Commencement Day 101

TIPS ON HOW TO NAVIGATE THE DAY

Breakfast with the Deans and Procession to the Morning Exercises
6:30 a.m. Breakfast. 7:15 a.m. Procession to Tercentenary Theatre for degree candidates.
- Commencement Day begins early. Breakfast starts at 6:30 a.m. Pick up GSAS and Dudley House flags, say hello and take photos with the GSAS and SEAS Deans.
- The GSAS Procession leaves from the breakfast at 7:15 a.m. sharp and is not to be missed. The streets are closed for the procession of crimson and black robes led by bagpipers.
- All degree candidates must be in academic attire, wearing their Harvard ID in a provided lanyard. Your Commencement lanyard contains a colored ticket, which designates your seating location. GSAS staff will direct you to your section upon arrival (see Sanders seating chart in your Commencement packet).
- All terminal Master’s degree and PhD graduates are seated before the ceremony begins. Because of the number of graduates, all ticketed guests cannot fit into Sanders at once, so seating of guests will be staggered, allowing all guests to see their candidate cross the stage.
- All degree candidates must be in academic attire, wearing their Harvard ID in a provided lanyard. Students in regalia DO NOT need a ticket to enter.

The Morning Exercises
7:45 a.m. Formation of graduate school candidates; 8:30 a.m. Academic Procession.
9:45 a.m. Morning Exercises begin, 11:30 a.m. Morning Exercises conclude.
- If you do not join the Procession, please arrive at Sever Quad no later than 7:45 a.m. and line up with GSAS. PhDs will be in front by Emerson Hall, GSAS AM and SEAS SM/ME will stand behind designated signs.
- This is Harvard’s big pomp and circumstance moment. Over 32,000 people fill Tercentenary Theatre in Harvard Yard, and it’s the one time all the University’s Schools are together. It’s a delight to watch in person or via simulcast.
- When Provost Garber asks you to stand, stand and wave your flags. PhD recipients will be called first and will be responsible for setting the tone for the entire Commencement. When President Faust finishes the conferral of the degree and says congratulations, yell, cheer, and wave your flags. Be the loudest, most enthusiastic School in the Yard!
- Your guests can watch the simulcast of the Morning Exercises with added commentary in the Science Center lecture halls or Maxwell Dworkin G115. Simulcast venues provide more comfort for your guests, especially those with mobility issues.
- If your guests plan to attend the Morning Exercises and want seats, they should skip the Breakfast with the Deans to arrive at Harvard Yard early. The gates open at 6:30 a.m., and GSAS guests enter via the Massachusetts Avenue gates.
- The Morning Exercises are festive and fun but not for the faint of heart; seats, bathrooms, food, and water are very limited. It’s a good idea to bring sunscreen and water. Your guests should note that a ticket to the Morning Exercises guarantees access to the Yard, but not an actual seat. Please note: Bags larger than 12” x 12” x 12” will not be permitted in Harvard Yard on Commencement morning.

The GSAS Diploma Awarding Ceremony in Sanders Theatre and Simulcast Venues (For PhD and terminal Master’s Degree recipients only, en route Master’s proceed to lunch)
9:30 a.m. Doors open to Sanders for guests with Red tickets, tented seating for White ticket holders.
11:30 a.m. (immediately following Morning Exercises) seating of all PhD and terminal Master’s recipients.
- Immediately following the Morning Exercises, you should head directly to Sanders Theatre for the GSAS Diploma Awarding Ceremony. Meet up with your guests after, not before; it will be too hard to find them in the crowds leaving Tercentenary Theatre.
- The GSAS Diploma Awarding Ceremony begins; 11:30 a.m. Pick up GSAS and Dudley House flags, say hello and take photos with the GSAS and SEAS Deans.
- All degree candidates must be in academic attire, wearing their Harvard ID in a provided lanyard. Your Commencement lanyard contains a colored ticket, which designates your seating location. GSAS staff will direct you to your section upon arrival (see Sanders seating chart in your Commencement packet).
- All terminal Master’s degree and PhD graduates are seated before the ceremony begins. Because of the number of graduates, all ticketed guests cannot fit into Sanders at once, so seating of guests will be staggered, allowing all guests to see their candidate cross the stage.
- DON’T WORRY: Your ticketed guests will be accommodated in Sanders in time to see you cross the stage. A professional photographer will take photos as degree recipients cross the stage, guests will not be permitted in aisles for photography.

The Science Center simulcast is a great option, offering additional comfort compared with Sanders Theatre as well as a complete broadcast of the ceremony. The space is air-conditioned with easy access to food and bathrooms. WE STRONGLY URGE families with small children and guests who have trouble standing or have mobility issues to consider watching the simulcast in the Science Center.
- The simulcast will also be shown in Maxwell Dworkin G115, located next to the Breakfast and Luncheon, with seating available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Champagne Reception and Luncheon
12:00 p.m. Champagne Reception begins; 12:30 p.m. Luncheon service begins.
- The GSAS Champagne Reception and Luncheon provides the best meal on campus on Commencement Day. Plan to meet your guests here to celebrate your big accomplishment.
- Lunch will be served until approximately 3:00 p.m. to accommodate those attending the Diploma Awarding Ceremony in Sanders Theatre.

The Afternoon Program
2:30 p.m. program start; 3:15 p.m. approximate time of featured Commencement speaker
- The Afternoon Program comprises the Annual Meeting of the Harvard Alumni Association including remarks from President Drew Faust and this year’s featured Commencement speaker, Steven Spielberg.
- The Afternoon Program officially begins at 2:30 p.m., though there are a number of ceremonial proceedings, including presentation of the Harvard Medals and announcement of the Overseer and Elected Director election results, that you may choose to skip in order to enjoy the Champagne Reception and Luncheon with your guests.
- All graduates and ticketed guests will be accommodated, and it’s perfectly acceptable to go late if you and your guests are attending the Luncheon. The Commencement Address begins at approximately 3:15 p.m.