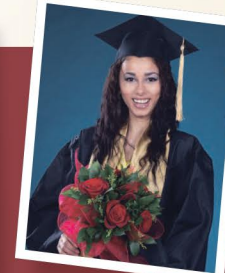


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SPECIAL SECTION



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GRADUATION 2021

How to celebrate grads despite unique circumstances

The end of a school year has traditionally been a time of celebration. Students may celebrate because summer vacation has arrived, and families typically gather to celebrate students who have earned their diplomas and degrees. But just as it's compromised many other traditional celebrations, the COVID-19 pandemic is changing how families can safely celebrate graduation.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of medical researchers, a handful of COVID-19 vaccinations have been developed and approved since the end of 2020. As more and more people become vaccinated, the world is gradually emerging from the pandemic. However, members of the class of 2021 will likely have to celebrate in unique circumstances. Such celebrations may not be traditional, but they can still be fun. Families may even enjoy finding new and unique ways to celebrate graduation this spring.

- Create a school-themed "movie" where grads are the stars. Students' academic careers are filled with milestones, and the emergency of various technologies over the past two decades has made it easier than ever for families to document those milestones. Parents can pore through the many photos and videos they've created through the years and create a "This Is Your Life" video montage documenting all the special school-related moments students have had on their way to earning their diplomas and degrees. Parents can share the video with relatives if they still can't gather en masse come graduation season.

- Plan a special dinner. Graduation dinners are one tradition that need not fall by the wayside, even if meals might not resemble traditional meals. Families comfortable

dining out can book a reservation at the grad's favourite restaurant, while those who prefer to avoid dining out can order takeout from that establishment. But families also can gather and prepare a special meal together. Even if dining at home, everyone can get dressed up and go the extra mile by creating a restaurant-like atmosphere at home. Fête the guest of honour with a toast before the meal, and reserve a special surprise for the graduate that's only revealed during the meal. For example, parents can uncork a special bottle of wine to commemorate college grads who can legally drink. Parents of newly minted high school graduates can present a special video with well wishes from all the relatives who would normally attend the dinner but cannot due to the pandemic.

- Organize a ceremony at home. A light-hearted graduation ceremony in the living room or the backyard can ensure graduates don't miss out on their chance to stride across the stage and receive their diploma. Invite a favorite teacher over to give out the diploma or present it yourself while doing your best school principal/president impersonation. This can be a fun way to add some levity to celebrations and will be a fun memory for grads to look back on in the years to come.

Graduation celebrations will be different in 2021, but families can still make the most of their chances to honor grads in these unique circumstances. (MCC)



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GRADUATION 2021

Thoughtful gifts to commemorate graduation

By the time students reach graduation day, many have taken hundreds of tests, written scores of essays, worked through thousands of pencils, and made dozens of friends along the way. Such realities only underscore the notion that graduation is worthy of celebration.

Though not everyone may be able to gather this year for a blow-out graduation party, thoughtful gifts can show graduates their accomplishments have not gone unnoticed. The following are nine graduation gift ideas.

• **Keepsake blanket:** A blanket featuring school colours that's woven with photos or data about the graduate and graduating class makes a great keepsake.

• **Engraved compass:** Finding one's new direction will take time, and a symbolic compass with inspirational words can help guide graduates on their future quests.

• **Jewelry:** Gift-givers may want to offer to pay for a school ring or can opt for different jewelry. For example, a necklace with the infinity symbol can represent infinite possibilities ahead. Those who collect charms for bracelets or necklaces can be gifted a graduation-themed charm.

• **Dorm room essentials:** Graduates going on to college will need a starter pack of essentials. A personalized tote bag filled with toiletries, linens and more will help graduates outfit their dorm rooms in style.

• **Inspirational art:** Graduates may want

to revamp their bedrooms or decorate new dorm rooms. Framed inspirational verses, sayings or images can make ideal gifts.

• **Blue-blocking eyeglasses:** Blue-blocking lenses protect eyes from the harsh effects of blue light emitted from screens, a big benefit in an era when students and professionals spend ample time with their devices.

• **Meal subscription service:** In addition to gifting a cooking appliance like a slow cooker or air fryer, giving grads a subscription to a meal delivery service may help them transition to life without mom's cooking or the dining hall.

• **Streaming service:** Graduates can benefit from any number of streaming television and movie services to stay entertained while commuting or relaxing around the dorm with friends.

• **Luggage:** Whether students intend to take a gap year before college or enjoy a summer break before looking for their first job out of school, young adults will always get use out of a set of luggage or a carry-on bag.

Gifts for grads evolve throughout the years, but many gifts have withstood the test of time. (MCC)



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