

How to Preserve Graduation Memories Beyond Photos

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For many people, graduation day quickly becomes a chaotic blur of ceremonies, parties, and handshakes. We take hundreds of digital photos on our smartphones, but most of them get forgotten and left in the cloud storage folder. While photos are fantastic snapshots of a single moment, they don't capture the physical weight of the achievements you reached.

Creating a physical memory box that you have personally curated to honour the legacy of your academic days can transform those fleeting memories into a permanent display that can sit in pride of place in your home, or at your parents' family household.

Collect everything before you start

Preservation cannot begin until you have everything in front of you to decide what you want to display and how you want it to look. Gather up all the physical artifacts from your graduation day, including but not limited to commencement programs (the official schedule of the day and list of graduates); your graduation cap, tassel, and hood/stole; awards, honors cords, or departmental medals; university invitations, thank you cards from friends, and congratulations cards from family.

Once you have a hold of all of your relevant items, you're probably looking at a decent-sized pile of memories. By itemizing them, you can start to view your graduation as an important event in your life, not just a conferral of your degree status. These items can tell a complete story about that day, your achievements, and the hard work you put into earning it.

Our step-by-step guide to preserving your achievement

These four steps that follow will show you exactly how to move these important items that acknowledge your academic milestone achievement from protection and storage to exhibition and display. By following these steps, you will create a viewable memory box that will be cherished by all who helped you achieve your graduation when they view it.

Step 1: Secure your original documents

In your pile of items, the first two to locate and isolate are your original diploma certificate and your results transcript. These are the two most valuable pieces in your collection, and it is important that these are stored securely and not put on display. They belong in an acid-free envelope that you should store inside a fireproof and waterproof safe.

These originals need to be kept pristine, as you will be required to provide them for legal verification purposes for any future employment and job promotion opportunities. Many people do like to display their certificate, but we have a solution for that later.

Step 2: Curate a shadow box

The best way to display the remaining items is in a shadow box; a deep frame that has been designed to display 3D objects at home. Once you have the box in front of you, you can start to visualise exactly how much you will be able to cleanly display within it.

Start by arranging the tassel, honor cords, and program inside the box first. If you need to mount things to the sides of the display, use acid-free mounting tape instead of glue, as this will help ensure no damage is done to the items. Then, build up the remaining parts of the display with your favourite items. By doing so, you are turning random items from one day into a deliberate, artistic display of effort and gratitude. When you are finished, take a step back from it and look at it with fresh eyes to make sure you can see everything you want to be able to see when you view it on display.

Step 3: Digitize everything (the right way)

The remaining items that you can't fit into the shadow box can be retained digitally, as if you would for important documents. You should always create 3 copies, keep them on 2 physical media types (such as a computer hard drive and a USB stick), and 1 off-site in a cloud storage platform.

Unless your smartphone can take HD photos, you should scan the physical programs and handwritten notes at high resolution (300 DPI or higher) on your desktop printer. It is important to preserve the physical items in this way as it will ensure the story of the entire graduation day survives even if the physical items eventually fade and degrade over time.

Step 4: Commission a display-ready diploma

Since so many people want to display their certificate as a visual reminder of their achievement, the safest way to do so is to lock the original away for safekeeping and instead order a [professional replica created by a high-quality diploma maker service](#). The blank space in your display, or above the shadow box on the wall, can be filled by a replacement certificate that matches the information listed on your original document.

This means you can complete your graduation day display without compromising the safety of your legal original document, and a professional replica becomes the final piece of the puzzle, so long as you use a reputable service provider that creates an authentic and professional-looking certificate.

Common pitfalls and how to avoid them

Three major issues are often encountered by people who store physical items on display: UV damage, acidic materials, and humidity or pests.

Starting with the simplest of these, sunlight fades ink, so it is extremely important that you keep your display away from any direct sunlight through the windows, or you invest in a UV-protective glass casing for the shadow box.

Most standard cardboard or paper backings in cheap frames are actually acidic and therefore yellow any document displayed in front of them over time. You should always specify acid-free or archival-quality materials when you are sourcing framing, display, or storage materials for important documents.

Attics and basements are high-humidity environments in the home, meaning that they are renowned for being death zones for paper-based documents. All displays involving paper

should be kept in climate-controlled living areas, so that you can catch any damage before it becomes too bad.

Following these pieces of advice will ensure that you can keep every single document and artifact from your graduation day in great condition for many years to come. You can't relive your graduation for a second time, and regain all the materials and memories if they become lost or damaged, so displaying and storing them properly at the first time of asking is crucial.

A diploma maker service perfectly finishes off your display

While photos may be a record of your day and the celebration, nothing can match a curated display as an emotional monument to your success. By gathering your items together, you keep everything safe and in one place, with the important documents stored where they cannot suffer damage.

Finish your display project by ordering a high-quality replica certificate from a diploma maker to act as the perfect centerpiece for your collection, or an accompaniment next to the shadow box on the office or living room wall. Graduation is a celebration, so your memories should be celebrated with just as much fanfare.

