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What grads want

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The Gazette

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Registries make buying gifts for happy couples and brand new babies a piece of cake. Pleasing college grads isn't always so easy.

“The horrors are just, like, getting the teddy bear, tacky stuff like that that says ‘2007,’” said Carrie Ehrmann, 22, an Amana native who graduated May 6 from Coe College.

In high school, “I got a book called ‘Hugs for Grads,’ ... a 2003 medallion that is sitting at home. It's all in a Rubbermaid under my bed at home.”

The key offenders, according to a 2007 Dormbuys.com poll, are picture frames and albums, stuffed animals, books, candles, clothes, cards without money and anything that says “graduate” or “2007.”

Dormbuys surveyed college freshmen about their high school graduation gifts, but college seniors say the selection is the same four years later.

Instead of knickknacks certain to be packed away, consider cold hard cash, graduates advise.

“You can't go wrong with cash because then you can go buy the things you really want,” University of Iowa senior Jill Goerd, 21, of Cedar Rapids, said.

Gift cards to big-box stores, not niche boutiques, also are a safe bet.

“Gift cards to Target or Kohls or Best Buy, places you can go and buy just about anything,” Goerd said. “It gives graduates the option to choose what they want.”

She also suggests anything apartment- or job-related.

While practical gifts often are preferred, sentimentality has its place, too, according to graduates The Gazette interviewed.

“Cards from family members that say how proud they are, that really means a lot when there's heartfelt thoughts,” Ehrmann said.

All agree they also wouldn't turn down the big-ticket items that some proud parents are bestowing on their graduates: splurges like trips to Europe, cars, laptops, down payments on condos.

Coe graduate Lindsey Driscoll's parents surprised her a couple of weeks ago with a new-to-her Toyota Camry.

“I've never had that kind of surprise before,” the Cedar Rapids native said. “I had tears come to my eyes.”



(Cliff Jette/The Gazette)

Recent Coe College graduate Lindsey Driscoll of Cedar Rapids received a Toyota Camry from her parents. Though college graduates suggest cash and gift cards as graduation presents, they also appreciate big-ticket gifts.

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