

Masks and Facial Coverings

Considerations

Wearing masks and facial coverings help prevent the transmission of COVID-19. Most school districts will have established policies based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. When considering how to help children and adolescents wear masks and other face coverings, consider the health and preferences of the student, the multiple environments encountered (e.g., bus, pick up and drop off location), and the array of tasks and occupations that need to be performed while wearing a mask (e.g., eating and drinking, completing class assignments, talking with friends, participating in recess). Some tips for teachers and school personnel to help increase students' wearing of masks are listed below.

Choose Masks and Other Facial Coverings

- Choose a mask or other facial covering that covers both the nose and the mouth.
- Explore different types of masks and facial coverings, such as bandanas, gaiters, and scarves to find the most comfortable option.
- Consider soft fabric liners to reduce any unpleasant sensations of scratchy material on the lips and cheeks.
- Consider masks that show mouths through a [plastic window](#) to improve communication.
- Consider [neck strips](#) with buttons to loop the mask on, instead of looping over the ears.
- [Attach buttons to eye glasses with rubber bands](#) to allow masks to be connected to glasses, instead of looping over the ears.
- [Consider masks that connect to baseball caps](#) (where allowed) or [headbands](#).
- Consider masks that Velcro or tie at the back of the head.
- Explore masks and facial coverings made out of different fabric weights based on weather conditions.

Teach Students How to Wear Masks and Other Facial Coverings

- Support students with a consistent message about wearing masks and other facial coverings.
 - Be sure to find out whether any students have [accommodations or health needs that require them to go without a mask or other facial covering](#).
 - Ensure school personnel working with students who are unable to wear face coverings have appropriate PPE and training.
- Teach students to wear the mask or other facial covering so it covers both the nose and mouth at all times.
 - Demonstrate and [show pictures of correct and incorrect mask positioning](#).
- Work with occupational therapy practitioners to implement a wearing schedule and use other strategies (e.g., sensory desensitizing techniques for children with documented assessment results that suggest sensory defensiveness) to support students with anxiety or other concerns related to wearing face coverings.
- Practice all steps for managing masks independently, including putting them on, taking them off, packing for transport, and washing.
 - Remind students not to touch the outside of the mask that covers their mouth and nose. Instead, encourage students to put on and take off the mask by using the ear loop/ties.
 - Remind students to put on a clean mask after eating lunch.
- Explain the need to cover the nose and mouth throughout the day.

- Incorporate stories, video models, and practice with toys (e.g., having a washable stuffed animal wear a mask).
- Post signs in the classroom and throughout the school that encourage and remind students to wear masks or other facial coverings.

Teach Students to Care for Masks

- Encourage students to take off masks at designated times by using the loops or the ties and avoiding the portion of the mask that covers the face to prevent the spread of germs.
- Encourage students to wear a fresh mask or facial covering to school each day.
- Encourage students to place soiled masks in sealable plastic bags for transport back home.
- Encourage families to [regularly launder masks](#).

Resources

- [Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19](#)
- [World Health Organization video: How to Wear a Fabric Mask](#)
- [Photos to remind students how to wear masks from Home Run Remington](#)
- [Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative \(ASERT\)'s Wearing a Mask Social Story \(available in English, Chinese, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, and Burmese\)](#)