



TEN REASONS TO CONSIDER A GLIDE YEAR

- 1. You'll have more time to study for the MCAT if you haven't taken it yet.** Medical school applicants should apply early in the application cycle, which raises the chance of acceptance. Taking MCAT no later than April/May allows you to know your scores before you submit your application (MCAT should be taken in May/June if you are comfortable applying without knowing your score). Students tend to prefer studying for MCAT in summer rather than during the academic year.
- 2. You can use next year to solidify your GPA.** Academic metrics almost always improve in senior year when students have more control over course selection and more familiarity with college expectations. If you are a senior whose GPA is not competitive at schools of interest, HPA advisers can discuss options to enhance your academic metrics before applying.
- 3. Your recommendation letters may be stronger.** The more classes and activities, the more opportunities are available to forge relationships with potential recommenders. Seniors usually benefit from a letter from their thesis adviser. If you're a senior, going on to postbac class work could provide more chances to get to know faculty, or if you go on to work, you could have an excellent professional reference.
- 4. You can get your finances in order.** Health professions school is expensive, as is the process of applying. Taking time away from school means that you may have to start repaying any student loans, but working full-time should allow you to make payments on loans (to defray some debt) while also saving some money to put toward applications and future expenses. If you have poor credit, rebuilding your credit record may also pay off when taking out school loans.
- 5. You'll have more time to focus on the preparations required to apply.** As an applicant, you will have essays to write, letters of evaluation to gather, MCAT to study for, schools to research, plus the rest of your life to manage, which could include job and internship applications, etc. If you cannot spend the time you need on application preparation now (and secondary essay writing this summer), it might be better to start getting organized this year, but focus on applying the following year.
- 6. "Everyone else is doing it."** Only about 20% of Princeton applicants applying for '19 are class of 2019 – the rest are taking time off. Every student with whom we have talked about time off has benefited from taking it. They all found something productive to do in their "glide year(s)," and may be more attractive to admissions committees with this new experience as well as the maturity gained from being in the 'real world.'
- 7. You can gain more experience and practice articulating your career interests, on paper and aloud.** You can participate in activities that can convince schools that you have a realistic understanding of what you're about to undertake, which can also allow you to serve the community and to build skills valued in health professionals. The more time you spend in these settings, the easier it will be to focus on applications 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 or dentist or vet, by take the time to find those experiences. If you're having trouble writing your essay, or practicing interview answers, you may need more time and experiences.
- 8. It can be hard for a junior to compete favorably with alums and postbacs who have rich life experience, and with seniors who have their complete academic history.** Admissions committees have acknowledged that younger applicants might "suffer by comparison" to the older, more experienced applicant (the [average age of successful applicants](#) to US MD programs at anticipated matriculation is 24).
- 9. Life is short!** Once medical school begins, 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. Princeton has many fellowships that you can look into as well, which provide funding for a one- to two-year service/work opportunity that are only available to recent graduates.
- 10. Your brain could use the break.** Princeton academics are rigorous. You may just want some time to take a break from academics after 18 years of school, so that you can return renewed to the rigor of health professions school course work. Health professions school (and the support that HPA provides in working with you to get there) will still be there for you if you go and do these things and return to the application process later.

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