



Graduates **2019**

Graduation Costs

After 12 years of schooling, graduation is a big deal for students, families and teachers. It's a chance to honor a major accomplishment, but it doesn't come out without stress, including extra expenses. The Classroom, an organization to help teenagers and their families prepare for college, offers a list of supplies graduates need and ways to keep costs down.

APPAREL

Graduates need a cap, gown and tassel and may also purchase sashes or cords depending on clubs in which students were members, honors they achieved and other accomplishments. Graduates can buy all of these or rent them to save money (and closet space); often these rent for about \$50. The schools may rent the regalia, or families can check online or with local shops. But buy your own tassel; it's a great memento to have of your big day.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Graduation is a time to celebrate! Share the good news with your family and friends. Graduates can send invitations or announcements; these typically cost about \$1 per invitation on up, depending on whether you want photos on announcements, metallic foil and more. Check with vendors who come to the school, websites or local print shops to see styles and find out costs. Don't forget to factor in postage; stamps are at 50 cents now.

SENIOR PICTURES

For seniors who want professional pictures taken for the yearbook or announcements, a session with a professional photographer likely will range from \$50 or so for a single pose package to hundreds of dollars for a longer session with multiple poses. These packages typically include touch-ups as well. Some schools contract with the photographer who takes their regular yearbook pictures; you can also find independent photographers in your city.

OTHER MEMENTOS AND ACTIVITIES

Class rings typically cost between \$200 and \$400; most high schools bring in vendors who sell rings.

Yearbooks cost about \$50.

Some schools also have a senior class trip, for which students and their families pay some or all of the bill. Often schools and parent groups

do fundraising events so students don't have to foot the entire cost themselves. Prom is also a major cost for seniors; most students spend several hundred dollars on prom.



Alcohol-Free Celebrations

After the ceremony, students want to celebrate. An increasing number of schools throw all-night Project Graduation parties with food, games, prizes and auctions to encourage graduates to have an alcohol-free celebration.

Often, the senior class and their parents spend the year raising money to pay for the party so students don't have to buy a ticket. These parties are a lot of work, but when done well, teenagers can stay safe and have a good time. We Are Teachers offered a number of ideas to make Project Graduation fun.

SET UP FOOD BARS

Have several different themed refreshment tables like a taco bar, a build-your-own-burrito table, a sundae or ice cream bar, an omelet or waffle station, a salad bar, a candy bar, a create-your-own trail mix or popcorn table or more. You could also hire food trucks to come for a period of time and let grads make their own pizzas or load their French fries with all the toppings.



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HAVE A PHOTO BOOTH

Even in the age of cell phone cameras, an old-fashioned booth with feather boas, masks, hats, fake mustaches and other props will be a hit, and it's a great memento for your grads on their last night together. You can rent an official photo booth or save money and hang up a fun backdrop and collect props from people's closets, thrift

stores or the drama department.

HAVE AN AUCTION

Get items they're going to need as they go off on their own to auction off at the end of the party. Items such as TVs and computers all the way down to laundry soap, dishes and gift cards are sure to be a hit. Grads can earn points through the year by participat-

ing in fundraising and attending planning meetings; their parents, guardians and friends who help can earn points for them as well. Knowing they could get a new laptop can be a good motivator for teenagers who are ready to be done with high school. During the party itself, have games and activities for which they can get credit as well, so even students who didn't participate all year can

get points.

PICK A THEME

Make it a Vegas night and have card games, slot machines, a poker table and Monopoly. Grads can play for points to bid on items during the auction. Or make it a spa night and offer manicures, pedicures and chair massages. Don't want a theme? Have a few poker tables or a spa booth.



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Taking a Gap Year

After graduating from high school, teens are faced with several options of what to do next, many of which seem scary. A lot of the conversations require young adults to consider what they want to do for the rest of their lives, a difficult question to ponder before many know what they're good at, what their priorities are and the best way to achieve those.

Because of this, many high school grads take a gap year between high school and college, using that time to travel, do community service or work in a field they may be interested in before diving into the rest of their lives. Forbes Magazine discussed the questions to consider when deciding whether a gap year would be beneficial.

WHY DO YOU WANT TO TAKE A GAP YEAR?

