



USAFA Cadet Milestones – Graduation

Who: First Class Cadets

What: Graduation Week marks a momentous occasion in the lives of our graduates, marked by pageantry, tradition, and celebration. Cadets and their guests take part in awards ceremonies, receptions, baccalaureate services, concerts, parades, air demonstrations, and commissioning ceremonies. The culmination of this week is the graduation ceremony, held in Falcon Stadium (weather permitting). The final event is a salute to the graduates by the world-renowned U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron, the Thunderbirds.

When: Dates vary, but graduation typically falls during the last week of May or the first week of June.

Throughout Graduation Week, guests may enter the Academy through either the North Gate or South Gate. All persons 18 years and older are required to show government-issued identification such as a driver's license or passport at the gate. Expired IDs will not be accepted. Additionally, all vehicles are subject to inspection by security personnel, and visitors may be asked to show proof of insurance, a valid vehicle registration, and/or a rental car agreement (if applicable).

For individual events, guests should refrain from bringing large bags/backpacks, coolers, or other items that will require additional scrutiny or searches from security personnel.

HINT: Graduation information will be posted here as it becomes available: <https://www.usafa.edu/about/traditions/graduation/>. If the upcoming year's



graduation details are not yet released/posted, you may use previous year's information to get a rough idea of the Graduation Week flow, as most of the information is similar from year to year, but please note that the date will vary from year to year.

Typical Graduation Week

Baccalaureate Services - Normally held on **Sunday Prior to graduation** and times and locations will vary. USAFA Chapel staff will share information as soon as it is available.

Dress: Business or formal attire

Superintendent's Graduation Reception for Cadets and Families – Reception honoring graduating cadets and their families hosted by the Superintendent and his spouse at the Carlton House, the Superintendent's residence. Families will have an opportunity to interact with and get a picture with Academy Senior Leaders and enjoy light refreshments.

Dress: Business Casual

Graduations Awards Ceremony – The Ceremony includes Athletic, Military and Academic recognition, and normally held **two days prior to graduation**. Your cadet will be notified in advance if he/she is being recognized.

Dress: Business Casual

Graduation Parade– Normally held the **day prior to graduation** signifying the departure of the senior class from the Cadet Wing...it's the full-circle moment from Acceptance Day when they joined the Cadet Wing. There are aerial demonstrations, drill demonstrations and Falconry demonstrations prior to the start of the parade. The parade is **limited to 6 guests per cadet due to space limitations**. Your cadet will receive wristbands for attendees.

Dress: Casual – bring sunscreen, a hat, and be prepared for weather!

HINT: Suggest guests get wristbands from their graduates earlier in the week as the day of the parade it will be difficult to get them.

Commissioning Ceremony – Normally held the **day prior** graduation: times and locations vary by squadron. Dress appropriately for outdoor or indoor venues. Your graduate will select the individual to commissions them (must be a retired or currently serving officer from any military branch). Graduates often select family members, AOCs, coaches, or sponsor parents. Your graduate will also choose 1-2 people to pin on their second lieutenant rank. Once commissioned, your new lieutenant will receive their first salute from a person they select to render it. This person is typically an active-duty or retired enlisted member or an under-class cadet.

Dress: Business or formal attire. Cadets will wear their formal Mess Dress Uniform. Commissioning officers will also be in formal dress (service dress at a minimum). This is the most formal event of the week. Individual squadrons will provide more specific information.

HINT: Your graduate is required to wear his/her cadet shoulder boards during the graduation ceremony the day after the Commissioning Ceremony. Ensure whoever removes your cadet's boards during the commissioning ceremony returns them to your cadet so they have them for graduation ceremony.

Graduation – The graduation ceremony begins promptly at 9:30 am in Falcon Stadium. Plan to arrive early as traffic can congested and stadium gates will close at the start of the ceremony (no late entrance is permitted). Venue security is also heightened when the President or Vice President are commencement speakers, which can create delays. Stadium gates will open at 7:00 am and the pre-ceremony entertainment by cadet performance groups will begin at approximately 7:45 am.

Each cadet is allowed up to 20 guests at the ceremony and all guests are required to have a ticket to enter Falcon Stadium. Your cadet will be provided tickets based on the number they request (up to 20). Family/friends should talk to their cadets regarding how many tickets they will need to request and when they receive them.

The graduation ceremony is live-streamed in its entirety on the USAFA webpage: [Graduation • United States Air Force Academy \(usafa.edu\)](https://www.usafa.edu/graduation) and will be made available for on-demand viewing following the ceremony. It is also normally live streamed in Arnold Hall for elderly guests or guests who may not be able to tolerate outdoor seating in the stadium.

Following the ceremony, guests are not allowed to exit the stadium until the Thunderbirds conclude their performance. Expect traffic delays when exiting.

Dress: Dress comfortably and casually! This is the day to proudly sport your USAFA spirit wear. Be prepared for Colorado weather--you may experience all four seasons during the ceremony. Bring plenty of sunscreen and a hat to protect yourself from the sun, dress in layers, and wear comfortable shoes.

***HINT:** Dehydration and altitude sickness can ruin your time in Colorado Springs. Drink plenty of water all week long to stave off illness. Vendors will be selling food and drink during the ceremony. Bring your sunscreen as high altitude also puts you at a greater risk for sunburn!*

Dorm Move-out/USAFA Out-processing (following the Graduation Ceremony and Thunderbird performance) – Following the graduation ceremony, your new second lieutenant will complete their out-processing in the cadet area. They are required to complete this **BEFORE** they can leave base and celebrate with family. Bus transportation will be provided to get them back to the cadet area following the ceremony.

Encourage your graduate to be proactive with packing and bring personal items to your lodging earlier in the week...the more they do during the days leading up to graduation, the less they'll have to do the day of graduation.

Other Hints for Guests

1. Reservations for accommodations, flights, and other venues should be made as soon possible once the graduation date is announced. Many hotels and venues book up a year in advance.



2. Guests may find it helpful to arrive as early as the Sunday prior to graduation to allow for participations in all scheduled activities.
3. Allow extra travel time for events to account for potential traffic and delays base entry. Recommend arriving early to events to rather than risk missing a special milestone event.
4. The Academy does not issue equipment such as wheelchairs or oxygen tanks. Please bring your own disability placard for your vehicle. Parking for persons with disabilities will be available at all venues and your cadet will be able to request special seating as necessary. For more information visit [Visitors • United States Air Force Academy \(usafa.edu\)](#).

Note: Please notify the USAFA Graduation Team as soon as possible if **hearing-impaired** guests will be attending graduation events so they can plan appropriate accommodations. Notification should be sent to graduation.info@afacademy.af.edu and should include the cadet's name and squadron along with events the hearing-impaired guest will be attending.

5. Social obligations outside of USAFA planned events should be kept flexible. Talk to your graduate about their unique schedule and when it would be best to plan graduation celebrations, etc. This is a busy time for them.
6. Guests can ask their cadet or check the following sites for changes to schedules and/or activities.

FACEBOOK: [U.S. Air Force Academy | Colorado Springs CO | Facebook](#)

Twitter: [U.S. Air Force Academy \(@AF Academy\) / Twitter](#)

Instagram: [U.S. Air Force Academy \(@af academy\) • Instagram photos and videos](#)

KAFA Radio Station: 97.7 MHz FM, [KAFA 97.7 FM USAF Academy Colorado Live Streaming from USA \(streamingthe.net\)](#)

Graduation Website:

<https://www.usafa.edu/about/traditions/graduation/>



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