

# Mask in Schools

## Frequently Asked Questions and Considerations for Use

### 1. Are face masks required in school buildings at this time?

Yes. Masks are required in school at this time per the [order](#) of the Acting Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

### 2. How long will masks be required in school entities?

The Order is effective 12:01 AM on Tuesday, September 7, 2021, and will remain in effect until the Acting Secretary of Health determines the public health risk is sufficiently reduced so that face coverings are no longer necessary as public health tools in school entities. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) will continue to provide updates as they continue to closely monitor the CDC guidance.

### 3. Are face masks required on district transportation?

Yes, As per the CDC transportation ([linked here](#)), masks are required on all district transportation.

### 4. Under what circumstances are students permitted to remove their face coverings?

Students will not be required to wear face coverings when they are outside of the buildings (recess, physical education, outdoor instruction, etc.), dining in the cafeteria, or when actively engaged in physical activity within the building. Similar to last year, mask breaks will be provided as appropriate.

### 5. Are there any exceptions for masking?

Yes. Exceptions to masking will continue to be granted for any student who cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition, including those with respiratory issues that impede breathing, a mental health condition, or disability. Accommodations for such students should be made in partnership with the student's health care provider, school nurse, and IEP / 504 team.

### 6. Are masks required at this time for both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals?

Yes. Safety protocols outlined above are applied universally, regardless of vaccination status.

**7. Where in schools are masks to be worn?**

Masks should be worn in all indoor spaces and buses except when eating their lunch, exercising, or participating in athletic activities.

**8. Do I have to wear one if I'm at an outside event?**

No. Current data suggest the risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in outdoor settings is minimal. In general, fully vaccinated people do not need to wear a mask outdoors. Fully vaccinated people might choose to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised. The chart below shows CDC recommendations for mask usage in various outside settings.

### Choosing Safer Activities

		Unvaccinated People	Your Activity	Fully Vaccinated People
		<b>Outdoor</b>		
Safest			Walk, run, or bike outdoors with members of your household	
			Attend a small, outdoor gathering with fully vaccinated family and friends	
Less Safe			Attend a small, outdoor gathering with fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people	
			Dine at an outdoor restaurant with friends from multiple households	
Least Safe			Attend a crowded, outdoor event, like a live performance, parade, or sports event	

— The CDC released updated guidance on outdoor mask usage. CDC








**9. Do I have to wear a mask when I'm exercising, at recess, or actively participating in athletic activity?**

No, masks are not required during these activities while the student is actively participating. When not, or when on the bench during competition, students should be masked.

**10. What type of mask should be worn?**

(<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-face-masks-what-you-need-to-know>, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>)

Look for a mask made with at least two layers of fabric. It should cover your nose and mouth without large gaps. The mask should have ear loops or ties so you can adjust it. For people who wear glasses, look for a mask with a bendable border at the top so you can mold the mask to fit the bridge of your nose and prevent your glasses from fogging. Gaiters with two layers, or folded to make two layers are acceptable.

DO choose masks that	DO NOT choose masks that
 Have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric	 Are made of fabric that makes it hard to breathe, for example, vinyl
 Completely cover your nose and mouth	 Have exhalation valves or vents which allow virus particles to escape
 Fit snugly against the sides of your face and don't have gaps	 Are prioritized for healthcare workers, including N95 respirators
 Have a nose wire to prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask	

### 11. What do I do if I don't have a mask?

*A mask can be provided for students and visitors as needed for those who forget or misplace them. Those in need of additional support to obtain masks will be connected with community resources.*

### 12. Can I wear a face shield instead of a mask?

*Alternatives to face masks may be considered if recommended by a medical professional.*

### 13. Will mask breaks be given this year, like they were last year?

*Yes. Mask breaks will be granted in the same manner they were last year.*

### 14. How is wearing a mask most effective?

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html> )

1. Wash your hands before and after touching the mask.
2. Touch only the bands or ties when putting on and taking off your mask.
3. Make sure the mask fits to cover your nose, mouth and chin. ...
4. Make sure you can breathe and talk comfortably through your mask.
5. Wash reusable masks after each use.

### 15. When can students and staff take off their masks during the school day?

*Students may remove their masks when outdoors, at lunch, while exercising, or participating in athletic activities.*

**16. What metrics will the District review to determine when masking or other safety prevention strategies can be removed or modified?**

*Key metrics including the level of community transmission (incidence rate, case counts, positivity rates, etc.) will continue to inform the District's decisions. These data sets are reviewed at multiple levels including building, district, zip code, county, regional, and statewide analyses. Each provide key information, along with guidance from the CDC and the Department of Health, to shape safety protocols at the District level*

**17. Are parents and spectators at school functions and extracurricular events required to wear masks at this time?**

*Yes, all visitors that enter school district buildings are required to wear a face covering. This requirement is included in the [order](#) of the Acting Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health. Parents and spectators are strongly encouraged to wear masks at outdoor events, but are not required to do so.*