



A Better You.
A Greater Us.

When to do a Service Year

After High School

High school graduates often do a year of service as a paid “gap year” to gain experience and get paid a modest living stipend before starting college. A service year is a great way to gain real world experience and learn what it takes to have a full-time job and the responsibility that comes with college or a career.

During College

Countless college students get part of the way through school and realize they don't love their major, want to study something completely different, or consider transferring to another school. That's totally normal, and a service year can help you find your way to the right major or career path. It allows you to hit “pause”, do something amazing for a year, and come back refreshed and with a better sense of purpose and direction.

As a Way to Find Your Path

Sometimes things don't go as planned, and you find yourself on a path that you never intended or you know you want to make a change. It can often be challenging to move forward and forge a new path, but a service year can be a great solution.

Whether you are looking to transform your life, get back to school, finish your degree, or find the right job for you – a service year is a life-changing experience that allows you to develop the confidence, grit, leadership and professional skills you need to find your path. You can stand out to colleges and employers, setting you apart from others and giving you a leg up as you plan for your future.

After College

Many college graduates choose to do a service year in order to gain real world and professional experience before starting their careers. A service year can help you find your passion while developing experience that will help you stand out to future employers.

For example, maybe you are considering going to medical school, but aren't totally sure if this is the right path for you. Many medical schools like to see applicants who understand the diverse populations they will eventually work with. You can do a service year with a program like Health Corps after graduation and spend a paid year learning about health and nutrition while providing students with information they need to live a healthy life. You'll make a huge impact on the people and community you serve, and – at the same time – you'll get to experience working in the healthcare field which can help you decide if going to medical school is the right path for you.

Additionally, individuals who do a service year in an approved AmeriCorps program may be eligible to temporarily postpone repaying their student loans while they are serving. This is called loan forbearance. While an individual's loan is in forbearance, they are not required to make payments. [Learn more about deferring your student loans here.](#)

While Working in a Job

Sometimes you find yourself questioning your career path, in a job that you just don't enjoy or feel like is a dead end. Maybe taking a break to explore something entirely new is appealing. Or maybe you're realizing that now is the best time to try something new before other responsibilities tie you down. Whatever the reason, a service year is a life-changing experience that provides a strong bridge to your next step - whether to a new path or to accelerate on your current one.