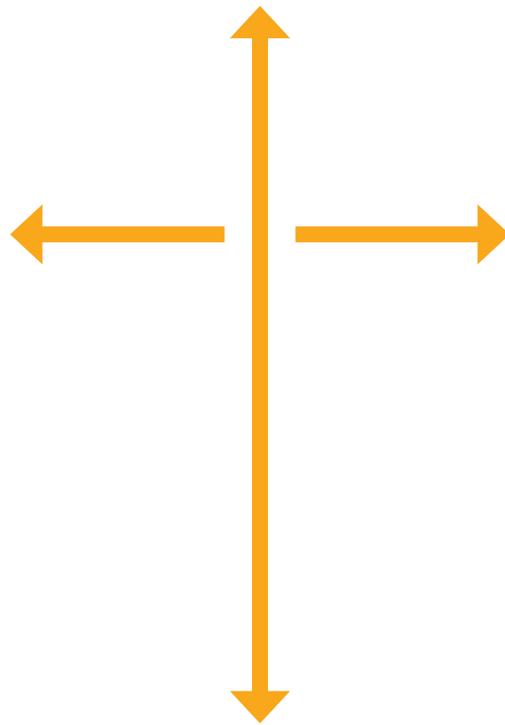




GAP



YEAR

A MODULAR TEMPLATE

Introduction

Life after high school can be stressful. With higher education, the stakes seem high. Some students are ready for post-secondary studies and pursue it successfully. Other students may choose to take a gap year (or a victory lap) rather than heading straight to college or university after high school. Typically, there are two main reasons why a high school graduate may choose to take a gap year.

1

They are unsure of what post-secondary program/studies they really want to pursue.

Some have suggested that going to university can be a way to “find yourself,” typically by studying the humanities. In recent years, however, the emphasis of post-secondary education is more pragmatic: to be trained for a chosen profession. Given the high cost of college and university tuition, many young adults—especially those who are unsure of their direction—do not feel compelled to start college or university right after high school. Many institutions and organizations have created “gap year” programs to allow young adults to take courses that help them build their personal foundation before moving into college/university.

2

They do not have the finances to go to school (and may be working).

For young adults who may have a life direction but cannot afford to attend college/university, taking a gap year to focus on work, rather than academic studies, may be the only (current) option.

How do young adults continue to build their personal foundations during this gap year if they cannot afford (or do not choose) to go to a gap year program? Perhaps you find yourself in a similar situation.

The GAP YEAR TEMPLATE is designed for a young adult (who is unsure/unable to continue in post-secondary studies) to formulate their own meaningful one-year experience that builds holistically towards independence with resources accessible at minimal cost through an year-long mentor/mentee relationship that establishes specific goals and works through them.

How To Use The Template

The template begins with your stated goals. You may have a clear idea of what you'd like to achieve in this given year (or maybe you don't). Begin with at least one smart goal¹ written down.

The template is divided into six key areas. In each area, under "Details", write what resource you intend to use². This could be a person, an organization, a print resource, etc. Also note where (if location is applicable) that resource is available. This may take some time to research what options are available to you; be sure to discuss this with your mentor and other people in different networks. Under "Plan", specify how that resource will best be utilized. There may be multiple resources for a given area. If so (and if you are using the digital version), have a separate row for each resource.

This is a living document. During the gap year (every 1-2 months), re-evaluate the resources or plans to see if they are still helping you meet your goals.

Template

GOALS

COMPLETE THE DETAILS AND PLAN FOR EACH AREA

If you have multiple resources for one area, add additional rows (one for each resource).

AREA	DETAILS	PLAN
Mentor		
Employment/ Career Building		
Education		
Financial Planning		
Healthy Rhythms		
Church Exchange		
Counselling (Optional)		

NOTE: This template is not meant to account for EVERY area of your life.

- Continue any healthy habits you've already established.
- Continue/start to pursue other areas of interest and/or hobbies.
- Continue meeting with friends and other healthy social circles beyond your church community.