There aren't necessarily right or wrong reasons for taking this year; if you have no idea what you want to study, it's not always bad to delay enrolling in school and paying tuition (though your first year includes a lot of general university requirements). However, for a gap

year to provide the kind of focus and maturity returning students are reporting, you want to use this time to work toward your goals. Consider how you can broaden your horizons, explore potential careers and take on new responsibilities. Look into different programs to find one that meets your needs.

WILL YOUR COLLEGE ALLOW YOU TO DEFER?

If you're already accepted into the college you want to attend, ask if they will defer your admission and any financial aid you received. Increasingly, many schools do, but it's not always feasible. If your university doesn't have a formal process, talk with the admissions representatives and keep thorough records of these

communications.

CAN YOU AFFORD IT?

There are some scholarships available for gap year programs, but most are paid for by the teenagers or through fundraising. Look up gapyearassociation.org for scholarships and grants. You can stay in the U.S. to keep costs down and look for options that allow you to work. If your program qualifies for college credit, you may be eligible for federal financial aid.

DO YOU WANT TO TAKE A YEAR?

Name aside, a gap year can be half a year or a semester. Figure out what you can afford, what programs you're interested in and what works best for you.

Useful Graduation Gifts

Cash is the first thing on a list of useful gifts for graduates, both high school and college, and it will always be well received. However, not all gift-givers want to go to the money route. What can you buy graduates that they'll welcome for their dorm room, apartment or at their first job?

USA Today has a list of potential gifts that grads will actually use. Graduates, don't forget to send thank-you cards!

CLOTHES

Graduates likely are moving into a more professional period of their lives, which means they need a more professional wardrobe. Both high school and college grads will benefit from an infusion of nice slacks, dress shirts and other more formal clothing. If you're not positive about sizes and styles, get a gift card to a favorite store or a session with a professional stylist.

SMALL APPLIANCES

A coffee maker, Instant Pot, slow cooker, toaster or microwave would be great for grads, helping them to save money by not eating out or buying coffee every day, encouraging healthier meals with less work and not taking up a lot of space. USA Today highly recommends the Instant Pot; it's a pressure cooker, slow cooker, rice cooker and more.

A BAG OR WALLET

A high-quality wallet, purse, bag or briefcase is always useful. You can splurge on leather or look for other options that can last through commuting to work, weekend



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trips, running between meetings or classes and going out on the town. A well-made carry-on suitcase is also a good gift to replace that old duffel bag.

JEWELRY OR A WATCH

Time matters a lot more

when a bell isn't releasing you from class or you're billing by the hour or have to catch a train to the office, so it's hard to go wrong with a professional watch. Earrings or a necklace are also great gifts; go for something a little less funky and ready for the office.

ELECTRONICS

If you want to splurge, a new laptop or an Alexa or other voice-controlled assistant are good options; a computer is especially useful for high school grads. You can also look at smaller items like portable chargers.

GIFT CARDS

Be this for a coffee shop or their favorite restaurant, a grocery store, Uber, a public transportation card for the city to which they're moving, the bookstore or a fuel card a gift card is a slightly more personalized way to give money.

Good Advice

Graduation speeches run the gamut from dull to cheesy to inspirational. If you're helping a valedictorian or principal or other speaker prepare, Entrepreneur Magazine has gathered quotes guaranteed to inspire speakers to write speeches that make graduates and their friends and family laugh, cry and feel the magnitude of the day.

“When the challenges come, I hope you remember that anchored deep within you is the ability to learn and grow. You are not born with a fixed amount of resilience. Like a muscle, you can build it up, draw on it when you need it. In that process you will figure out who you really are, and you just might become the very best version of yourself.”

— **Sheryl Sandberg, UC-Berkeley, 2016**



WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM/
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS
Sandberg

“Whether it’s starting a business or running for office or raising an amazing family, remember that making your mark on the world is hard. It takes patience. It takes commitment. It comes with plenty of setbacks, and it comes with plenty of failures. But whenever you feel that creeping cynicism, whenever you hear those voices say you can’t make a difference, whenever somebody tells you to set your sights lower — the trajectory of this country should give you hope. Previous generations should give you hope. What young generations have done before should give you hope.”

— **Barack Obama, Barnard College, 2012**



PETE SOUZA/
OFFICIAL
WHITE HOUSE
PHOTO
Obama

“The stories we tell versus the stories we leave out will reverberate across the rest of your life. ... You are about to enter the most uncertain and thrilling period of your lives. The stories you are about to live are the ones you will be telling your children and grandchildren and therapists.”

