

Fabric Masks: Guidelines and Suggestions

Fabric masks are used as one method of reducing the spread of COVID-19. They act as “source control,” helping to stop the virus at the source – the infected person. Since it is possible to spread the virus when you do not have symptoms, it is essential that everyone, even those who feel well, wear a mask when in public. All staff, students and visitors must wear a mask when on The GSA campus.

CHOOSING A MASK

All masks are not created equal. There are countless designs available to be made or purchased and the style and fabric choices will determine how effective and comfortable the mask is. An effective mask must be made and fit such that it reduces the spread of respiratory droplets. To help you choose, remember the following tips:

- Masks should have 2 or more layers.
- Tightly woven fabrics work better than loosely woven fabrics.
- Do not use plastics or any material through which air cannot pass.
- Select fabrics that can be washed in a washing machine and dried in a dryer.
- Fit is very important. The mask should fit closely over the bridge of the nose, at the sides and below the chin. A loose mask offers little protection.
- If you can feel air or your breath moving around the edges of your mask or if your glasses fog up while you wear your mask, the mask is too loose or is incorrectly fit.
- Avoid the use of fleece fabrics. Preliminary research suggests fleece may not be an appropriate material for mask making.
- Do not use a mask with a valve as these do not block the escape of respiratory droplets.

WEARING AND CARING FOR YOUR MASK

By caring for your mask, you can ensure it keeps you and those around you safe. Here are some wear and care tips to help you:

- Never use a mask that shows signs of wear or that is stained. These should be discarded.
- Do not share masks. Each person should have their own supply.

- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer before putting on or taking off your mask. After removing your mask, wash again.
- While wearing a mask, do not touch your mask or your face.
- Always carry spare masks with you in a clean bag
- Your mask should be changed if it becomes damp or dirty. Outdoors in warm Texas weather, this may mean changing your mask very frequently. Be sure to carry enough extras.
- When removed, used masks should be placed in a designated “dirty mask” bag. This should be a plastic zip-top bag that can be closed to prevent contamination of clean items.
- Wash used masks daily in the washing machine using warm or hot water and laundry detergent. Avoid products that may irritate your skin or that are strongly scented.
- Do not put disinfectants or hand sanitizer on your mask. These can be dangerous when inhaled.
- If you use a disposable filter in your mask, replace it every time the mask becomes damp or dirty, and at least once a day.

The best mask is the one your daughter will wear! It can help to involve your daughter in the selection of her mask. Choose fun colors or prints and ensure the mask is comfortable when worn for longer periods of time. It is also essential to select a mask that your daughter is able to put on and take off herself, as she will likely need to change it while at school. [This video](#) may help you and your daughter become more comfortable with these mask-wearing guidelines.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The World Health Organization [When and How to Use Masks](#)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [Use of Masks to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19](#)