



ABC GUIDELINES: COVID-19

Guidelines for the reopening of Climbing Gym Industry during social distancing



More people
More active
More often

Written in partnership with UK Active and the OIA and compliant with the Government:
'Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) Providers of grassroots sport and gym/leisure facilities.'

OVERVIEW

This document is a framework setting out the operational requirements for opening climbing gyms and is based on a joint framework developed with UK Active for gyms and leisure centres during an anticipated period of “social distancing”, following the full closure of the sector due to Covid-19.

The document has been developed in full partnership with the major fitness and leisure operators in the UK and has been reviewed by a leading virologist. It has also been informed by best practice from international markets where governments are at different stages of managing the Covid-19 crisis, and working with their own fitness sectors.

The guidelines have been written following research through working groups from the Association of British Climbing Walls. The ABC have also been in weekly contact with a number of other European and North American indoor climbing organisations. The ABC guidelines are comparable or stricter than those from other countries we have been working with.

The guidelines have been approved by The British Mountaineering Council, the sport’s National Governing Body.

Our guidelines are compliant with those produced by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport which have been written in consultation with UKActive, Sport England, Sport and Recreation Alliance, National Governing Bodies, Public Health England and the HSE.

We believe climbing will play a vital role in ensuring the return of physical activity and the ongoing health and well-being of the nation following the raising of Covid-19 restrictions. We all understand how important any physical activity is, and as the Chief Medical Officer stated ‘There is no situation, no age, no condition, where exercise is not a good thing’.

This document sets out the framework for opening climbing gyms and provides a basis for individual operators to add their own operating guidance for customers, staff and supply chains in their own venues as necessary.

It is not intended to be exhaustive in covering every possible scenario but aims to provide a clear direction for the entire leisure sector, ensuring climbing gyms will fall within the best practice of the leading recognised leisure facilities.

Individual climbing gyms may make their own decisions to enhance or adapt this to their own venues, and even go above the standards within this document, but not lower, if they wish to be recognised as meeting the standards.

The strategy is based around 3 principles

- Hygiene
- Capacity Management
- Social Distancing

GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE: ESSENTIAL READING

For England, the Government has produced the guide linked above and below, on how to work safely in a COVID-19 environment. It is updated regularly, The guidance helps you to think about risk, who should go back to work, social distancing, managing customers and workforce, and more. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are all taking a slightly different approach but very similar at the top line of protocols.

For England

see the [Working safely during coronavirus guide](#)

For Wales

see the [Taking all reasonable measures to maintain physical distancing in the workplace](#)

For Scotland

see the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Phase 1: business and physical distancing guidance](#)

For Northern Ireland

see the [Coronavirus: Workplace safety guidance and priority sector list](#)

DCMS advice on reopening a gym or leisure venue

see the [Working safely during coronavirus \(specifically for providers of grassroots sport and gym/leisure facilities\)](#)

COMMUNICATE YOUR 'COVID-SAFE' STATUS

'WE'RE GOOD TO GO'

As an Outdoor Recreation venue or destination, you can apply for the Visit Britain 'Kite Mark' [here](#). This is a nationally coordinated campaign by Visit Britain and the Department of Culture Media & Sport that is relevant in all 4 devolved nations and intended to inspire confidence in returning consumers.

Go to the [Visit Britain Website](#) - track to the OIA / Outdoor Recreation link for your sector and start the application process. It is a simple, online, self-certified process that walks you through the key steps we've talked about above. There is a help line you can ring and useful links as well. If you can complete the 20+ questions and agree the Terms & Conditions then you will be awarded a Visit Britain 'We're Good To Go' Kite Mark with your own unique number. The award IS MONITORED and there will be spot checks and mystery shops on establishments. You will also need to appoint a COVID-19 contact for Visit Britain to ensure any updates to policy are put in place. If an error is made there will be help from Visit Britain and the OIA, if in the end you are unable to be compliant, then permission to use the mark will be withdrawn.



In addition

Here is a link to a selection of ABC posters to print and display around your centre.

www.abcwalls.co.uk

You may also find your local printer, as well as many suppliers online, offering useful generic products too.

REOPENING GUIDELINES

GENERAL

- PHE (or equivalent) posters will be on display informing customers and staff of social distances and cleanliness/hygiene protocols throughout the facility.
- Operators will commit to the wellbeing of their staff and customers, and if they show/have any signs of Covid-19 (temp, cough, difficulty breathing), they will be sent home to follow Government regulations.
- Operators will comply with any health designation documentation that the government implements.
- Hand sanitizer and/or soap will be available for both staff and customers to use on entrances and around the gym.
- Encourage customers to adhere to social distances with point of sale, information and Staff 'floor walking'. Further criteria is below for certain areas.
- Face masks will not be mandatory, unless government requires this.
- It is down to the individual customer to take reasonable personal responsibility for social distancing when taking part in climbing and belaying.
- Queue management. Gyms will ensure two metre spacing markers on the floor and if necessary, outside the entrance.

CAPACITY MANAGEMENT

- Climbing walls will reduce their capacities to 1 person per 9 sq metres of space. This includes circulation, toilets and changing areas.
- If time slots are used, customers will be managed in and out the centre to ensure social distancing measures are adhered to.
- Any taught courses that are run will be undertaken with full adherence to social distancing guidelines and after a specific risk assessment has been completed.

