

- 1 You are going to read a magazine article about students leaving school. For questions 1-15, choose from the people (A-E). Some of the people may be used more than once. When more than one answer is required, these may be given in any order. There is an example at the beginning (0).

A	James Bradley
B	Ann Dawkes
C	David O'Donnell
D	Naomi Jackson
E	Anthony Stein

Which statement refers to which people?

- | | | |
|--|----|---|
| I used my year out to prevent future financial problems. | 0 | E |
| I spent my year out with a companion. | 1 | |
| Boredom motivated me to choose a field of study. | 2 | |
| I couldn't make up my mind what career to choose. | 3 | |
| A disappointing experience helped me decide what to do. | 4 | 5 |
| I discovered what I was good at during my year out. | 6 | |
| My year out made me eager to start studying again. | 7 | 8 |
| I took someone else's advice. | 9 | |
| I became more mature during my year out. | 10 | |
| I completed a preparatory course before going to university. | 11 | |
| I was tired of studying when I started my year out. | 12 | |
| I am in a better financial state than many people I know. | 13 | |
| I worked for a relative during my year off. | 14 | |
| I discovered that I had a particular fear. | 15 | |

1. Taking a Break

As the end of the school year approaches, millions of students face the same problem — what next? The majority start looking for a job, while others embark upon university courses just weeks after finishing their secondary education. However, there are a brave few who, for one reason or another, take a year out of education before going to university. I recently went out in search of some successful 'year outers' to find out about the advantages of such an option.

James Bradley was undecided as to what he wanted to study. "On the one hand I wanted to do an English degree, but on the other I quite fancied the idea of going to drama school and becoming an actor, so I decided to take a year out to think about it. During this time I joined an amateur dramatic society. Sadly, it soon became apparent that not only did I suffer from terrible stage fright, but also that an actor's career was not as glamorous as I had thought. However my experience did give me the chance to study a number of excellent plays which made me realise that what I really wanted to do was teach." Consequently, James went to university to study English Literature, and after doing a PGCE, got a job teaching English at a secondary school, which he enjoys immensely.

After all those years of education, many feel they deserve a break. **Ann Dawkes**, who now works for a computer programming company, told us that she had reached the point where even her favourite subjects had become a chore. "I had completely lost interest in learning and when I left school I wanted nothing more than to sit at home watching TV." After six months of that, though, Ann was desperate to do something more challenging, and enrolled on a short course in computer programming with a renewed thirst for knowledge, before going on to university to get a degree in computer studies.

David O'Donnell's year out was supposed to give him the opportunity to learn the basics of farming before he went on to study at an agricultural college.

"After a few months of helping out on my uncle's farm I realised that my dreams of farming were nothing like the reality." While he was there, however, a farm-hand started teaching him to repair the farm machinery, something he soon discovered he had a flair for. "That was six years ago," says David. "He encouraged me to sign up for a mechanics course and now I work for a major tractor manufacturing company. I'm glad I did decide to try farming before starting an agricultural course -- otherwise I might never have discovered my real talent."

For many, the idea of starting university signifies the beginning of real adulthood. **Naomi Jackson** took a year out to travel around southern Europe with a friend as a gesture of farewell to her youth. "I supported myself by working in restaurants and bars and had a fantastic time. I learnt to manage my own finances and see a bit of the world at the same time. By the time I went to university I felt calm and relaxed and prepared to settle down to some serious work, which I doubt I would have been ready for straight after finishing school."

As government grants for students gradually decrease in value there is an increasing number of school leavers who delay going to university so they can earn some money to support themselves when they do go. **Anthony Stein** told us that he spent his year out packing boxes at a factory. "It was the most boring job on earth, but as I was living at home I was able to save most of my wages." Anthony's hard work paid off, though, as he was able to get through university without taking out a single loan, unlike many of his friends who are now deep in debt.

Whatever the reason for taking a year out, it seems to give young people a chance to discover their real interests and talents. Perhaps then, for those who aren't entirely sure about what they want to do in the future, a twelve-month break is the answer.

- 2 You are going to read a magazine article about people who live abroad. For questions 1-15, choose from the people (A-F). Some of the people may be used more than once. When more than one answer is required, these may be given in any order. There is an example at the beginning (0).

