



How Do I Say Goodbye?

**A Quick Guide for Parents Who
Just Dropped Their Kid at College
and Feel Like Crying in the
Parking Lot**



Dropping them off at college hits hard. One minute you're untangling charging cords and making sure they packed deodorant—and the next, you're standing in a half-empty dorm room wondering how to say goodbye without melting into a puddle.

Here's how to do the part no one really prepared you for: the leaving.



Accept That This Is a Big Deal

Because it is. And it's okay to feel all of it.

- Let yourself be emotional. You just raised a whole human.
- Cry if you need to. (They probably will too—either now or later.)
- Don't rush through the moment, but don't linger so long it gets harder.

You're not "abandoning" them. You're cheering them into their next chapter. Big difference.





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Make a Goodbye Plan in Advance

The more you prepare, the less awkward it'll be.

- Decide ahead of time who's doing the goodbye —just you, the whole crew, or one-on-one.
- Let them lead the vibe: some kids want a big hug, others want a casual "See ya."
- Take a family photo in the dorm, even if they groan. (They'll appreciate it later.)

Write them a note to leave on their pillow or desk. Simple, sweet, personal.





Set Expectations for Communication

**Avoid the “Why haven’t they called?!”
panic spiral.**

- Talk about how often you’ll check in—texting, FaceTiming, or calling
- Ask what they want—respect their space without disappearing
- Remind them they can always call, even just to hear your voice

“No news is good news” is hard, but often true. Silence usually means they’re adjusting, not struggling.





Focus on Their Excitement, Not Your Empty Nest

Your job is shifting, not ending.

- Celebrate what's ahead for them (and for you, too!)
- Resist the urge to “fix” every little thing before you go
- Let them stumble and problem-solve—it builds confidence

When you feel the urge to hover, remember: your love helped them get here. You don't have to stay for it to stick.





When It's Time to Go... Go!

**Don't drag it out. Don't ghost either.
Just go.**

- Say the words: "I love you," "I'm proud of you," or "You've got this"
- Hug if they're up for it. Wave if they're not.
- Walk away before you start narrating the whole moment

You can sob in the car. Most people do.





Final Words

You did your job.

They're growing into their own person—
and you're still part of that journey, just
from a different seat.

Text them when you get home. Let them
know you're okay.

Then... go do something for yourself.
You've earned it.



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