This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil
Hello. This is 6 Minute English and I'm Neil. And joining me to do this is Georgina.

Georgina
Hello.

Neil
Now, Georgina, I know you went to university to study for a degree but before you moved from college to university, did you take a year off?

Georgina
I did.

Neil
Well, you're not alone. Many students choose to take a break from their studies to travel or gain work experience before moving on to university.

Georgina
Yes, and this is what we call a '**gap year**'.

Neil
And … in this programme we're talking about taking a gap year and why doing this has become more important than ever. But first, as always, I need to challenge you and our listeners, Georgina, to answer a question. Are you ready?

Georgina
Ready and waiting, Neil!

Neil
According to the Institute of Fiscal Studies, which subject studied at university will lead to the highest average earnings five years after graduating? Is it…

   a) Law
   b) Veterinary science, or
   c) Medicine and dentistry

What do you think, Georgina?

Georgina

Well, all are subjects that involve lots of studying – but as a guess, I think those studying veterinary science end up working as vets and earning the most money – so it's b), I think.

Neil

OK. Well, we'll find out if you're right at the end of the programme. Let's get back to talking about gap years – as the name suggests, it's a break or gap in between your studies – we might also call it a year out. It's not a new concept – meaning idea – and there are a number of reasons why someone may choose to take one.

Georgina

That's right. The BBC's Smart Consumer podcast looked at this and heard from two students – one, Meg, took a gap year and the other, Tom, didn't. Let's hear from them now…

Students – Meg and Tom

Meg: I knew I wanted to go to university, but... I decided I'll do it after a year out. That way I can wait till I get my official results and apply to university with those rather than getting **predicted** grades and then, you know, potentially being surprised and not being able to follow the path I wanted. I just always had **in the back my mind** that I'd spend a year doing something **productive** and something that would just be good fun.
Tom: It's not something that I really knew about to be honest, I think, until I started university. It was a bit of **an alien concept** to me. It's something I've never thought about - it would have been far too expensive and it's not something that would have been able to rely on my parents or family members for.

Neil

Two different experiences there. So Meg said she had '**in the back of my mind**' doing a gap year. That means she had the idea but didn't think about it frequently – it was stored deep in her memory.

Georgina

And she had the idea of doing something **productive** – that means leading to a good or useful outcome – and, of course, having fun at the same time!

Neil

She also wanted to do something while she waited for her exam results to come in, rather than applying for a university place based on predicted results which may turn out to be wrong. If something is **predicted**, it's an estimation of what is likely to happen in the future based on current information.

Georgina

Now, Tom had a different experience. He wasn't really aware of the gap year and described it as **an alien concept** – so an idea that is strange and not familiar.

Neil

Tom also mentioned a gap year would have been too expensive – but according to Chris

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Rea from the organisation Prospects, it needn't cost a lot of money. Speaking on BBC Radio 4's You and Yours programme, he says it's about gaining skills and being more employable…

Chris Rea, Higher Education Services Manager, Prospects
I think the experience of the gap year has become actually much more **practical**, partly as I say to do with university participation increasing, but also because of the demands on developing skills, specifically employability skills. Actually from an employer's point of view, certainly, any form of experience and skills acquisition that you've undertaken is valuable.

Neil
According to Chris Rea, the focus these days is for a gap year to be more **practical** – this adjective describes the learning of real skills which can be usefully applied.

Georgina
Yes, and these are skills that help you compete for a place at university and ultimately make you more employable - they help you get a job.

Neil
Right, but which job might earn you the most money Georgina? Earlier I asked you, according to the Institute of Fiscal Studies, which subject studied at university will lead to the highest average earnings, five years after graduating? Is it…

   a) Law
   b) Veterinary science, or
   c) Medicine and dentistry

What do you say, Georgina?

Georgina
I said veterinary science. Was I correct?

Neil
Sadly you weren't. The correct answer is c) Medicine and dentistry. According to research in the UK, graduates of medicine and dentistry earn an average of £46,700.

Georgina
That's more than an English teacher I suspect, but that's not going to stop us recapping today's vocabulary.

Neil
OK. So, we've been talking about a **gap year** – that's a year between leaving school and starting university that is usually spent travelling or working.

Georgina
When we say something is **at the back of my mind**, we mean an idea we don't think about frequently but keep stored deep in our memory.

Neil

And when something is **productive** – it describes something that leads to a good or useful outcome.

Georgina

Next, we mentioned the word **predicted**. If something is **predicted**, it's an estimation of what is likely to happen in the future based on current information.

Neil

An alien concept is an idea that is strange and not familiar.

Georgina

And when you're doing something **practical**, you're doing something that is real and useful because you learn skills that can be used in the future.

Neil

Thank you, Georgina, for that practical run through of our vocabulary. So that's all from 6 Minute English for now. Goodbye!

Georgina

Bye!

Vocabulary

gap year
year between leaving school and starting university that is usually spent travelling or working

at the back of my mind
an idea we don't think about frequently but keep stored deep in our memory

productive
something that leads to a good or useful outcome

predicted
what is likely to happen in the future based on current information

an alien concept
an idea that is strange and not familiar

practical
relating to the learning of real skills which can be usefully applied.