



Should I take a Gap Year?

By Michael J. Smith, ForeCollegeGolf

As you progress through the college recruiting process, you may stop and think, should I consider taking a gap year?

For some, a gap year could be ideal. The following article outlines the main considerations for those of you who might not be ready or prepared to take the leap to college.

First, let us look at the different types of “gap” years.

- **Post-Grad** – after graduation, taking time to work on all facets of personal development
- **Grade retention** - Repeating a grade in high-school or continuing education
- **Part-Time** – enrolling part-time in a junior college or online classes (less than 12 credits/semester)
- **Traditional**– taking time away from school and athletics to travel and embark on new journeys (*not recommended for prospective student-athletes**)

Next, let’s understand the **most common reasons** players tend to opt for a gap year.

- Young Age
- Academic Standing
- Athletic Development
- Initial Eligibility
- Health Problems
- Social Aptitude/Maturity
- Missed School

Now, let’s look at the pro’s and con’s associated with the decision to take a gap year.

Pro’s

- Can assist with personal development - physically, mentally, emotionally, socially
- Can assist in “readiness” for college golf
- Players who were late to golf, the “late-bloomers”, will have more time to showcase their skills to coaches

We must also be aware of the Con’s of a gap year. Personally, I see too many players taking gap years because of the hopes they will improve their games and greatly enhance their chances of a D1 scholarship. I think this view is flawed for many reasons, the strongest of which is that most times, especially at the peak of their



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development, it is very difficult to see major gains in performance unless there is a significant life altering change in a player's practice, training, and preparation. However, in the case that a player needs to develop with the maturation process at their age or simply needs more time to be "college ready" with their academics a gap year could be the more logical and correct answer, rather than just throwing themselves, for lack of better words, "in with the lions". Below I've listed the [NCAA's requirements](#) to become initially academically eligible as a freshman in college.

Below I've listed the NCAA's requirements to become initially academically eligible as a freshman in college. Per NCAA Rules, a prospective student-athlete interested in playing college golf must successfully complete 16 core courses per NCAA Division 1 – Bylaw 14.3.1.2.1, Core-Curriculum Time Limitation. In layman's terms, once a player begins high school, he/she has eight (8) semesters to successfully complete the required core courses. (See below for D1/D2 breakdown)

Core Course Requirements		
	Division I	Division II
English	4	3
Math	3	2
Physical Sciences*	2	2
Additional Core	1	3
Social Science	2	2
Additional Courses	4	4

Considering the decision to take a "gap" year should be treated on a case-by-case basis. Each individual is different and is most likely facing a different situation. Let's now discuss some of the Con's when considering a gap year.

Con's

- No guarantee you will improve your college recruiting opportunities
- Less structure in daily life and having to manage time and activities independently
- Complications with NCAA Initial Eligibility
- Increased confusion for College Coaches which could raise red flags if the gap year plan/vision is not communicated properly and understood by all parties.



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- Friends will leave town and embark on a new chapter in their lives, leaving many without friend groups, feeling left out and lonely, and on a different life path for the next year.

While taking a gap-year is certainly not for everyone, in many cases it could provide an additional year of academic, athletic, and personal growth for the individual and could position the player for more recruiting opportunities. Additionally, players who are underdeveloped could choose to take a gap year are better prepared to take on the busy challenge of becoming a student-athlete and are given ample time to mature.

For players who choose to take a gap year, understand that you will have to be highly motivated and prepared to embark on your new journey. This is not a vacation or time away from responsibilities, rather it's your opportunity to show coaches you are capable of becoming a student-athlete. There will be sacrifices and commitments you will have to make in order to change your current situation and ultimately impress coaches of your athletic and academic abilities.

All in all, each player considering a gap year should carefully evaluate his/her situation to fully understand and optimize their college fit both from an academic and athletic perspective. Whether you decide to take a gap year or not, it is paramount you and your team create a plan that is best suited to maximize your development.

All the best,

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