A	John Falk
B	Janet Falk
C	Mary Kristoffersen
D	Bruce McAlpine
E	Marcie McAlpine
F	Anne-Lise Nyheim

Which of the people suggest the following?

- | | | |
|---|----|----|
| My husband's health has improved. | 0 | B |
| I had visited the place in the past while on holiday. | 1 | |
| I hadn't been planning to live in Europe. | 2 | |
| There is something special about this area which helps me with my work. | 3 | |
| I get discounts when travelling. | 4 | |
| I admire the educational system here. | 5 | |
| Relatives often come to visit. | 6 | |
| I feel homesick occasionally. | 7 | 8 |
| The cost of living has gone up here in recent years. | 9 | |
| I was transferred here by my employer. | 10 | |
| I adore the culture and the history of my new country. | 11 | 12 |
| It has always been my aim to spend the rest of my life as a pensioner here. | 13 | |
| The sense of fashion and style in my adopted country is brilliant. | 14 | 15 |

2. Living Abroad

The idea of living abroad seems glamorous, challenging and maybe even slightly risky. Why do people leave their own countries and go elsewhere to live and work? What kinds of problems do they face? What are the rewards of such a move? These questions have as many answers as there are expatriates. Here are some comments from people who have come from other parts of the world to live and/or work in the Mediterranean area.

John Falk, 60, and his wife, **Janet**, 58, took early retirement and sold their house in Oxfordshire to buy their villa near Tarragona, Spain. "We'd been coming to the Costa Brava for years on holiday, and both dreamed of retiring here," says John. "It's the weather, of course, the wonderful sun!" John suffers from asthma, says Janet, "and the hot dry weather does wonders for his health. We've got to know a lot of people around here -- lots of 'retirees' like us from Britain and other places. Our Spanish isn't bad -- we've been coming here for so long now! Things used to be so cheap, but prices have gone up a lot lately, which is difficult if you're on a fixed income, but we manage. If we need to go back to the UK to see our children, it's only a few hours by plane, though they usually visit us and have a holiday at the same time! I wouldn't go back to those awful UK winters for anything!"

Mary Kristoffersen, 32, from the USA, is working as a designer in a textile company in Florence, Italy. "After I had finished my degree in design in New York, I decided to take a year off and tour Europe. I arrived here in Florence, took one look and decided to stay! I've been here for ten years now and can't see myself going back to the US to live. I found work almost at once and my boss was able to arrange my work permit, which would have been really difficult to do by myself, as I couldn't speak any Italian then." Mary now speaks fluent Italian and has a lively social life. "I love it here," she says. "This

country has such a rich history and there is evidence of Italian artistic development almost everywhere. Besides, the Italians are so elegant and have such a sense of style! Life is easy-going and fun. I know there are problems, but the good points of staying here definitely outweigh the bad."

Bruce McAlpine, 48, and his wife, **Marcie**, 42, come from Australia. Bruce is the European manager for *Down Under Travel*, which is based in Marseille, France. They have two children, Brian, 13, and Tracy, 10. Bruce says, "My company sent me here for a five-year period, so the whole family had to come too. So far, it's working out very well. I do miss the wide open spaces, the laid-back lifestyle and the glorious beaches of Australia sometimes, but there are compensations." "I'll say there are!" says Marcie. "I love the lifestyle here! The culture, the history, the elegant clothes, the wonderful food! We can all speak French reasonably well now. The children picked it up very quickly. The schools have high standards and are more formal than we were used to at home. We're lucky that the school they go to has got really good teachers. Another good thing is Bruce's job, which means we get cheap flights home now and then."

Anne-Lise Nyheim, 27, is an artist from Bergen, Norway. She came to live in Sardinia because of the climate and the scenery. "I love the sea, the weather and the summer here," she says. "The light in the Mediterranean is wonderful for my work, although I miss my friends and my own culture sometimes. I even miss the cold! It's not so bad, though, as I can fly home in a few hours. But the longer I stay here, the better I speak the language and the more friends I make. I have bought my own little house now and I know everyone around here. Sure, everything isn't always very efficient, but the wonderful climate and the friendliness of the people make up for that."