

## What Is an Employment Gap?

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An employment gap is a period of months or years when the job applicant was not employed at a job. Employees choose to spend time unemployed for purposes such as attending school full time and having and raising children. Employment gaps also occur for involuntary reasons such as [layoffs](#) and downsizing, serving time in prison, or employment [termination for cause](#).



Many Mothers Experience an Employment Gap

*ULTRA.F / Getty Images*

An employment gap or gap in employment history is important because it raises red flags in the eyes of a potential employer when the unemployed individual tries to return to work. Employers are justifiably nervous about hiring a job candidate without a consecutive employment history. Because an employment gap is either for positive or negative reasons, it will need an explanation for the potential employer.

As an employer, any gap in employment that shows up on a [resume](#) or [job application](#) requires an explanation. Smart candidates explain the employment gap up front in their resume [cover letter](#). Candidates who are trying to cover up the employment gap or fool the potential employer, use tricks to make their application materials appear free of employment gaps.

Applicants use years of employment, rather than years and months, as an example, to cover up short employment gaps. They also use [functional resumes](#), that emphasize skills and accomplishments, rather than chronology to cover up employment gaps. Depending on the reason for the employment gap, candidates make up stories – some true, some not - to explain their gap in employment.

Savvy people use the time spent unemployed [preparing to return to the job market](#).

As an employer, look for candidates with integrity. They explain their employment gap in their cover letter. They are truthful when they account for the time spent unemployed during the job interview.

With application materials fraud escalating, you need to [know who you are hiring](#).

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**Also Known As:** gap in employment, resume gap

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