CLEANING

- Continue rigorous cleaning procedures.
- If Covid-19 case in facility, operator will follow the PHE Guidance – '[COVID-19 – Cleaning in non-healthcare settings](#)' while cleaning all areas of the facility.
- Staff will carry out regular cleaning throughout the premises, particularly of points of frequent contact.
- Hand wipes/sanitizers will be on offer (or people will be directed to where they can clean hands).
- Gloves are not mandatory: WHO advice is that it is preferable not to wear gloves but to regularly wash your hands.
- Processes will be put in place to make sure social distancing remains in place for reception staff e.g. protective screens.

CHANGING ROOMS/ SHOWERS/TOILETS

- All gyms will be encouraged to keep changing rooms and showers closed.
- Extra care will be taken and signposting deployed to maintain social distancing when in these areas.
- Lockers will remain in use, as long as social distancing can be maintained. Spray and cloths will be available for customer use at common touch points.

CLIMBING GYM AND WARM-UP AREAS

- Wherever reasonably possible ground level equipment will be cleaned regularly by the venue, customers will be asked to clean equipment immediately after use - e.g. exercise bikes, weights in warm up areas, pull up bars etc. Sanitising cloths and sprays will be provided.
- In the case of climbing holds, which are part of the infrastructure of the centre, these cannot be cleaned between uses. They will be cleaned only when removed from the wall before being replaced. Customers should be encouraged to use good hand hygiene with sanitiser available around the centre. This is in common with other facilities such as schools, public transport, trampoline parks and playgrounds etc.
- At all times we will ask customers to use their own best endeavours to keep the centre clean. This will be on top of the regular cleaning schedule.
- Extra signage regarding social distancing will be in place around warm up, stretching, free- weights or training area.

VENTILATION

As per the government guidelines, in Section 5 it states that restricting capacity to 1 person per 9 square meters of usable space will allow for ventilation of 20L per second, per person in venues with no mechanical ventilation system. Climbing walls will ensure appropriate ventilation through either natural or mechanical means. They will use CO2 monitors where necessary to ensure adequate air flow for both customers and staff.

CAFÉ/RESTAURANT

- Cafes, restaurants and bars will re-open when Government restrictions allow and will operate under any guidelines issued by PHE or other national health authorities.
- Additional signs will be put up communicating appropriate cleanliness and social distancing measures.
- Vending machines will remain in place but will be cleaned regularly.
- Government guidance on Coronavirus protocols for food businesses will be followed.

FIRST AID/RESCUE AT HEIGHT

- Although there may be heightened concerns around first aid, this will continue as normal. The below adaptations will be used when needed:
- Staff undertaking rescue at height will use suitable PPE
- Gloves and resuscitation face masks will be provided to all first aiders for emergency first aid
- Face masks for general first aid
- The Resuscitation Council UK has provided [specific guidance on CPR delivery](#) which walls are advised to communicate to all first aid staff and duty managers.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Operators to follow Government guidance for office staff. Card/contactless payment will be promoted.
- Operators may want to consider additional steps for any clientele over 70/with underlying health conditions.
- All external contractors are to follow Social Distancing and cleanliness Guidelines.



The procedures below have been prepared by the ABC specifically for UK Climbing Walls. They are based on solid research and government guidelines and requirements. They should be read in conjunction with 'ABC Guidelines' submitted to the government through UK Active.

There are 8 sections to these procedures:

1. **Hygiene**
2. **Capacity Management**
3. **Social Distancing**
4. **Coaching and Instructing**
5. **Running Competitions (local and national)**
6. **Cafe**
7. **Outdoor Structures**
8. **Managing Staff**

Each section has 3 different levels:

Government Requirements - mandatory.

These are practices that have been imposed on the industry or have become commonly expected. You must comply with these. Health matters are a devolved issue so walls should monitor the relevant Home Nation Government website to stay aware of the relevant timeline as well as any variations in guidelines.

Climbing wall adaptation - recommended.

These practices have been adapted to the specifics of the climbing wall environment and are practices that you should seriously consider. If you decide not to comply, we recommend that you complete a full risk assessment.

Other practices for consideration.

These are practices that have been identified through our work that may help with customer perception or management but the evidence for them helping to stop virus transmission is weak or mixed.

Our Procedures set out minimum requirements. You should comply with the Mandatory Requirements but you are welcome to enhance these in ways that fit your business.

These Procedures are compliant with the [Government Guidelines](#) issued for the reopening of the leisure sector on 9 July. You should ensure that you read the Government Guidelines and ensure that you are complying with them.

If you employ 50 people or more, you have an obligation to put the results of your Covid-19 Risk Assessment on your website. The government guidance also encourages all businesses to publish this info, regardless of size.

It should be recognised that whilst climbing walls will take all reasonable steps to prevent the transfer of CV to its staff and customers, there will always be a risk that an infected person visits the centre and either through droplet transfer, aerosol action or smear infection, transfers the virus to others. Our customers should be made aware of this and make their own decision given their specific circumstances whether this small residual risk is one they are willing to take. The residual risk should be no greater than in many other public spaces and facilities that are already open or will re-open in the coming months.

You should display the [Government Staying COVID-19 Secure poster](#) once you have completed all the actions in this document.



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Important

The above information has been researched and prepared with the best intention of providing a helpful 'hub' of advice and information available at the time and is in no way legal advice or an exclusive recommendation or endorsement from the ABC.

Always refer to and follow government guidelines

Written with help and in collaboration with



More people
More active
More often