



April 2022

To Our Boulders Community:

Happy April! This comment response will address feedback we've received in the month of March.

As a reminder, comments can be submitted anytime to our [three online comment boxes](#), and to our two physical comment boxes (one in each location). We do our best to respond as frequently as possible in a public forum, and for urgent or easy-to-take-care-of matters, we often fix things on the fly. While we don't address every comment in our public responses, we do try to get the gist of all the comments represented, either through combining comments or addressing a concept more generally. If you have a question about how your comment was (or wasn't) responded to, or the response process in general, feel free to email community@bouldersgym.com.

We can't thank you enough for contributing to improvement at Boulders. We really appreciate the comments, especially the ones which spark thoughtful internal conversations and engagement with our community. We're happy and privileged to serve each and every one of you.

Sincerely,

Boulders Climbing Gym

General Feedback, COVID concerns:

Several Comments, Addressed Together: #1 *I am bummed to hear that masks will still be required while climbing. Not only does it suck to wear a mask while exercising, it seems to express distrust in the PHMDC who have deemed it safe to allow the indoor mask mandate to expire. Do you have any metrics you are using to decide when you will end the requirement, or is the plan to require masks indefinitely?* #2 *Get rid of the mask rule that is more strict than a mask mandate* #3 *I'll admit I'm sick of masks....*

#4 *The removal of the vaccine mandate has made it where a lot of my friends and I are going to cancel our memberships. It is the wrong decision and I am sad that you don't care about your members*

Response: If you've been following our restrictions throughout the pandemic, you know that we have always erred on the side of caution, and have generally waited at least two weeks before following the county in lifting requirements. So far, we have found this to be effective in limiting the number of rule changes we've had to make, as the county has lifted and subsequently reinstated restrictions. In the case of the vaccine mandate, in the face of an unprecedented surge, we went far beyond what was demanded of us by Dane County, adding a barrier of access to our space. When numbers were surging, we felt that was a necessary safety measure, and we were modeling what was happening in many large cities around us. However, we do not find it appropriate to maintain such barriers if a concrete case cannot be made that they are required for health and safety.

In the case of the mask mandate, we are waiting, as always, to see how the numbers responded to the mandate lifting in Dane County, and we were also waiting for UW's spring break to pass, which had the potential to cause a surge in cases. Overall, we are sick of masks just like you are. However, we know that the burden of wearing a mask is small compared to the fear and/or serious

illness many vulnerable populations are currently experiencing as restrictions are lifted across the country. We are continuing to monitor case numbers, and barring a sudden change in case rates, we expect our mask mandate to lift shortly.

We would like to thank the majority of our patrons who have complied with and supported the various decisions we've had to make over the course of the pandemic. Our community's ability to pull together and shoulder personal discomfort for the benefit of the group is unique, and makes us incredibly proud. We would like additionally and especially to thank our desk staff who have had the complex job of enforcing these various rules. We have received feedback on every decision we have made so far, always from both sides of the issue, calling every rule, mandate, or requirement both too harsh and not harsh enough, and desk staff have shouldered the brunt of these complaints.

We appreciate your patience as we continue trying to walk the line between individual choice and community safety.

General Feedback:

Comment: *People at the desk are wonderful. Thanks for making this place possible*

Response: We're glad you've noticed our awesome desk staff, we think they're pretty wonderful too. If you haven't already, feel free to stop by and introduce yourself, ask for beta, or just say hi :)

Two Comments, Addressed Together: #1 *Most of the climbing shoes the toes part is ripped and it's really hard to climb without proper shoes #2 shoes are not good and most of them are ripped on the toe and hard to get a grip on routes*

Response: Yes you are absolutely right, and we are sorry! With the uptick in rental gear use as COVID wanes, we got out of sync with our rental shoe refreshal. We are in the process of ordering more shoes, and will get back on schedule so that this doesn't happen again. Thank you!

Comment: *Bring back reservations, the gyms are too crowded. It feels unsafe to climb during peak hours*

Response: Oof we hear you. Believe it or not, we are not even anywhere near the capacity we had in the pre-pandemic era- crazy! We likely won't be bringing back reservations, as they created an issue of access for many, but please do feel free to let staff know if you ever see folks behaving in a way that is unsafe. We also encourage everyone to climb at off-peak hours when possible (7am-4pm is lovely and quiet!).

Comment: *Curious if there could ever be a in gym sign in for solo top rope climbers to sign in when they get to the gym and sign out when they leave so if anyone else is solo climbing and wants to belay one another it is easier to connect! Maybe put shirt color or have employees announce names if there is a second person! No worries if it could lead to liability or trust issues but just a thought as I am a climber who often comes alone and wishes to do non auto belay routes!*

Response: Yes! You will be hearing more about this soon, but we will shortly be switching over to a new POS system, with a new app that will replace KAYA. With that new software, there will be

a find-a-partner function that allows folks to find belay partners, climbing partners, or just folks to hang out at the gym with! We are excited to see how it works out!

Comment: *Idea for a class: Intro to Dynos*

Response: Awesome idea! We will send this over to the appropriate managers. As you have likely noticed, we are a bit tight on physical gym space these days, which makes the introduction of new programs a bit tricky, so thank you for your patience!

Comment: *Thank you for teaching our whole family @ once. So nice and inviting :)*

Response: Thank you for coming in! One of our favorite things about climbing is that it can be an intergenerational sport!

