

Graduates 2024

*What
feels like
end is
the
often the
beginning*

Crafting the Perfect Graduation Announcement

Graduating from high school or college is a significant achievement, marking the culmination of years of hard work, dedication and personal growth.

Sharing this milestone with loved ones is part of the celebration, and one way to do so is by sending out graduation announcements.

These announcements typically serve as a formal announcement of your achievement and provide an opportunity to express gratitude, share future plans and invite others to join in the celebration. You can choose to go with traditional, formal formats or make your own creative, casual graduation announcement.

Jostens assures graduates there are no rules on how these work.

CHOOSE A DESIGN

The first step in preparing graduation announcements is selecting a design that reflects your personality and style. Whether you prefer classic elegance, modern simplicity or bold creativity, there are countless options to choose from, including traditional paper cards, digital designs and customizable templates. Consider factors such as color scheme, typography and layout to create a design that resonates with you and captures the spirit of your graduation.

While many of the events surrounding graduation are steeped in tradition, there are plenty of ways to express your creative style. One of these ways comes in your graduation announcement.



GRADUATION

© ADOBE STOCK

When crafting your graduation announcements, be sure to include essential details such as your full name, graduation date, degree or diploma earned, and the name of your

school or university. You may also want to include additional information, such as honors or awards received, future plans or aspirations, and a personal message of thanks

or reflection.

Personalize your graduation announcements with a heartfelt message that reflects your journey and expresses gratitude to those who have sup-

ported you. Whether it's a simple thank you to family and friends, a quote that has inspired you, or a personal reflection on your educational experience, adding a personal touch to your announcements can make them more meaningful and memorable.

DISTRIBUTING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Decide how you want to distribute your graduation announcements, whether it's through traditional mail, email, social media or a combination of these methods. Consider the preferences of your intended recipients and choose the method that is most convenient and accessible for them.

If you're sending physical cards, be sure to include postage and allow plenty of time for delivery.

Give yourself plenty of time to prepare and send out your graduation announcements, ideally several weeks before your graduation date. This will ensure that your announcements arrive promptly and give recipients ample time to mark their calendars and make arrangements to celebrate with you.

Preparing graduation announcements is an opportunity to celebrate your achievements, express gratitude, and share the joy of this milestone with loved ones.

Dressing Up for Graduation

Caps and gowns are iconic symbols of graduation ceremonies, representing academic achievement, tradition and the transition from student to graduate.

From their origins in medieval academia to modern-day celebrations, caps and gowns have remained an integral part of graduation attire, steeped in symbolism and tradition.

ORIGIN AND SYMBOLISM

The tradition of wearing caps and gowns dates back to medieval Europe, where scholars and clergy donned academic robes as a symbol of their status and learning.

These early robes were practical garments designed to keep scholars warm in unheated buildings, with hoods serving as makeshift head coverings. Over time, academic dress became more standardized, with distinct styles and colors representing different degrees, disciplines and institutions.

Today, caps and gowns are worn by graduates at high school, college and university graduation ceremonies around the world. The cap, or mortarboard, symbolizes the culmination of academic achievement, while the gown rep-



© ADOBE STOCK

resents scholarly tradition and dignity.

HOW TO WEAR THEM

Wearing caps and gowns correctly is an important part of graduation etiquette. Here's how to do it according to Jostens:

Cap: Place the mortarboard squarely on your head, with the front point centered and the tassel hanging to the right

side. The cap should sit flat and level, not tilted or cocked to one side. Men should take the caps off during the school song and the National Anthem.

Gown: Put on the gown with the zipper or buttons at the front. The sleeves should hang down naturally, with the hem of the gown falling to mid-calf length. If the gown has a hood, drape it over your shoulders

with the velvet trim facing outward. Traditionally, garments worn under the gowns include dark trousers with dress shirts or lightweight dresses or blouses and skirts that do not hang below the gowns. Some people wear a detachable white collar. Flowers and jewelry should not be worn on the gown.

Tassel: At many graduation ceremonies, the tassel starts

on the right side of the cap and is moved to the left side after receiving your diploma. Some schools have specific instructions for when to turn the tassel, so be sure to follow any guidance provided by your institution.

Sometimes caps and gowns are accessorized with stoles or honor cords depending on the school's traditions.

