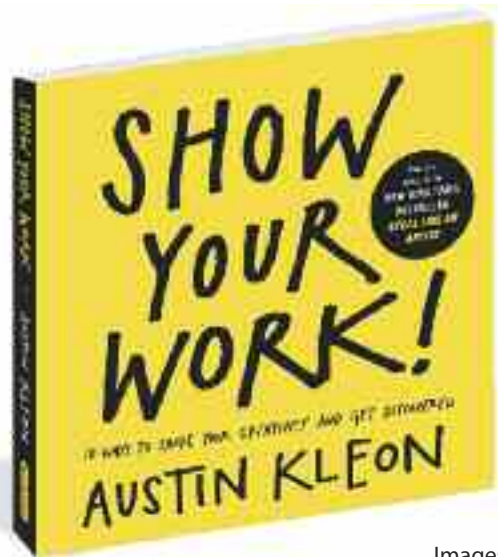


# Great Book Ideas for Grads

By Lou Fancher



Images provided

With Saint Mary's College graduates recently tossing caps into the air and Acalanes, Campolindo and Miramonte high school students prepping for commencement next week, the number one gift we can give a child at graduation is good advice. What better way to insure the future happiness of the kid who was, just yesterday – it seems – still in diapers, or wobbling down the sidewalk on their first two-wheeler?

Problem is, these wee ones are now young adults, and they'll likely prefer electronics or cash to hearing wise words. But two new books can serve as stand-ins. (Actually, it's three, because one author has been clever once before, in a 2012 book readers may have missed.)

Facebook CEO Sheryl Sandberg conveniently released "Lean In For Graduates" (Knopf, April), a new edition of her 2013 best-selling "declaration of independence" for working women. The original version has sold over 1.75 million copies and spawned over 16,000 Lean In "circles" in 72 countries. The small support groups – over 300 are on college campuses – emphasize building a more equal world by working together.

"Start by aiming high," Sandberg writes in the expanded edition's introductory "Letter to Graduates." Suggesting the world is rooting for every graduate, she says "leaning in" consists of unbridling ambition, making and seizing opportunities, and employing leadership unbound by what she later in the book calls "the holy trinity of fear: the fear of being a bad mother/wife/daughter." Six chapters, penned by contributing writers, and paired with a total of 12 illustrative personal-account stories (and given priority here), add nuts-and-bolts support to Sandberg's spirited pronouncements.

Millennials entering the highly-charged job market and high school graduates taking a gap year or working to pay tuition will benefit from executive coach Mindy Levy's "Find Your First Job." Levy's tips on improving your online presence, making the right impression during interviews and following up on everything are concise, concrete and contemporary. McKinsey & Company consultant Kunal Modi's frank words on bias in "Man Up and Lean In" are worthy of note. And learning from Tufts University graduate Nola Barackman's story that the Brooklyn Bridge's construction was completed by a woman, Emily Roebling, makes her message – knowing one's history – inspiring.

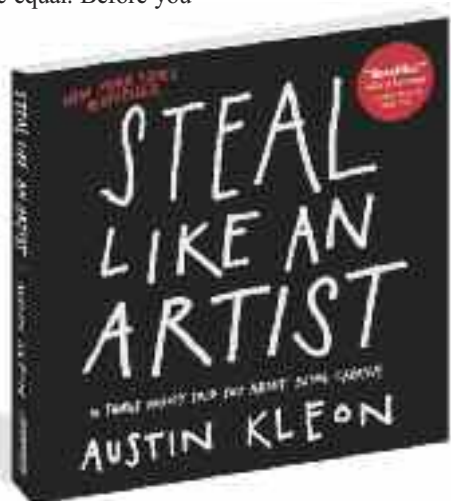
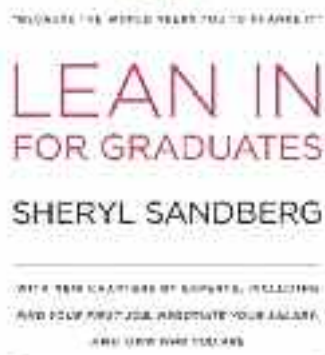
Not all of the added narratives or chapters have the fiery aggression of Sandberg's manifesto. Most lack her welcome, blunt directives (to get over quibbling about "what should be," or to get on with the work of women supporting each other) to make a lopsided world more equal. Before you

conclude it's a gift only for girls, note: it's a book aimed at women that men might do well to discover. If Sandberg is spot on in her predictions, women will increasingly influence the workplace – gender neutrality leveling the playing field – in the 21st century.

Like Sandberg's book, Austin Kleon's "Steal Like an Artist" (Workman Publishing, 2012), has its genesis in a keynote speech given to college graduates. An Ohio native and New York Times bestselling author who now lives in Austin, Texas, Kleon writes and creates art. His immensely readable books speak to an audience raised in the digital age with pithy, timeless advice reminiscent of yesterday, but attuned to today's high-speed platforms. Using words as his tools – copying, pasting, scribbling and, most humorously and effectively, redacting them – Kleon's "Steal" encourages readers to "make friends, ignore enemies," "choose what to leave out," "use your hands," and importantly, "write the book you want to read." Packed with quotes and quiet gems of advice – both Kleon's and well-sourced, assiduously-attributed words from others – the message is to be unstopably hungry (intellectually) and make sure you get fed (literally and creatively), even if the prospect ahead causes you to gulp.

"Show Your Work" (Workman Publishing, 2014), the "sequel" to "Steal," is all about getting discovered. Counterintuitively, the idea is to share: stealing is over, revealing is all. Sending out daily (digital) dispatches, "building a good (domain) name" and not "feeding the trolls" (not listening to aggressive Internet criticism) address the online era's potential and pitfalls. "Don't turn into human spam" ascends into "If you want followers, be someone worth following." Pipe dreams become purposeful: "Look for something new to learn, and when you find it, dedicate yourself to learning it out in the open." Given singly or as a pair, Kleon's tiny editions are no larger than an average adult's hand print, but promise wisdom for eternity.

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