Defining Each Area

MENTOR

It is vital to have an adult (*preferably someone from your home church³ who you would consider a mature Christian*) you trust to walk alongside you in this process⁴.

Choose someone who you feel:

- can help you discern the overall plan for the year
- will pray for you consistently
- has your best interest at heart
- is willing to challenge you for your own good
- can hold you accountable to your plan
- potentially direct you to other supports as needed

This person is not a supervisor; they are here to support and challenge you as you move through your gap year. This person is to walk alongside you in your journey with Jesus for this specific time in your life. It is recommended that you should meet at least once a month; the frequency is best determined with you and your mentor. Be sure to schedule all your remaining meetings at your first meeting (and you adjust as needed going forward).

EMPLOYMENT / CAREER BUILDING

It is key to begin the adulting process which includes being a contributing member to society (usually through employment). Having a job also helps you establish a financial base (if you haven't already established one). This job may not be one in your (future) career, but it's a source of income and can be an opportunity to learn and grow in the labour force. If you are not familiar with how to effectively find a job, look for community resources (e.g. the Employment Ontario program⁵ or Quebec's employment services⁶) to help build a resume and learn other job-seeking skills.

EDUCATION

While you may have earned your high school diploma, you never stop learning and should seek out opportunities to do so. Find one cost-effective course (or the equivalent for the duration of this gap year) to take. This could include another high school course/credit, an online course, auditing a college/university/Bible college class, or an adult continuing education course. This may not be directly related to your intended future profession; it is an opportunity to learn something of interest.

FINANCIAL PLANNING

Begin to establish a sound financial foundation including budgeting and savings goals, plus tracking your spending. Utilize resources that are accessible to you such as someone in your church who is good with finances (e.g. your church treasurer) or your bank's financial advisor. As you are earning an income, it's good to have a pattern of managing the assets God provides. Once you have a plan in place, you can utilize a system or app to help track your plan.

HEALTHY RHYTHMS

Life isn't just about working and earning money. God intended for us to live in a healthy rhythm of work, rest and play. Healthy rhythms include personal time for spiritual reflection, sabbath, healthy eating, physical fitness, mental balance and spiritual disciplines/practices. Healthy rhythms also include regular connections with others (such as your family and close friends). This area will likely require multiple resources such as:

- A spiritual director
- A health and/or wellness coach
- A personal trainer
- Resources from a community agency (including your local library)
- Suggested readings from your mentor, spiritual director or pastor⁷
- A spiritual retreat
- Engaging in an appropriate hobby/extra-curricular activity that brings you joy/fulfillment

This area may require some trial and error. Rhythms do not get established quickly but require perseverance over a period of time.

CHURCH EXCHANGE

As you take more ownership over your faith formation, consider attending another church during this gap year (especially if you grew up at your home church). Like an "exchange program", the intention is to temporarily be a part of another church community, to participate in services and to learn new things from new people.⁸ You may find that this new church family becomes your new spiritual home. You may also find yourself returning to your home church, now with more experience and skills to continue serving in that family.

COUNSELLING (optional)

Each person has some "blind spots" in their life. Many times, we become too busy to resolve them well and unknowingly allow them to influence us negatively. If you have a counsellor available to you, take advantage to see if there are any "blind spots" to consider during this year.

Assembling Your Plan

With your mentor devise a plan using each listed resource.

Consider the following:

- When will you be done using that resource?
- How often will you need to access it?
- When is it available?
- What do you hope to gain from it?

As you formulate those individual plans, begin to place them in a calendar to ensure all the pieces fit together. You may find adjustments to your individual plans are needed as part of finding your healthy rhythms.

Going Forward

It is our hope that after one year, you will be on a solid pathway into your adult years with Jesus. Blessings to you as you continue to discover who God calls you to be.

APPENDIX A:

One-Year Mentorship Agreement⁹

This is a mutual agreement between _____ (*name of mentor*) and _____ (*name of mentee*) in understanding the parameters and nature of this mentoring relationship.