— **Lin-Manuel Miranda, University of Pennsylvania, 2016**



LUKE HAROLD/WIKI-
MEDIA COMMONS
Miranda

“Humanity’s greatest advances are not in its discoveries, but in how those discoveries are applied to reduce inequity. Whether through democracy, strong public education, quality health care or broad economic opportunity — reducing inequity is the highest human achievement.”

— **Bill Gates, Harvard University, 2007**



US TREASURY
DEPARTMENT/
PUBLIC DOMAIN
Gates

“Ditch the dream and be a doer, not a dreamer. Maybe you know exactly what it is you dream of being, or maybe you’re paralyzed because you have no idea what your passion is. The truth is, it doesn’t matter. You don’t have to know. You just have to keep moving forward. ... Perfect is boring and dreams are not real. Just do.”

— **Shonda Rhimes, Dartmouth University, 2014**



SARAH E. FREEMAN/
GRADY COLLEGE
Rhimes



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Graduation Tips

Preparing for graduation doesn't just include cramming for that last final exam and making sure outstanding late fees at the library are paid off, though you should do both of those things. To make the day as memorable-in-a-good-way as possible, participants and their loved ones can follow these tips from Glam & Gowns by Faviana.

FOR GRADUATES

Dress appropriately. If the ceremony is outside, wear lighter clothes so you're not sweating halfway through the second speech. If it's inside, get a sense of how much that building is air conditioned. You may find yourself shivering in May and wish you had a sweater.

This includes footwear. Women who want to wear heels should break them in beforehand and ensure they can walk and stand comfortably. Comfort is a good

theme for the day.

Decorate your graduation cap. It's a great way to get a little bit of your own personality into your graduation garb and help you stand out.

Bring bobby pins and make sure before you arrive that your cap will stay on your head.

Only carry what you can stash in pockets or elsewhere on your person; leave your bag with a family member or friend. You don't want to have to worry about keeping track of it.

FOR EVERYONE

Know the rules of the venue. Some arenas have a clear bag policy; make sure you know what to expect.

If the ceremony is outside, wear sunscreen. (This also, famously, is the best a wannabe graduation speaker offered grads in a Chicago Tribune column in 1997.)

Arrive early. For graduates, that's whatever time you're supposed to be there. Depending on the size of the graduating class, families should plan to be about an hour early. That

way you don't have to rush and get your pick of seats.

Decide on a meeting place for after the ceremony. Particularly with college graduations, when the graduate is one of several hundred or a few thousand, it's easier than trying to find each other in the crowd and have to call one another.

Snacks and a water bottle are always helpful, particularly at longer events. Bringing younger family members who will be bored? Make sure to have entertainment for them.

Graduation marks the end of an era and a transition to the next phase of life — the first phase of adulthood when grads may move out and live away from home for the first time, take on new responsibilities and take on the sometimes scary task of considering the rest of their lives.

It's a fun, exciting time, but the transition can cause fear and anxiety in some people. That's normal, according to PsychAlive, an organization that offers educational and awareness resources related to mental health. What should grads do to move past these fears?

FIND A HEALTHY WAY TO COPE WITH ANXIETY

Anxiety and stress can have negative consequences on physical and mental health. Don't let these feelings overwhelm you. Write your thoughts in a journal, talk to a mentor or trusted friend, take up martial arts and kick your way into a less stressful life or seek help at your college's counseling center or through other resources. If you find these fears getting to be too much, see a doctor.

RECOGNIZE 'THE REST OF YOUR LIFE' DOESN'T HAVE TO BE

What you major in, what



your first job out of college is — that does not have to define the remainder of your decades-long career. In fact, statistically, it won't; you'll almost certainly change jobs, career paths and industries a few times before retirement, and those changes may be related to your major or may have nothing to do with it.

If you're not certain on a major, take a few classes in other departments or get a minor in something you're also interested in, but leave yourself open to the possibility of additional training, graduate school or a change years from now and don't put all the pressure on your high school or college graduate self to make the right

decision that defines the rest of your life.

FIND ACTIVITIES YOU ENJOY

Transitions can be scary. Look for opportunities that help you feel comfortable in your new environment, like clubs, intramural sports teams, trivia night or a new hobby.

These can help you make friends and build a good support system for those times when you're feeling overwhelmed and just make your everyday life more fun. Parents of college freshmen should encourage their children to not come home the first month or two but rather acclimate and find their place on campus.