



Face Mask Information

We will wear face masks on course when social distancing is not possible. Realistically, there will be plenty of times when you will need to be close to your teammates during expedition travel, including lifting packs, cooking around the fire, or riding in the van. Having an effective face mask for these situations is paramount.

Traditional neck gaiters are very breathable, but breathability means that respiratory droplets can pass through easily, creating a very false sense of protection.

With these challenges to risk mitigation, here's the scoop on face masks for our courses.

Mask Criteria

1. All masks should be at least 2 layers. If you have a thin synthetic/polyester buff, make sure there is enough fabric that you can fold it over to create a face mask with 2 layers of fabric.
2. Test Them:
 - a. Make sure you can't see daylight when you hold the mask up to a lightbulb.
 - b. Try to blow out a birthday candle. If the mask doesn't pass these two tests, it's a flunky in the pandemic wardrobe. More details [here](#).

Cotton Face Masks: 2 or 3-layers of fabric are a solid choice for many non-aerobic situations. It is likely what you've been using one since the pandemic hatched. They have the filtration protection to mitigate a chunk of aerosols; however, it gets tricky from there. Cotton is best for non-medical masks, as the fibers trap particles well, but trapped moisture quickly turns into a soggy mask, rendering it ineffective and uncomfortable. They will need to be dried out thoroughly at the end of the day which can be challenging in the wilderness.

Staff Picks:

[Outdoor Research Essential Face Mask Kit](#): comes with filter inserts for added protection. Instructors like these for the quick drying material along with comfortable fit.

Related Articles

- [CDC: How to Select, Wear and Clean Your Mask](#)
- [Cold Humid conditions and respiratory droplets](#)
- [Ranking Effective Filtration in DIY Mask](#) – scroll down to mask material filtration chart
- [How to Do the Barrier Efficacy Test: Blowing Out A Candle, with thermal imaging maps](#)