Class Report FAQs

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Q1. How hard are your deadlines? I really want to participate in the Class Report, but I’ve got a big project due next week. When is the absolute last second I can get my entry in?

A. There is a little give in our deadlines. As long as the Class Report website is up and running, your entry will be accepted. If you are confronting a particular obstacle to meeting the deadline, don’t hesitate to contact the Class Report Office and ask for extra time. There comes a point when we have to close the door, but our aim is to get everyone into these books who wants to be.

Q2. What happens if I don’t submit anything? I’ll still at least have an address in there, right?

A. Not anymore! This is actually a major change that the Class Report Office has had to make, in response to new legal conventions being adopted worldwide to protect privacy in the digital age. Now, if you don’t submit anything for the Class Report, your entry in the book will consist of just your name, the year of your Harvard undergraduate degree, and House or dorm. In order for anything more to appear in print, you must submit it intentionally. This is all the more reason for you to participate in the book!

Q3. What’s with this “terms of use disclosure” we have to agree to? Am I giving up my privacy?

A. Not at all! We are now required to obtain your acceptance of those terms of use in order to publish your class report. However, rest assured, the Class Report itself is unchanged. The books still have the same wonderful, noncommercial purpose they have always had and the same very restricted exposure to eyes outside your own Class.

Q4. Is there a word limit?

A. No. The instructions suggest one or two paragraphs, and most of the narratives are in the 200–500-word range. But shorter and longer are fine—though we would have to draw the line at a multipage treatise.
Q5. I am trying to update my essay, but I keep getting an error message.

A. This happens rarely, but it is why we recommend that you first write your Class Report narrative in a word-processing program, such as Microsoft Word, and then copy and paste it into the essay field. Then, should you receive a timeout issue, or your internet connection fails, or some other error occurs, you will have your essay in a safe spot and won’t lose your work. If you get an error message, we suggest that you either wait awhile and try again later to paste the essay into your online form, or just email it to the book-specific address provided in the chart (see the homepage of the Class Report section on this website).

Q6. I want to italicize words in my personal narrative, but don’t see how. Any ideas?

A. In the Class Reports, we italicize book titles, TV show and movie titles, and words that might otherwise be all caps to show emphasis. To do so, we use HTML tags. For example, if you wanted to italicize The Class by Erich Segal, you would do so thus: <i>The Class</i> by Erich Segal. The Class Report staff is happy to italicize everything for you, but if you do decide to italicize on your own, be sure to close your tags with the </i>! As a corollary to this point, don’t be alarmed if the confirmation email you receive after filling in the online form contains font or character anomalies, or if the paragraph breaks have been lost! This is just a foible of the confirmation emails—the formatting will display correctly in the published book.

Q7. You mean you actually read these things?

A. Each Red Book gets read a total of four times by the editorial staff—twice by the book’s assigned editor, once by an editorial assistant or other editor, and a final time by the associate director or assistant director of the Class Report Office. We do light copyediting, correcting for house style, misspellings, and grammatical errors, and we do a lot of fact-checking of such things as place names, Harvard degrees, and dates. We normally don’t make substantive changes without consulting the author.

Q8. Do other schools publish reunion books like these?

A. Other schools, including Yale, Princeton, and Stanford, have reunion books, but they’re not like Harvard’s. Harvard has been publishing its Red Books for well over a century. Initially they were collections of classmate obituaries written by the class secretaries, but before long they grew into something much more. For many years they have been produced by a staff of professional editors, which is a unique distinction; at other schools, the classes themselves produce their own books.

Q9. Can I send a photo for my book?

A. Only the 25th and 50th Reports have photos. The ones in the 50th are in color. The 25th features people’s Yearbook photos juxtaposed with the current ones they send in. The 50th features current photos only.

Q10. What happens if I choose not to participate in a given Class Report book?

A. The Red Books are now “opt-in” only. Formerly, if you didn’t send an update for a Report, your name would still appear in the Records of the Class with your preferred address and phone number as recorded in the alumni database. However, starting with 2020, if you choose not to participate in a book, your entry will consist of just your name, your Harvard (or Radcliffe) House or dorm, and your undergraduate Harvard (or Radcliffe) degree.
Q11. Will my report appear anywhere on the Internet?

A. No. We are still completely paper-based. People put a lot of personal information in these reports, and we are very committed to safeguarding it. We have been exploring secure ways of digitizing the Class Reports, but so far a satisfactory solution to the security problem has been elusive.

Q12. What if I just can’t get my HarvardKey? Is there any other way to submit my report?

A. Yes, absolutely there is. Just call or email the Class Report Office to request an emailable version of the Report questionnaire. (By the way, you will avoid a common pothole in claiming the HarvardKey if you make sure to click the Alumni tab.)

Q13. Whom do I call if I’m having a technical problem submitting my class report?

A. We are here to help! If you are having difficulty using the Class Report website, call us in the Class Report Office, at 617-495-2696. If your problem is with the HarvardKey, call the IT Help Desk, at 617-496-0559. And please don’t just give up—your classmates want you in their Red Book, and we will gladly find a way to get you there.