

good manners

Graduation Etiquette 101

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It's been said

social savvy will take you farther than any degree. Well, actually, it has not just been said, but it has been studied. According to a study conducted by Harvard University, Stanford Research Institute, and Carnegie Foundation, a person's ability to get a job, keep that job, and to even advance in that job depends on 85% of people skills and only 15% of actual technical ability.



So here we are in graduation season where lots of hard work, sleepless nights, and stressed-out days come to fruition. Along with that, add the high cost of an education where tons of checks have been written and monthly student loan payments are about to begin. And now, you find out that it's all about social skills!

Well, it's actually about both. Whether graduating from high school or college, we all know it's more competitive now than ever before. Graduating from high school with a great GPA will certainly open doors to future college choices. Graduating from college with a marketable degree is what will get your foot in the door. However, it's the next step, your social savvy, that will set you apart from others.

Why not show the world—family and friends—that you not only have a degree, but the people skills to go with it. Start off this new phase in life by following some simple rules of etiquette during the graduation celebrations.

- **Announcements/Invitations:** There's a huge difference between graduation announcements and graduation invitations. An announcement shares the graduation and degree details. These may be sent to family and friends who are not able to attend the actual graduation. Invitations, on the other hand, are sent to just those invited to the ceremony. Many schools limit how many tickets each graduate may send due to limited seating. Send invitations at least three weeks in advance.
- **Gifts:** It is considered poor taste to include a gift registry on a graduation announcement or invitation. Most friends and family send cash or gift cards. This is perfectly acceptable, however, not necessary. In fact, no gift at all is required. A card acknowledging your accomplishments is considered appropriate. Some do wish to give a gift other than cash along with a card. Some examples of graduation gifts include: monogrammed pen, piece of luggage, computer case, jewelry, cufflinks.
- **Parties:** Holding a party after the graduation is a great way to include those who were not able to attend the graduation. Send the invitations at least three weeks in advance to those who live locally. For family and friends who live out-of-town, send the invitations at least six weeks in advance. Even though your friends will attend the party, it is very important to spend time with family and out-of-town guests. Here's a time to let your people skills shine. Greet each guest at the door with a hug or handshake, thank them for coming, spend time visiting at least once with each guest, and give a warm good-bye.
- **Thank you cards:** As tempting as a quick text or e-mail may be, a hand-written thank you card is expected for every gift. If you received cash, check, or gift card, include in the thank you note what you intend to purchase.

Graduation is a very special time. It's a time for the people in your life to celebrate your accomplishments and wish you success as you begin a new and exciting phase of your life. Accept the showering of congratulations with grace. Thank all who have supported you and your endeavors over the years. And, most of all, savor the memories. Congratulations!

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