- 1 The aim of this mentoring relationship is to accompany the mentee in their gap year experience to build a stronger holistic personal foundation and Christian faith formation.
- 2 The mentor becomes a companion to the mentee, co-listening to the life of the mentee. The mentor will offer discernment, affirmation and challenge as the mentee responds to their spiritual formation.
- 3 The mentor provides a safe place to explore how the mentee is responding or reacting to this transformational process as the Spirit of God interacts with them.
- 4 The mentor will aim to demonstrate a respect for the mentee by deep listening & attentive presence, honest feedback, reflection, affirmation, encouragement, prayer, mutual discernment, guidance, goal setting, teaching, empowerment as well as confrontation if needed.
- 5 The mentee will adequately reflect and prepare oneself and issues for discussion prior to sessions.
- 6 Personal organization and record of mentoring content is essential and expected using a notebook or personal journal brought to each session.
- 7 If issues arise during the mentoring process that are judged to require further expertise such as counselling then a referral will take place.
- 8 Partners of mentees need to be supportive and agreeable with the concept, process and cost¹⁰ of the mentoring.
- 9 (a) Complete confidentiality will occur on the part of the mentor of for all mentoring content.
(b) Disclosure would only be made in extreme circumstances when it would be inappropriate to withhold information from the police or other health professionals or when there is risk of personal harm. (c) The mentee is requested to respect with confidentiality any sensitive or personal material shared by the Mentor.
- 10 We agree to meet _____ (frequency) between _____ (start date) to _____ (end date). It is understood that if any meeting needs to be rescheduled, the mentor/mentee must notify the other at their earliest convenience.

APPENDIX B:

Suggested Topics for Monthly Mentor Meetings

AUGUST

Establish gap year goals including a timeline for when each goal is aimed to be achieved. Write a “end of gap year” letter to self.

SEPTEMBER

Reflecting on the initial stages.

OCTOBER

Re-evaluate/revise goals if needed.

NOVEMBER

Consider what post-gap year plans will be. If post-secondary education is a consideration, begin the process now.

DECEMBER

Have a fun time together.

JANUARY

Identify highlights, challenges to date.

FEBRUARY

Evaluate healthy rhythms to date.

MARCH

Outline learnings so far in each area.

APRIL

Reflect on the death of Jesus and celebrate his resurrection together.
(If Easter is in March, swap the topics.)

MAY

Evaluate healthy rhythms to date.

JUNE

Encouragement in the final 2 months and what will be needed to finish well.

JULY

Evaluate/celebrate the last 12 months and how principles learned can be established for long-term use.

APPENDIX C:

Sample Completed Template

GOALS

- To develop a healthy, sustainable, holistic schedule that will be maintained for at least 3 months
- To create a budget with a steady income that will be maintained for at least 6 months
- Join 1 new church ministry and develop 2 new ministry skills/learnings

COMPLETE THE DETAILS AND PLAN FOR EACH AREA

If you have multiple resources for one area, add additional rows (one for each resource).

AREA	DETAILS	PLAN
Mentor	Bob Smith	Meet every 2nd Wednesday from September to August
Employment/ Career Building	Ontario Job Start career counselling	To meet with a career counsellor for at least 2 sessions
	Job Start resume builder	Meet as needed to create an updated resume
	Various online job banks	Apply for a minimum of 3 jobs
Education	Local high school	Take 1 woodworking class for 1 semester
	Online Bible college	Audit 1 college-level course
Financial Planning	Senior advisor at bank	Meet at least 2x to develop and review a financial plan
Healthy Rhythms	Dietician	Get referral from family doctor for dietician; Meet with dietician to put together a sensible meal plan/system
	Youversion	Register and complete "read Bible in 1 year" plan
	Pastor (of new church or current church) or designate	Meet to discuss formulating schedule for spiritual practices/disciplines
Church Exchange	Local community church	Join from October to June; Ask current pastor (or senior leader) for referral to new church; Meet with pastor of new church (or senior leader) for orientation
Counselling (Optional)		

NOTES:



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