

CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS REGARDING FACE COVERINGS

What can I do if a colleague is not wearing a mask? What should I do?

First, assume the best in your colleague. Like you, they may still be working to build the habit of meeting all health AND safety protocols. They may have forgotten to put it on, or they may not have realized they would be around others. Kind support from colleagues is one of the best ways to help establish new habits. Here are some ideas on what you can say to support healthy behaviors on campus:

- *Don't forget your mask!*
- *Let's make sure we follow the mask requirements.*
- *Remember, we are all expected to wear masks.*
- *Please wear a mask when you come to my office/cubicle.*

What if a colleague or direct report does not want to comply with the CDC recommendation and UK requirement to wear a face mask?

Start by talking to the individual to better understand their reasons for not wearing a mask.

- If [they are concerned](#) about wearing a mask due to a health condition, they should contact the ADA coordinator at (859) 257-8927. If a colleague or direct report indicates they have already contacted the ADA coordinator, take their word for it.
- If their concern is not due to a health condition, share the [CDC recommendation](#) on wearing masks, and the [UK requirement](#) that wearing masks will be required unless alone in a room, or when it would interfere with required curricular requirements and activities.

What if they still refuse to comply?

1. Steer the conversation in a productive direction and position yourself as a partner.
 - *I understand you are upset. Let's talk about it.*
 - *I can see you are frustrated. Let's see if I can help.*
2. Keep your own emotions under control and do not let their anger provoke your own.
 - Concentrate on controlling your breathing and pausing before responding.
 - Do not attempt to reason with the person while their emotions are high.
 - Remember, this conversation is not about personal beliefs; it's about the clear university requirements on wearing a face mask.

3. Identify and diagnose the *real* problem.

- Ask non-threatening clarifying questions to better understand their concerns.
 - “Help me understand your concerns with wearing a mask.”
 - “What else is bothering you?”
- Demonstrate active listening skills (eye contact, head nods, etc.).
- Use silence to allow the individual time to clarify their thoughts. This often leads to clearer understanding of the true source of the person’s conflict.

If a person challenges your authority, redirect their attention to the issue at hand. Stay focused on the need to meet the university’s clear expectations on wearing a face covering; this is not about anyone’s personal beliefs. ***Ignore the challenge, but not the person.*** Bring their focus back to how you can work together to solve the problem.

4. Consider and discuss options.

While the only true option is that they wear a mask while on site, unless approved by the ADA Compliance Officer, involving them in finding a solution could help diffuse the situation and help them better understand the overall reasons behind wearing a mask.

When a person is upset, they may not be able to think clearly. Give them a few moments to *think through what you’ve said*. A person’s stress rises when they feel rushed. Allowing time brings calm.

- *What is the worst thing that could happen if you wear a mask?*
- *What is the best thing that could happen if you wear a mask?*
- *What suggestions do you have?*

They will more than likely be focused on why it won’t work. Your goal should be to show the upside.

Having a calm conversation will hopefully diffuse the situation and help the individual understand the importance of complying with CDC recommendations and UK’s requirement of wearing a mask.

After all that, what if they still refuse to wear a mask?

- If it is a colleague, refer them to their supervisor.
- If it is a direct report, contact [Employee Relations](#) at (859) 257-8758.