MORTARBOARD DECORATION

In recent years, there has been a growing trend of decorating mortarboards with creative designs, personal messages, and symbols representing graduates' interests and achievements. This tradition of personalizing mortarboards has its roots in individual expression and celebration.

A professor from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Sheila Bock, researches mortarboards. She said the earliest examples she found of people decorating mortarboards were in the 1960s as protests against the Vietnam War.

Graduates use a variety of materials and techniques to decorate their mortarboards, including paint, glitter, rhinestones, fabric and decals. Common motifs include graduation caps, diplomas, school mascots, quotes and symbols representing future aspirations or hobbies. Decorating mortarboards has become a fun and creative way for graduates to express their personalities and commemorate their academic journey.

Health Insurance for Graduates

Health insurance is complicated for everyone, and especially so for graduates who are in a new phase of their life and may have to get their own coverage for the first time.

With proper guidance, graduates can make informed decisions about their coverage options and ensure access to essential healthcare services.

UNDERSTANDING COVERAGE OPTIONS

After graduation, graduates may find themselves in different situations regarding health insurance coverage.

Coverage under a parents' plan: Many young adults can remain on their parents' health insurance plan until they turn 26, thanks to the Affordable Care Act (ACA). This option provides comprehensive coverage and may be the most cost-effective solution for recent graduates, especially if their parents' plan offers employer-sponsored coverage.

Employer-sponsored insurance: Graduates who secure employment with a company that offers health insurance benefits may have the option to enroll in an employer-sponsored plan. These plans vary in coverage and cost, so it's essential to carefully review the details and compare options.



© ADOBE STOCK

Individual health insurance plans: For graduates who are not eligible for coverage under their parents' plan or employer-sponsored insurance, individual health insurance plans are available through the Health Insurance Marketplace, established by the ACA. These plans offer a range of coverage options and graduates may be eligible for premium subsidies or cost-sharing reductions based on income.

Medicaid and CHIP: Graduates with limited income

may qualify for Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), which provide low-cost or free health coverage to eligible individuals and families. Eligibility criteria vary by state, so graduates should check with their state's Medicaid agency to determine eligibility and apply for coverage.

NAVIGATING CHOICES

Assess your health care needs, including anticipated medical expenses, prescription medications, and any ongoing

medical conditions or treatments. Choose a plan that provides adequate coverage for your needs while balancing costs. Review the network of doctors, hospitals and health care providers included in each plan's network. Ensure that your preferred health care providers are in-network to avoid additional out-of-pocket costs.

Consider the monthly premiums, deductibles and co-payments associated with each plan. Evaluate how these costs fit within your budget and

weigh them against coverage benefits. If you require prescription medications, check each plan's formulary to ensure that your medications are covered and evaluate any associated costs, such as co-payments or coinsurance. Explore additional benefits offered by each plan, such as wellness programs, preventive care services and telehealth options. These benefits can enhance your overall health care experience and help you maintain optimal health.

Post-Graduation Anxiety

Graduating from high school or college is a significant milestone, but it can also be a time of uncertainty and anxiety about what lies ahead.

The transition from student life to the real world can bring a range of emotions, from excitement and anticipation to fear and self-doubt. Navigating post-graduation anxiety requires resilience, self-awareness and proactive coping strategies to manage stress and uncertainty effectively.

WebMD reports that post-graduation distress is common. Libby O'Brien, a licensed professional counselor said, "The first thing to understand is that you're not alone. Feeling anxiety, depression or some degree of 'stuckness' and discomfort after graduating is normal. It's a change, and change can be very challenging to negotiate. You don't necessarily know what comes next."

ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR FEELINGS

The first step in managing post-graduation anxiety is to acknowledge and accept your feelings. It's normal to feel anxious or overwhelmed about the future, especially when facing uncertainty and change. Allow yourself to experience these emotions without judgment, and recognize that it's



© ADOBE STOCK

okay to feel scared or uncertain about what comes next.

Set realistic expectations for yourself during the transition from graduation to the next phase of your life. Avoid comparing your journey to others' or putting undue pressure on yourself to have everything figured out right away. Understand that it's OK to take time to explore your options,

make mistakes and learn from experiences along the way.

SELF-CARE

While there may be many unknowns about the future, focus on what you can control in the present moment. Set small, achievable goals for yourself, such as updating your resume, networking with professionals in your field or

researching job or educational opportunities. Taking proactive steps toward your goals can help you regain a sense of agency and empowerment.

