

Sample

Graduation Speech

Thank you ____ (*name of person who introduced you*) ____ .

[*Look around the room.*] Graduates . . . family members . . . and staff, it is an honor to be part of this celebration, the ____ (*number*) ____ graduation ceremony at ____ (*name*) ____ School.

It is such a pleasure to share in the intensity of emotions filling this (auditorium, stadium) as you who are graduating close this chapter of your life's story.

Parents, you are probably wondering where the years have gone. As you marvel at your sons' and daughters' accomplishments, it doesn't seem that long ago when these young adults we honor today were toddling off to start kindergarten.

Of course, living through those years between kindergarten and graduation may have seemed like an eternity for the students . . . and for some parents as well.

[*Look at graduates.*] You are the Class of 2010. You graduate in a century still in its infancy . . . at a time in history when our world is dealing with enormous challenges . . . but at a time when the opportunities created by those challenges have never been greater.

You are technology natives . . . born and educated in a technological world that was only found in science fiction stories when many of us in this room were in school. You Twitter and tweet . . . read books and news on line . . . and your electronic social networking has shrunk the known world.

You are the generation that will take the technology of today to new and dizzying dimensions.

You are the ones who will bring solutions to environmental concerns . . . global warming . . . conservation of natural resources . . . and development of alternative energy sources . . . the issues that my generation is only now identifying.

And who knows? There may come a time that some of you live on a space station circling the earth.

Someone among you may find the cure for cancer . . . or other debilitating afflictions. [*Pause.*]

So (*tonight/this afternoon*) you are poised to start a new chapter of your life's story.

Armed with the skills and knowledge you've attained . . . I can tell you are eager to tackle this next phase, whatever it might be. For some, college or technical schools will be your next stop. Some are heading straight to the workforce. Some have chosen military service.

[*Optional*] Would those who are heading to military service please stand? Please join me in saluting these individuals. [*Lead applause.*]

Whatever direction you take, I guarantee that your world will change as you leave high school. And . . . as a result of whatever it is you choose to do . . . our world
(*Over*)

will change as result of your contributions . . . contributions that will be determined by how you follow your dreams and imagination. *[Pause.]*

While we celebrate your past academic accomplishments and activities (today/tonight) I want to challenge you to continue your quest for knowledge and to discover your own unique ways to contribute to our society.

Although, for some, your next steps may have been determined, many of you may not yet know the direction your life will ultimately take. You may find a new calling in this next chapter . . . or it may be several chapters down the road. You may decide the direction you thought you were going just doesn't seem right, or it flat out isn't working . . . and you will begin to follow yet again another new road.

J. K. Rowling, the creator of the Harry Potter books, was addressing the 2008 graduating class at Harvard, when she said,

“. . . some failure in life is inevitable. It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all – in which case, you fail by default.”

Can you imagine a life lived so cautiously that you have 'failed in life by default'?

I can't imagine any of you seated before me choosing to live life that cautiously with all the opportunities that lay before you.

So take risks.

Set goals.

Take the detours that inevitably pop up and learn from them.

You live in the greatest democratic society in the world . . . a place where you can worship as you wish . . . gather where you want . . . and pursue any opportunity that you happen upon regardless of your sex, your race . . . or your age.

You are part of a global generation for which professional opportunities, recreational travel and explorations may take you to the furthest reaches of the earth and beyond. *[Pause.]*

I felt the joy as I watched you prepare for this ceremony. I saw you straighten each others caps and gowns . . . I saw the hugging . . . the high five's – the age old signals of friendship and caring. I saw your unbridled enthusiasm for what you have accomplished.

So I want to challenge you to take that enthusiasm that surrounds you (*tonight/ today*) out into the world with you and use it to obtain your goals.

As you go forward, don't forget the friends you have made and those that you will make along the way. True friendship is a treasure.

Continue to care – care about yourself . . . your family . . . your friends . . . and your world.

And, wherever the next chapters in your life story may take you, make sure the journey includes joy. *[Pause.]*

In closing, I would ask the graduates to join me in a round of applause for the family members and faculty who helped them reach this milestone. *[Lead applause.]*

And to those in the audience who are here to honor these fine young adults, please stand and join me in saluting our 2010 graduates of (name) High School

Thank you.