Two Comments, Addressed Together: #1: *A warmup area of some kind downtown would be great! #2: I think it would be nice to have some open mat space for warm ups/workouts by the couch space.*

Response: Unfortunately, the current structure of the gym is not well set up to accommodate more workout space downtown than already exists near the slab wall. We know that this has been a frustration for some, and in the planning of future gyms we will certainly prioritize this type of space. In the meantime, the area in the back right corner of the downtown gym near the ramp and glass doors is typically available for stretches, and we will make sure to have workout mats of some kind downtown to be used over there. Additionally, stay tuned for partnerships in the works with various other downtown gym and fitness establishments, which we are hopeful will be able to make up for the lack of workout space downtown.

Comment: *I think it would be really cool to have some kind of singles event at Boulders. Seeing so many climbing couples at the gym always makes me wonder how I can meet other climbers who are single.*

Response: We think this is an awesome idea! We're currently trying to figure out how to go about this, so if you have any more specific ideas please shoot them our way!

Comment: *I found some of the climbs a little risky. Banged my head with pipes*

Response: So sorry to hear this! We will make sure that this gets managed accordingly, thank you for your feedback!

Comment: *My only complaint is that downtown is too hot for training properly. thanks for listening.*

Response: Thank you for your feedback, this is a known issue. Since we rent the space for the downtown gym, it's sometimes hard for us to have total climate control. Always feel free to mention to desk staff if it feels particularly hot, sometimes they have control over the temperature, but oftentimes they do not. We're working on a more sustainable solution to this issue, and hopefully will have an update soon!

Routesetting Feedback:

Comment: *Please consider having more down-climbing holds! Often there is only one down-climb hold or none at all (sometimes not even jugs from nearby problems), and jumping down from the top of a boulder problem isn't always advisable, especially when the gym is crowded and there are lots of people walking around not paying attention.*

Response: We agree that jumping down from the top of the wall is generally not the best idea, and are sorry to hear that you've found a lack of downclimb holds. Since receiving this comment, we bought more downclimb holds for both locations, and folks should see those implemented already. We also always want to remind folks to plan a way down before you get on the wall. Sometimes, the best move can be to use the top of the wall to traverse slightly to a more comfortable downclimb.

Two Comments, Addressed Together: #1 *Love the partner climbing! #2* *More partner climbs? We heart partner climbs! (also, brings so much collaboration!)*

Response: We're so happy to hear that you're enjoying these climbs! We'll make sure the setters know that they are in high demand :)

Comment: *More crack climbs!*

Response: We were so happy to finally be able to bring some crack climbing to you all! Creating those climbs is incredibly time consuming, so if you see our head setter Baker around the gym, make sure you thank him. Hopefully we will be able to bring you more at some point in the future!

Safe Space Feedback:

There were no comments in this section that were not addressed in prior sections and/or handled in person at the time of the incident.

Big Picture Feedback:

Comment: *to preface this, i am a woman of color, but i am not Black. in the downtown gym, i have noticed occasionally there is music being played with frequent usage of the n-word. this music is created by Black people and i have nothing against the appreciation or listening to the music, but it has always felt off to me that this music is allowed to be played in a space that is so overwhelmingly white. it hasn't sat well with me. this article in the chicago tribune makes a lot of similar points that i've been thinking about - <https://www.chicagotribune.com/columns/mary-schmich/ct-met-schmich-n-word-eric-williams-20190215-story.html>*

i especially agree with the author's point that in a primarily white establishment, there is no place for music with the n-word. i don't believe this cultural music should be used in such an un-diverse setting, and i don't

feel as if boulders is more “hip” by playing it. if anything, to me, it is a reminder of how white the demographics are.

this is only my opinion though, and i am curious if others have expressed this before, or what Black boulders members think.

Response: Thank you so much for taking the time to write this piece of feedback. As some may already know, the management team at Boulders, which is entirely white, has been participating in anti-racism training centered around white supremacy in the workplace for almost a year now, and this comment was our most recent point of discussion.

What our conversations inevitably circled back to, was the central question: who *has the power to decide what is appropriate in various situations?* As a group of nearly all white people, we took your comment as an opportunity to interrogate our own biases and reflect on our relationship to and rap/hip hop. These conversations were new for many of us, and again we thank you for reminding us of the importance of this issue.

For the time being, we feel as though it would be inappropriate for us to make a blanket rule banning the use of the n-word by Black artists. We feel as though these artists have a right to express with the words they choose, and since we do not censor other swear words, we didn't feel as though it was our place to mark this word specifically as erroneous if the artist intentionally included it. However, we are going to take this comment as a jumping off point to have conversations with our wider staff this summer, centered around interrogating whiteness and everyone's relationship to and consumption of rap/hip hop.

All of that said, we also value the safety, physical as well as emotional, of our patrons. If you or anyone else is ever made to feel uncomfortable by music that is being played, please feel free to ask desk staff to change it, or fill out the anonymous [safe space feedback form](#), which will notify management in real-time so that the issue can be dealt with immediately.

This decision is obviously imperfect. We understand that there is a violent history of cultural exploitation in the music industry specifically, and that white folks have long cherry picked pieces of Black culture to adopt for their personal gain. We do believe that our desk staff play the music that they do out of appreciation for the art, rather than to appear “hip”, but, of course, as we are all entrenched in white supremacy, that is a hard line to draw.

We would be more than happy to continue this conversation, and to hear opinions from other climbers who have had experience with this. If you would like to contribute your thoughts or ideas please send them our way via [email](#), or by filling out one of the [feedback forms](#).

Again, a huge thank you to whoever wrote this piece of feedback. This conversation is incredibly important, and we would be more than happy to hear back from you if you would like to contact us again.