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How to successfully request a gap year deferral

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Elizabeth LaScala, PhD personally guides each student through each step of selecting and applying to well-matched schools for undergraduate and graduate school study. Over the past two decades, Elizabeth has placed hundreds of students in some of the most prestigious colleges and universities in the U.S. The number of clients taken is limited to ensure each applicant has personalized attention. Contact Elizabeth early in the process to make a difference in your outcomes. Write elizabeth@doingcollege.com; Visit www.doingcollege.com; or Call: 925.385.0562.

for taking a gap year, their gap year plan and objectives, and the length of time they plan to defer their enrollment. Students that submit a concrete deferral plan are more likely to have their application accepted. Thus, conducting thorough gap year program research and identifying clear goals for the gap year before applying will go a long way to ensuring success. Most schools have a May 1 deferral application deadline, so students should begin considering gap year plans before receiving college admissions decisions.

After learning more about gap years and if your preferred college allows it, students must write and submit their deferral application! As with college essays, it is wise to have a college counselor, teacher, or another strong writer review the application before it is submitted. The reader should be able to easily understand the student's gap year objectives. While applying for a gap year deferral is less intensive than the college admissions process, having clear goals and conducting thorough research will help ensure success.

Some students choose to defer their undergraduate studies to take a gap year, using the time to work, travel, or volunteer. Aside from having a concrete gap year plan, students must ensure that they apply for a deferral at the college they plan to attend. The deferral process differs across colleges, and thus it is vital that students understand their college's policies to successfully apply for a gap year.

An obvious first step is ensuring that the college allows gap year deferrals. While the vast majority do, the University of California system does not allow admitted students to defer their enrollment. Students that aim to take a gap year and attend a UC must reapply the following year, and thus should ensure that they factor in time for college applications when making their gap year plan. Conversely, many private colleges and some public universities support gap years. Harvard not only allows incoming students to take a gap year but encourages it. Harvard admissions' "Considering a Gap Year?" webpage states that the school believes students should consider deferral, if it will allow them to make the most of their opportunities and avoid burnout; between 90 and 130 incoming Harvard students take a gap year each cycle. The school even has a student-run Gap Year Society to support students during and after their gap year experience. Tufts University also believes that a gap year can be a "fulfilling experience" for students. However, Tufts does not allow students admitted from the waitlist or transfers to apply for a gap year. The university also does not accept deferral requests for students to pursue "structured" or "credit-bearing" academic programs during their gap year.

Clearly, schools have varying gap year policies: students must investigate their college's specific gap year deferral process. Most colleges list their gap year information online, but it is most beneficial to call the college's admissions office to learn more about the gap year application process. Students are generally required to submit a deferral form or write a gap year application letter that asks for information like the student's reason

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