

Getting Ready for high school graduation:

Senior Pictures

- ✍ Start shopping photographers during your teen's junior year – consider the summer after the start of 'senior picture season'
- ✍ Once you've selected a photographer, get on their schedule sooner rather than later
- ✍ Know your school's senior photo deadlines for the yearbook, this will help you make the best scheduling choices

Be sure to check with your school's individual guidelines, but these are things to typically keep in mind for the yearbook photo you'll turn into the school:

- ✍ Color portrait
- ✍ Vertical alignment
- ✍ Neutral background
- ✍ Head shot (head and shoulders being the main focus)
- ✍ No props/hats
- ✍ Digital
- ✍ Check the due date! (typically early October in Billings)

Getting to Graduation

When senior year hits there isn't a lot of time to settle in before the ball gets rolling on preparing for graduation. As Billings' Jostens' rep, Jeremy Sawicki notes, senior year is a crazy, hectic time for students and parents alike, so plan to make your orders early and check in with your school's website and calendars regularly for pertinent dates and information.

Starting in late September/early October the Jostens rep will visit the schools and hold meetings with the senior classes. At these meetings students will receive all of the ordering information for...

Original Order Days - (October of your child's senior year)

- ✍ Cap and Gown
- ✍ Graduation Announcements
- ✍ Any other commemorative items (t-shirts, class rings...)

The Jostens rep will return to the schools for two order days when your student can bring their order forms directly to him. These dates are listed on the school's website and Jostens' website. You can

place an order by mail (PO Box listed on all of the information that gets handed out), via the website, or if you're completely crunched for time via phone (651-9494).

- <http://www.jostens.com/apps/store/customer/1059430/Skyview-High-School/>
- <http://www.jostens.com/apps/store/customer/1059447/Billings-West-High-School/>
- <http://www.jostens.com/apps/store/customer/1059450/Billings-Senior-High-School/>
- <http://www.jostens.com/apps/store/customer/1020212/Billings-Central-Catholic-High-School/>

If you miss out on the original order days, don't panic, there's still time to place your order. If orders are submitted by **January 1**, you will still be able to receive the custom, traditional foil embossed announcements. But let's say that you were completely in the dark about all of this, and you missed all of the aforementioned deadlines – call. Call and talk to your representative, as they will do everything they can to get you what you need, and if nothing else, the cap and gown.

Early spring is when your teen should be on the lookout for their Jostens rep once again, as that is when the items will be delivered and they will be able to pick up their items at the school. Pick-up days will also be in the school calendars and announcements.

Planning for the Cost

While every order is different, Jeremy says an average total order cost is roughly \$200, with a down payment of \$60 to get the order processed. There are multiple payment plans available and families are invoiced throughout the year.

Getting to Graduation: The Academics

Getting to graduation is not only about senior year, every year and class leading up to that momentous occasion plays a role. It's important for your student to go in with eyes wide open and goals in mind starting freshman year – after all, that's where the race to Valedictorian begins...

- ✍ Keep track of grades and assignments - particularly the last semester before graduation, advises Ms. Black.
- ✍ Be in regular contact with your teen's guidance counselor – they can be extremely helpful with college and career readiness.

- ✍ You'll especially want to check in with the counselor if he/she is planning to attend a Division I/II school and play sports, as there are specific rules that need to be followed.
- ✍ Ask questions of teachers, counselors, and other students as you're student is signing up for classes – make sure he/she's enrolled in the classes needed in order to pursue post-high school plans.
- ✍ Grades matter for college admission and scholarships – stay on top of the studies!

What's Next?

- ✍ Starting freshman year, keep an ongoing list of activities, achievements, and volunteer activities (don't rely on your memory come college application time).
- ✍ Research the options: a Job, 4-year College, Vocational Training, the Military, Apprenticeship?
- ✍ If college is the goal, check the school's website for regular updates about scholarship leads and financial aid help. (Freshman-Senior years)

Test Taking:

- ✍ October Sophomore/Junior year PSAT
- ✍ Junior year begin prepping for the ACT/SAT
- ✍ Junior/Senior year, look for ACT/SAT/ASVAB test dates throughout the school year

So You Want to Go to College...

MSU-Billings Director of New Student Services, Tammi Watson, and the Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships Director, Emily Williamson, provided these tips on college planning.

Start early and plan ahead:

- ✍ Junior year/summer leading into Senior year - Visit college campuses and attend a local college fair to get a feel for the college that will be a good fit.
- ✍ Take advantage of opportunities to visit with college representatives who come to the high schools.
- ✍ Plan to apply to the colleges of choice 6-10 months ahead of the time you wish to attend college. Application deadlines vary, so check deadlines of each institution that interests your teen.
- ✍ Apply for financial aid for the following fall. The upcoming year's Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) becomes available starting January 1. www.fafsa.ed.gov.
- ✍ When selecting courses throughout high school, explore a variety of classes to help determine what they enjoy (or don't).

- ✍ If at all possible, advises, Ms. Watson, students should take four years of math. Two reasons: If you don't use it, you lose it and taking more math can help students place into college level math and save them taking extra courses in college.
- ✍ And don't forget those extracurriculars. Whether it be community activities, volunteer work, student clubs, music, or athletics – these could also help with scholarship opportunities.

You Made It!

It's graduation day, you made it! After all of the stress, hullaballoo, madness, and memories you're here, your baby is graduating! We don't want you to miss a thing, so for our final checklist, some tips from a mom who's been there, done that and doesn't want you to look back with any regrets.

Mom of four, Wendy Nelson, has these tips to share:

- ✍ Find out what section your child will be seated during the ceremony, so you can snag seats closest to that area.
 - ✍ You don't have to have the party immediately after graduation (it doesn't even have to be the same day as the ceremony), be flexible! It's okay to do your own thing.
 - ✍ Don't worry about making a fast exit after the ceremony, go down to the floor, take pictures of your graduate with all of his friends, soak in these memories in the making.
- But perhaps most importantly...
- ✍ Relax and enjoy the moment, there are no do-overs. [sfm](#)