

How to See Celebrities in Person

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You don't need a press pass or a lot of money to see your favorite television and movie stars, authors, and other celebrities up close. All you need is knowledge about where and when to be in the same place that they are, and then what to do – and not do – when you are there.

This article will tell you how to find out about red-carpet events and other opportunities that are free or low-cost opportunities to see and sometimes even talk to celebrities. A short list of celebrities that my tween-aged son and I have met includes Robin Williams, Taylor Swift, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Selena Gomez, Ewan McGregor, Amanda Bynes, Aly and AJ, Tim Burton and Danny Elfman, Billy Bush, Mary Hart, AnnaSophia Robb, Henry Winkler, Sally Field, Josh Peck, Madison Pettis, Ashley Olsen, R.L. Stine, Brenda Song, and members of music groups as diverse as Hi-5 and Green Day.



The author's son meets Taylor Swift before her concert in Beverly Hills, California.

How to Find Out About Celebrity Events

If you live in, or plan to visit, the Los Angeles area, the main source for learning about upcoming celebrity events is www.seeing-stars.com. Click on Calendar of Hollywood Events for a list of red-carpet movie premieres, Walk of Fame ceremonies, book author signings, award shows, concerts, and other celebrity events. This site also has pages dedicated to which stores, restaurants, hotels, and even churches that celebrities frequent.

If you are not near Los Angeles, you can still find out where celebrities might be appearing in your town by checking with local colleges, arts councils, live theaters, book stores, music stores, sports venues, and chambers of commerce or visitor bureaus. Your local newspaper and radio stations can also be good sources of upcoming events, including charity fund-raisers and holiday events. If there is a PBS television station in your area, ask if any celebrities will be in the studio during pledge drives. If so, then volunteer to help out at the pledge. And don't forget to monitor your favorite celebrity's own official Web site and fan sites. Sometimes you can find out about red-carpet premieres through the film company's press relations department. Your city clerk might be able to clue you in on films or television series that will be shooting in your neighborhood, because the production companies need to file permits to close off streets or limit parking for outdoor scenes.

When to Arrive and What to Do When You Get There

If you want to catch a glimpse of your favorite entertainer or get an author's autograph, be prepared to arrive early and wait, wait, wait. How early you need to get there depends on which stars will be appearing, the venue, and the day and time. For example, fans who wanted to see Johnny Depp up close at the weekend premiere of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* at the Chinese Theatre literally slept out on Hollywood Boulevard the night before. But for most events, arriving about two or three hours ahead of time is sufficient. My son and I once attended a film premiere (for *The Bridge to Terabithia*) that was held at eight o'clock on a Sunday morning. For that one, we arrived only one hour early and got front-row spots near the entrance to the movie theatre.

Sometimes it pays to ask a security guard or set-up crew member for tips on the best place to stand. For instance, when my son and I went to the *Robots* premiere, we got there just as the event was starting. A crowd had already gathered, and the Blue Man Group was about to begin performing on an outdoor stage. So I asked a guard where we might be able to get a view of the stage. He instructed us to walk behind some buildings and then up an alley to the sidewalk immediately behind where the entertainment television shows had their interviewing stations set up. We followed his instructions, and, incredibly, we were just a few feet away from every celebrity who stopped to be interviewed, despite our late arrival.

Be Humble!

The wrong thing to do at a celebrity event is drop names or otherwise try to impress or befriend the security guards and event staff members. They've heard it all, so don't even try to put one over on them. If you were truly so-and-so's cousin, you would have gotten a legitimate backstage pass before the event.

The right thing to do is be humble, genuine, honest, and just yourself. For example, when my son and I went to the red-carpet premiere of Green Day's *Bullet in a Bible*, a lot of fans were trying to get tickets to go inside and see the movie along with the members of Green Day and other celebrities. But my son and I didn't ask for tickets. Surprisingly, an event staff member just came right up to us and put two tickets in my hand. All he asked was that I didn't turn around and sell them. Of course, we didn't even consider doing that. What we did do was run into the theatre just as it was starting. Green Day had just announced the movie and were walking from the stage to their seats – which were just seven rows in front of our assigned seats. In fact, Billie Joe Armstrong's hair was obstructing my view of the screen, but, heck, I wasn't going to complain!

Autograph Tips

It's acceptable to ask for autographs at public events, but, please, do not approach celebrities in restaurants, stores, hospitals, or places of worship. And when you do ask for an autograph, request that they sign it personally to you (or the name of the person who are getting the autograph for). That way, they know that you aren't doing it just to sell on eBay. Also, it's refreshing for celebrities if you give *them* something personal, rather than asking for something *from* them. For example, my son likes to draw pictures for his

favorite entertainers. Ewan McGregor was so impressed with one of my son's drawings that he held it up to the camera when he was being interviewed by an entertainment news program. And the news program chose to show that clip as part of their coverage of the event!

And when we went to the WALL.E premiere event, my son gave his favorite Disney star, Selena Gomez, a picture of her that he drew. Her reaction? She hugged him! For him, her genuine expression of appreciation carried more value than a piece of paper with a signature.

Is This Considered Stalking?

As long as your intention to meet certain celebrities is to express *your* appreciation for how they enrich your life with the entertainment they provide, then doing research to see where they will be appearing in public and then showing up early to get a front row spot is not considered stalking or a sign of mental illness. So just have fun meeting other fans who share your interests and passion . . . and enjoy seeing your favorite celebrities in person!