

WHAT TO EXPECT ON GRADUATION DAY

Knowing what's coming can help keep things calm and fun

Graduation day is everything you've worked so hard for, all rolled up into one super-charged day. So how can you make sure you're able to relax and enjoy your celebration instead of just running from one situation to another?

Knowing what to expect on graduation day can ensure that the memory of your special educational milestone day is one of great joy and calm instead of confusion and frustration.

Expect to be challenged as you try to balance everything

Suddenly, all of your worlds are going to crash. You'll have friends you want to see and say goodbye to, you'll have family in town, and you'll have all kinds of logistics to work out. Definitely, you will be pulled in different directions by the people who mean the most to you. Surely, this will likely feel a bit overwhelming at times, however, you will have to smile and just roll with it.

Expect the administration to be busy

If you think you can take care of some last-minute to-dos like talking with the financial aid office, you might be surprised to learn that graduation day is one of the worst days to try to get things done. Many offices are super busy with student and family requests at a time when they're also expected to be involved with graduation itself. If you have things you need to get done before you graduate, plan to do so before graduation day arrives.

Expect to serve as a guide for your family

You may have no problem knowing where to park, where to get food, where the bathrooms are, and where all the buildings are located on campus...but your family doesn't. Expect to serve as their guide and plan accordingly, either by being available physically to show them around or by being available via cell phone.

Expect not to have much time with your friends

You and your friends might plan on seeing each other, eating together, and overall hanging out, but, just like you, everyone will be pulled in a million different directions. Do your best to cram in as much time with your friends as possible before graduation day arrives.

Expect a challenge when you're trying to find people

Even with cell phones, campus maps, and text messages, it can be a serious challenge to find your family, especially in a large crowd. Plan in advance to meet at certain places (e.g., next to the large tree by the church) instead of “out front” after the graduation ceremony is over.

Expect large crowds around town

Even if you're graduating in a major city, the restaurants and hotels nearby will likely be crowded before, during, and after graduation. If you're hoping to go out to eat afterward, make sure you have reservations in advance.

Expect to see people for only a short amount of time

Aha! You finally found your sorority sister after graduation. You say hello, introduce her to your family, and then...she's disappeared among the crowd. With so much activity and so many people on campus, it's likely that you'll only have a few moments to cherish with those who mean the most to you. Consequently, keep your camera handy (and fully charged) so that you can capture some amazing graduation picture moments before they fade away.

Expect to be on your cell phone – a lot

The night before graduation is not the time to forget to charge your cell phone. Your friends will be calling and texting you; you will be calling and texting your friends; your parents and /or family will also be in touch; and even your grandmother, who is 1,000 miles away, will want to call and congratulate you.

Expect a lot of conflicting emotions

After all you've worked for and as ready as you thought you were to graduate, graduation day can be an emotional experience. You might very well find yourself not wanting to leave. Make sure you have some tissue around to wipe the tears of joy. It is, after all, one of the biggest days of your life, so why shouldn't it be an emotional one, too?

Expect things to run late

No matter how well you, your friends, your family, and the campus administration plan, things will inevitably run late. Taking it all in stride can help make sure you still enjoy yourself, no matter how far behind schedule things seem to run.

Expect the day to be one of the most memorable days of your life.

Think of all the hard work you put into earning your degree; think of all your family has contributed and sacrificed; think of all the benefits of being a college graduate, both professionally and personally. When you're old and gray and looking back on your life, your college graduation will probably be one of the memories you are most proud of. Do your best to take a few moments throughout the day to absorb everything that's going on. It can be challenging, but after all you've done to make your graduation possible, you're definitely worth the few extra moments it might take to relax and congratulate yourself on a job well done.

Expect your family to be removed from the ceremony if they yelled out your name.

Graduation is a very exciting and memorable time in a student's and their family's life. Walking across the stage is a milestone that needs to be respected. Your name should be announced by the college dean and heard throughout the ceremony building. This cannot happen if every family starts yelling out their son's or daughter's name. So be prepared to have your family escorted out of the ceremony if they yell out your name.