Taking care of your physical, emotional and mental well-being is crucial during times of transition and uncertainty. Make self-care a priority by getting enough sleep, eating healthily, exercising regularly

and engaging in activities that bring you joy and relaxation. Practice mindfulness, meditation or deep breathing exercises to help calm your mind and reduce stress.

Tennessee Tech advises its graduates to invest in something they are passionate about or to start a new hobby outside their comfort zone. It's a way, they say, to re-energize and regain focus, especially if those were things that you were too busy to do while in college.

SEEK SUPPORT

Don't hesitate to reach out for support from friends, family members, mentors or mental health professionals if you're struggling with post-graduation anxiety. Talking openly about your feelings and concerns can provide validation, perspective, and practical advice for navigating this challenging time. Surround yourself with people who uplift and encourage you, and don't be afraid to lean on others for support when needed.

EMBRACE UNCERTAINTY

Instead of viewing uncertainty as a barrier or source of anxiety, try to re-frame it as an opportunity for growth, exploration and self-discovery. Embrace the unknown as a chance to try new things, learn from experiences and expand your horizons. Remember that setbacks and challenges are a natural part of the journey and can lead to unexpected opportunities and insights.

Networking Basics

As recent graduates embark on their professional journeys, building and nurturing a strong network of professional connections is essential for long-term success and career advancement.

Networking provides opportunities to exchange ideas, gain insights and open doors to new opportunities.

START WITH YOUR EXISTING NETWORK

Begin your networking journey by tapping into your existing network of family, friends, classmates, professors and alumni. Let them know that you're actively seeking opportunities in your field and ask whether they have any advice, leads or connections they can share. Personal referrals and introductions can be powerful tools for expanding your network and uncovering hidden opportunities.

EXPAND YOUR NETWORK

Attend networking events, industry conferences, career fairs and professional meetups in your area. These events provide valuable opportunities to meet and connect with professionals in your field, learn about industry trends and



© ADOBE STOCK

expand your knowledge and skills. Be proactive and approach people with confidence, introducing yourself and initiating conversations about shared interests and goals.

Online networking platforms such as LinkedIn, X (formerly known as Twitter) and profes-

sional forums provide powerful tools for connecting with professionals and building your personal brand. Create a compelling LinkedIn profile that highlights your skills, experiences and career goals, and actively engage with industry influencers and thought leaders by sharing content, partici-

pating in discussions and connecting with people in your field.

Volunteering for industry-related events, community service projects or nonprofit organizations is a great way to meet like-minded professionals, gain valuable experience, and give back to your commu-

nity. Consider joining professional organizations, clubs or associations in your field, where you can network with peers, attend workshops and seminars, and access resources and opportunities for professional development.

OFFER VALUE AND BE GENUINE

Networking is not just about making connections — it's about building mutually beneficial relationships based on trust, respect and authenticity. Approach networking with a genuine interest in getting to know people, understanding their needs and goals and offering value wherever you can. Be a good listener, ask thoughtful questions and follow up with people you meet to nurture and maintain your connections over time.

After networking events or meetings, follow up with your new contacts to express gratitude, reinforce your connection and explore potential opportunities for collaboration or further discussion. Keep in touch with your network regularly by sending personalized messages, sharing relevant articles or resources and offering assistance or support whenever possible.

Networking can open doors to new opportunities, support career growth and enhance professional success for recent graduates. Remember that networking is a long-term investment in your future, so be patient, persistent and proactive in building and maintaining your network over time.

Meal Prep Tips for Graduates

For graduates who are leaving home and won't have a meal plan at college, suddenly having to feed yourself can seem like an overwhelming task.

Mastering the art of simple meal prep can help you maintain a healthy lifestyle on a budget.

With a little planning and creativity, you can whip up delicious and nutritious meals that will fuel your body and mind without breaking the bank.

PLANNING

When it comes to meal preparation, simplicity is key. Focus on recipes that require minimal ingredients and preparation time, such as one-pot meals, sheet pan dinners and easy stir-fries. Opt for versatile ingredients that can be used in multiple dishes, such as rice, pasta, beans and vegetables, to maximize efficiency and minimize waste.

Take some time each week to plan your meals and create a shopping list based on your menu. This will help you stay organized, save time at the grocery store and ensure that you have all the ingredients you need on hand when it's time to cook. Consider batch cooking and meal prepping on weekends to save time during the week and have healthy meals ready to go when you need



© ADOBE STOCK

them.

