximise your earnings whilst minimising your spending?
* If you need to earn to fund your day to day, can you combine this with something else, such as travel or developing yourself or meeting new people?
* Where is the best place for you to be to do this – best can mean all sorts of things – most supportive, comfortable, cheap, invigorating, safe – what does best mean for you?

### Do you procrastinate? Can you create your own structure to your day/week/month/year?

* Taking time out implies that you are away from ‘normal’ life, with all its natural rhythms, rules, and structures.
* That means that you’ll be more or less in charge of your time. How are you when you have that freedom – do you find it liberating, or do you find yourself getting bored? If you are the kind of person who is listless by mid-afternoon on a rainy Sunday, how will you fill a free week, month, year?
* Taking time out means making decisions and putting them into action. And the longer you take out, the more decisions and action you’ll need to take.
* How good will you be at creating that forward momentum by yourself? Do you have someone who can help you if you’re not very good at it?

### What are your friends and connections doing?

* You’ll know people who are taking time out, and others that are ‘getting on with their lives’, and you’ll see their carefully edited highlights on social media.
* Which set of highlights – e.g. the fun and adventure, or the money and the smart clothes, do you think that you’re most likely to have FOMO about?
* Are there people who bring out the best in you? If so, can you see them more? Are there others that have the opposite affect? If so, can you avoid them during your time out?

### What will you spend your time doing?

* You can do (nearly) anything, go (nearly) anywhere: that could be exciting - all of those endless possibilities; or it could be daunting – how do you choose when there could be better options out there?
* Anything you do can be enriching or healing, whatever you want it to be, as long as it’s the right thing for you. There may be people around you telling you what you ‘should’ do, and it might be good to hear their ideas and opinions, but they aren’t necessarily right for you.

## My aims

When it comes to setting your aim for the time out, then think about how you will know that your time out was a success. For example:

* Have the most relaxing/adventurous/exciting/challenging time
* Satisfy your need to see new things, experience different ways of living
* Develop yourself – generally, or specifically
* Work out what to do with the rest of my life

Whatever a successful time out means for you, it is unlikely to happen unless you develop at least a loose plan to achieve it. And to develop the plan, you’ll probably need to do some research.

As you’ve just learnt in your degree, you can research from secondary sources – such as reading articles and watching videos from those who’ve gone before, or who are eager to sell their wares. You can also do some primary research by communicating with the people who have gone before, and this is more likely to help you really understand what will work for you.

## Be ready for when you get back

If you are taking time out, then you are planning that that time will come to an end. At that stage, you are likely to be either wanting to get a job (directly or via a graduate scheme), further study, or setting up your own business.

If you are wanting to secure a place on a graduate scheme or a masters/PhD then you’ll need to be applying many months before you start. So you will either need to do that applying whilst you are taking time out, or build in more waiting time after your time out ends.

If you are going to get a job directly – which is what most recent graduates do – then it’ll probably take a few weeks, or even months, to get a good offer. Planning for the job search time is important, or else you’ll have to take whatever work comes your way first.

Also think about who your support network will be at the end of your time out. You may make lots of great friends along the way, but the people you already know will remain valuable (emotionally and practically) too, so maintaining those relationships is worth your time to.

Creating a plan for your return will help to ensure that your re-entry into life is seamless.

The Careers Service is here to help you with any element of this, so book an in person or online appointment via https://reading.targetconnect.net/ if you’d like to discuss.

## Further reading

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/gap-year>

<https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/university-life/gap-year-ideas-and-how-plan-year-out-after-graduating>

<https://www.grb.uk.com/blog/the-pros-and-cons-of-taking-a-post-graduation-gap-year>

<https://uk.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/what-to-do-after-university>