Q: How does the glide year timeline work?
A: You apply to medical and dental schools in June, about 16 months before your desired matriculation date. So to take one glide year, you apply in June right after graduation and interview at schools from about August through March. While schools’ stated deadlines are not until the fall, applying early in the summer gives you the best chance at acceptance.

Q: Why does HPA call it a “Glide Year”?
A: Glide year, gap year, opportunity year, bridge year—all are terms for time taken between graduation and matriculation into health professions school. We prefer “glide year” because it evokes the idea of a smooth transition from one phase of life to another, during which you pursue activities that may assist in that transition whereas “gap” sounds like a break or a hole. Whatever term you’re most comfortable with is fine—they’re used interchangeably.

Q: How many Princeton students take a glide year?
A: Of accepted applicants for whom HPA wrote committee letters in the past four application cycles, 22% applied direct entry as juniors to matriculate the fall after graduation, 31% took one glide year, and 47% took two or more glide years.

Q: Why do so many Princeton students take a glide year?
A: There are aspects of the Princeton experience that lend themselves to applying at the end of senior year and taking a glide year:

• Your senior thesis is significant accomplishment; having it on the application, along with a letter from your thesis adviser, can be meaningful.
• The transition to Princeton can be a steep climb. Applying with a glide year allows more time to demonstrate academic ability via all four years of grades on your transcript.
• Taking the MCAT and applying take a significant amount of time that may be better spread over the additional year.
• A student may not have had as much time to leave the “Princeton bubble” and gain real-world experience as they would like, so the year can be a chance to mature and grow away from an academic environment (it’s hard to describe how meaningful this is until you have done it, but if you ask students who have taken a year or two off, this is one of the first things they say about the benefit of doing so).
• Finally, Princeton is tough, emotionally and intellectually, and it is fine to take some time to refresh before jumping into the rigors of medical school.

We have even more reasons outlined in our website.

Q: Do premeds who aren’t at Princeton take glide years at the same rate?
A: According to the Matriculating Student Questionnaire administered by the Association of American Medical Colleges¹, about 62% of first-year medical students took one or more years between graduation and medical school matriculation.

Q: What do students do in their glide years?
A: Some sample activities are included on the back of this handout: consider filling any potential gaps in the application and reflect on the ways that whatever you plan to do will fit into your narrative and inform your future in your chosen profession.

Q: Will I be at a disadvantage if I don’t take time off?
A: Each applicant brings different strengths and distinguishing qualities to their application and many juniors who apply for direct entry are successful in the application process—we’re happy to talk with you about your candidacy and give you feedback about your readiness in consideration of your goals.

Q: Will HPA support me after I graduate?
A: Definitely! If you take one glide year, you will prepare your application as a senior and submit your application right around graduation. After that, we are available by phone and Skype, and all application resources are posted online. As long as you meet our committee letter eligibility, which includes having graduated within five years of applying, we can support you with our letter. If you don’t meet our criteria, we will still support you with advising and guidance.

¹ www.aamc.org/data-reports/students-residents/report/matriculating-student-questionnaire-msq
Sample Glide Year Opportunities
See the “Pre-Health After Princeton” section of the HPA website for more.

Academic Fellowships
• Gates Cambridge Scholarship, studying for a one year MPhil in Music Studies, specializing in music and science
• Fulbright Research Fellowship to pursue research on Type 1 Diabetes in the Netherlands

Service-Oriented Fellowships
• Princeton P55 AlumniCorps Fellowships, multiple locations
• AmeriCorps Fellow then Team Leader at City Year Seattle/King County
• Teaching chemistry at a STEM-focused school in the Dominican Republic through Princeton in Latin America
• Working with Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative in Maseru, Lesotho through Princeton in Africa
• AmeriCorps Fellow in Norwalk and Stamford Community Health Centers working on patient education projects
• Fulbright ETA - teaching English in South Korea
• Sachs Scholarship working at K-RITH in Durban, South Africa
• Princeton ReachOut Fellowship working with women in Nicaragua

Clinical Research
• Clinical Research Assistant in Orthopedic Surgery at the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles
• Clinical Research Assistant studying Traumatic Brain Injury at USF Morsani School of Medicine
• Clinical Research Assistant studying Sturge-Weber disease at Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore
• Clinical Research Coordinator investigating cancer treatments at MD Anderson
• Clinical Research Intern at the American Hip Institute while taking postbac classes

Bench/Translational Research
• Staying at Princeton as a Research Assistant in thesis adviser’s lab
• Post-baccalaureate Intramural Research Training Award (IRTA) at National Institutes of Health
• Post-baccalaureate Research Education Program at Yale
• Research Assistant at U Penn: basic science, clinical, and translational projects in cardiovascular surgery
• Neurogenetics Research Assistant studying homeostatic plasticity at Harvard Medical School
• Research Assistant studying translational therapies for immunological disorders at Seattle Children's Hospital
• Research Technician focusing on molecular targets for therapy in neuroblastoma tumor cells at Baylor College of Medicine
• HHMI Research Associate at NYU Langone medical center, focusing on epigenetics

Direct Clinical Experience
• Senior Patient Coordinator, administrative work and patient interaction at Weill Cornell Imaging
• ER Scribe: ScribeAmerica at Union Hospital in Maryland; CityMD in NYC
• Medical assistant for dermatologic surgery practice
• Medical Technician and Scribe, NY Retina Consultants
• Community Residence Counselor McLean Hospital
• EMT and tutor

Postbac Academic Record Enhancement
• Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Master of Biomedical Science
• Boston University, MA in Medical Sciences
• U Penn, Specialized Studies Program
• Part-time coursework alongside part-time or full-time employment as a non-degree seeking student

Other
• Playing professional sports
• Communications and Research Assistant, Penn Memory Center
• Religious study and EMT with Magen David Adom in Israel
• Research analyst at Vera Institute Center for Immigration and Justice
• Masters Programs including Global Health at UCSF, Health Econ and Outcomes Research at JHU, MPH at Vanderbilt

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