Keep staple ingredients on hand, such as canned beans, diced tomatoes, whole grains, olive oil, herbs and spices and condiments like soy sauce and vinegar. These pantry essentials can form the basis of a wide variety of meals and add flavor and nutrition to your dishes.

MEAL CHOICES AND TECHNIQUES

Batch cooking is a time-saving technique that involves preparing large quantities of food

at once and portioning it out for future meals. Cook a big batch of grains, protein and vegetables at the beginning of the week and mix and match them to create different meals. Soups, stews, casseroles and grain bowls are all excellent candidates for batch cooking and can be customized to suit your tastes and dietary preferences.

Seek out simple and nutritious recipes that are easy to prepare, budget-friendly and packed with flavor and nutrients to keep you feeling satis-

fied and energized throughout your day.

OVERNIGHT OATS

Food Network recommends overnight oats as a staple for college students and it provides this recipe.

Ingredients

1/3 to 1/2 cup of milk (any kind will do)
1/3 to 1/2 cup of old-fashioned rolled oats
1/3 to 1/2 cup yogurt, optional
1 teaspoon chia seeds
1/2 mashed banana

Optional ingredients: fruit, nuts, nut butter, seeds, protein powder, granola, coconut, spices, citrus zest and vanilla extract.

Directions

1. Add the desired amount of milk, oats, yogurt, chia seeds and banana to a jar or container and stir. Refrigerate overnight or for at least 5 hours.

2. Add additional liquid until you achieve your desired consistency. Top with optional ingredients.

The mixture will keep up to two days or four days if you don't add the banana.

Traditions and Modern Practices

High school graduation ceremonies are steeped in tradition and symbolism, serving as a rite of passage for students transitioning from one phase of their lives to the next.

Over the years, these ceremonies have evolved significantly, reflecting changes in society, education and cultural norms.

HISTORY

The origins of high school graduation ceremonies can be traced to medieval universities, where students were awarded degrees in formal ceremonies known as commencements. These early ceremonies often included processions, academic regalia, and the conferral of degrees by university officials.

Over time, these traditions were adopted by secondary schools. In the U.S., graduation ceremonies in the 1900s included events for the graduating seniors, according to Jostens. These included senior plays, banquets, picnics or sometimes even outdoor hikes and backpacking trips.

“Pomp and Circumstance,” the most commonly played processional, was written for the coronation of King Edward VII of Great Britain, according



© ADOBE STOCK

to History.com. In 1905, Yale bestowed an honorary degree on the song’s composer and played it for the graduation, a practice that was picked up by other schools.

ETIQUETTE

Graduation ceremonies are formal events. Students are expected to dress appropriately, typically wearing caps and gowns in school colors. Guests should dress tastefully and refrain from disruptive behavior during the ceremony.

It is customary for attendees to arrive early, silence cell phones and remain seated. Applause and cheering are encouraged at appropriate times, such as when graduates

receive their diplomas, but excessive noise should be avoided out of respect for others and the proceedings.

Some schools limit the number of guests each graduate can have at the ceremony. Jostens recommends inviting one person from each wing of the family or coming up with a creative solution such as drawing names.

COMPONENTS

While specific elements of graduation ceremonies vary from school to school, several common components include:

1. Processional. The ceremony begins with a formal procession of graduates, faculty and school officials enter-

ing the venue to the accompaniment of music.

2. Welcome address. A school administrator or faculty member delivers a welcome address, greeting attendees and setting the tone for the ceremony.

3. Student speakers. Graduation ceremonies often feature speeches by student representatives, such as class valedictorians or student council members, reflecting on their experiences and offering words of inspiration to their peers.

4. Presentation of diplomas. Graduates are individually called to the stage to receive their diplomas or certificates, often accompanied by hand-

shakes or congratulatory remarks from school officials.

5. Commencement address. A keynote speaker, typically a distinguished guest or prominent community member, delivers a commencement address, offering words of wisdom and encouragement to the graduating class.

6. Turning of the tassel. At the conclusion of the ceremony, graduates participate in the symbolic turning of the tassel on their mortarboard hats, signifying their transition from students to alumni.

7. Recessional. The ceremony concludes with a formal recessional, as attendees exit the venue to the accompaniment of music.