



Return to Soccer Activities Guidelines

Approved: August 21, 2020

Updated: September 14, 2020

(updates highlighted in yellow)

As a club, we acknowledge the upcoming fall soccer season must be approached differently than in the past. Our mission statement will continue to guide us through this unprecedented season and allows us to keep the appropriate priorities for our club.

The Grafton Soccer Club is committed to providing an opportunity for the youth of Grafton to participate and develop in the game of soccer within a fun and safe environment, promoting individual skills and fitness, team play, sportsmanship and a passion for the game.

Return to Soccer Activities

Governor Baker has provided a 4-phase guideline to reopen the state. Each phase of return has specific guidelines that must be followed by the Grafton Soccer Club. Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association has provided Return-to-Soccer Guidelines which the Grafton Soccer Club is adopting and heavily relying on here.

Implementing the Return-to-Soccer Activities Guidelines presented here will require a cooperative relationship between the Grafton Soccer Club, our Coaches, Parent(s)/Guardian(s), and the Players. While the Grafton Soccer Club and our Coaches must create a safe environment, the parent(s)/guardian(s) are the only ones who may make the decision for their child to return to soccer activities.

As of August 13th, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) issued amendments to the COVID-19 order no 43 classifying youth soccer as a Moderate Risk sport. Moderate Risk is defined as a sport or activities that involve intermittent close proximity or limited, incidental physical contact between participants.

Sports in this category are permitted to participate in Level 1, 2, and 3 training activities, if modifications are made to play.

After review of the guidelines from both the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association, the Grafton Soccer Club has selected the following modifications to play.

These modifications are intended to maintain compliance with the state guidelines as well as to minimize the risk of transmission of infection among participants and our community.

There will always remain an inherent risk participating in sports, but these modifications will be taken by Grafton Soccer Club to minimize the risk.

- All age groups will participate in an In-Town Only Recreational League.
 - Creating an In-Town Only for all ages give the Grafton Soccer Club greater control and ability to adjust and evolve for the safety of the players and community.
 - In-Town Only for all ages will place the emphasis on fun and safe rather than the competitive nature sports can foster.
- Minimize Intermittent Contact: Game situations that result in intermittent close physical or face-to-face contact must be modified or eliminated.
 - **Restarts** – An indirect free kick will be awarded to the team whom the referee deemed to be in possession when the referee stops play.
 - **Throw-Ins** will be replaced by a Kick-in.
 - Ball is placed on the touchline and kicked back into play.
 - Opponents must stand at least 10 yards from the point on the touchline.
 - **Corner Kicks**
 - The ball may not be played directly into the opponent's penalty area.
 - Opponents must remain at least 10 yds from the corner arc until the ball is in play.
 - **Heading** is suspended for all ages during this time. Any intentional heading will be treated as a violation resulting in an indirect free kick restart.

- **Slide Tackling** is suspended for all ages during this time. A slide tackle will be considered a violation resulting in an indirect free kick restart.
- **Direct Kicks & Defending Direct Kicks**
 - Violations inside the penalty box will result in a penalty shot as normal.
 - All Violations outside of the penalty box will result in an indirect free kick.
 - Defending with a defensive wall is suspended for all ages.
- **Facial Coverings**
 - **Coaches Must Wear Facial Coverings during all soccer related activities.**
 - Players are required to wear facial coverings. Only facial coverings that secure with loops around a player's ears are acceptable. This includes arriving to the field, during play, and leaving the field.
 - The default expectation is that face coverings will be worn.
 - Facial Covering Exceptions: when distancing of 6 feet or more is possible; or for individuals that are unable to wear a face covering due to a medical condition or disability.
- **Ball(s)**
 - Before each game, at half time, and the end of the game the ball must be wiped with a sanitizer.
 - During a practice, each player should use their own ball.
- **Goalkeeper Gloves**
 - Players considering playing goalkeeper must bring their own personal gloves. No sharing of goalkeeper gloves will be permitted.
- **Fields/Playing Areas**
 - All Practices and Games must finish by 6:00pm to reduce the risk of EEE.
 - No More than 25 players on a single playing area at one time.
 - No More than 50 people (spectators included) at a single GSC activity at one time.

Parent(s) &/or Spectators

- Massachusetts Youth Soccer requires Grafton Soccer Club to limit the number of spectators at all soccer activities to One (1) per player. Spectators are defined as a Parent, Legal Guardian, or Chaperone.
- **All Spectators must always wear facial coverings and maintain six feet of social distance (Coaches & Referees included).**
- Coaches and the Grafton Soccer Club Board of Directors will hold all players and spectators responsible for following these guidelines.