



IEEE Ottawa Robotics Competition Compétition de robotique d'Ottawa d'IEEE

COVID-19 Guidelines for Teams

Last Revised: January 29, 2022

School robotics clubs are currently not running in many instances. As such, teams will likely have to meet on their own time outside of school hours. Our priority is to keep you and your team safe and healthy, so we can meet again in person in a future year when the competition can be held in person again. This is why we have created the following guidelines using the current available guidelines and evidence. In some cases, we have decided to go beyond what is recommended out of an abundance of caution.

With that said, regularly check federal government, provincial government and local public health unit websites for the latest information on public health measures and restrictions. You must follow any laws enacted by government and/or Section 22 Class Orders and/or Letters of Instruction issued under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* (Ontario) by a (Chief) Medical/Public Health Officer of Health. **Laws are subject to change on a regular basis. Wherever the law and/or public health guidance restricts you from following any of our guidelines or helps to better protect you from COVID-19 than our guidelines, the law and/or public health guidance takes precedent over our guidelines.**

Guidelines

1. When making your teams, choose other members from the same household (e.g. siblings) or class cohort (e.g. classmates). We do not recommend incorporating team members from outside the same household or class cohort. If you do, we recommend that your team meet virtually and use contactless methods when delivering or receiving items.
2. We recommend that each team member have distinct main roles (e.g. one person is the programmer, another is the tester, etc.).
3. If your team needs to purchase supplies to prepare for the competition:
 - a. Make a list of everything you think your team needs.
 - b. Use delivery, curbside pickup, or online ordering/shipping options as much as possible.

- c. If you must shop in person, consider using pick-up/reservation options, minimize the number of stores/retailers you visit, and shop with your list in hand.
4. If you need to transfer equipment (e.g. robots, test tracks, etc.) to other team members outside your household, we recommend the following:
 - a. Schedule a time for dropping off the equipment.
 - b. On arrival, leave the equipment by the door, ring the doorbell or knock on the door, and back up at least 2 metres.
 - c. For the team member receiving the equipment, store it in an area where it can stay untouched for at least 3 days. If you wish to use disinfectant, please follow the product's instructions.
5. For team meetings:
 - a. Meet using virtual tools (e.g. Google Hangouts/Meet, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Zoom, etc.). This is your safest option.
 - b. If there is not a good time to meet virtually, use emails, text messages, and phone calls to communicate between team members.
 - c. If the team is meeting in their home classroom, please follow existing guidance in place within your school.
 - d. If the team is meeting in-person at a team member's house, here is some guidance on how you can reduce your risk of getting and/or transmitting COVID-19 if you must meet in-person:
 - i. If eligible, get vaccinated. Consult your healthcare provider should you have questions before doing so.
 - ii. Implement the following COVID WISE measures:
 - W**ear a mask (see Question and Answer #2)
 - I**solate if sick (with any symptoms)
 - S**tay 2 metres apart
 - E**xercise good hand hygiene (wash hands regularly)
 - iii. Have as few people in person meet as possible.
 - iv. Ensure everyone on the team and household members of each attending team member has the COVID Alert app installed.
 1. Download for [Android](#) and [Apple](#) devices.
 2. If anyone tests positive, they should enter their one-time key code into the app, so everyone is alerted in an anonymous fashion.
 - v. Before gathering, screen each person in attendance for COVID-19 symptoms (see Question and Answer #1). Send

- anyone who is not feeling well or has any symptom back home or cancel the meeting altogether.
- vi. If the weather permits, meet outside.
 - vii. Schedule breaks so only one team member is taking a break at a time.

Questions and Answers

1. What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Common symptoms of COVID-19 can include:

- New or worsening cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever of at least 38 degrees Celsius
- Chills
- Fatigue or weakness
- Muscle or body aches
- Loss sense of smell or taste
- Headache
- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Skin changes/rashes

Symptoms can take up to 14 days from infection to appear. Symptoms vary from person to person. People may experience other symptoms not on this list. In some cases, people may even have no symptoms (asymptomatic).

2. How is COVID-19 spread/transmitted? How can we prevent COVID-19?

COVID-19 is primarily a respiratory virus, meaning that it is most easily caught in places where we may breathe the same air. COVID-19 can also spread through contaminated objects, but the risk is minimal compared to airborne/respiratory transmission risk.

As such, to reduce the spread, you should avoid:

- Crowded spaces (fewer people is better)
- Close-contact settings (further apart the better)
- Confined spaces (outdoors is best, open windows if indoors)

We also recommend that you be COVID **WISE**:

- **W**ear a mask (see below for recommendations)
- **I**solate if sick (with any symptoms)

- **Stay 2 metres apart**
- **Exercise good hand hygiene (wash hands regularly)**

For masking, it is recommended that individuals wear a well-fitted mask that provides superior filtration. This can be achieved by wearing a non-fit tested respiratory (N95, CAN95, KN95, KF94, FFP2, FFP3, and other equivalent designations) or well-fitted medical mask (or otherwise commonly known as “surgical mask”). A high quality 3-layer non-medical mask (i.e., cloth masks) can be a reasonable alternative if it promotes adherence. Respirators are designed to closely fit or seal to the face, and while fit-testing is not required for use in the community, non-fit tested respirators cannot be assumed to filter all of the air inhaled (i.e., respiratory protection).

If you are using a medical/surgical or cloth mask, you can follow these [tips](#) to improve the fit of your mask.

- 3.** I have heard the terms droplet and aerosol thrown around in terms COVID-19 transmission. Can you explain those terms?

When individuals with COVID-19 breathe, cough, sing, sneeze, or talk, the virus is ejected in droplet and aerosol forms. Droplets are typically larger, so they tend to travel less far and fall to the ground quicker. Aerosols are smaller, and thus can travel further and can stay in the air for longer.

- 4.** When is COVID-19 most contagious?

The current scientific evidence says we are most contagious starting from 2 days before symptoms appear to the day where symptoms appear. Furthermore, we remain contagious for about 10 days after symptoms appear. The period of infectivity may be increased to about 15 days following symptom onset with the Omicron (B.1.1.529) variant.

- 5.** If we have anymore questions about COVID-19, where can we turn to?

We recommend that you turn to the following resources:

- Ottawa Public Health
 - <https://ottawapublichealth.ca/coronavirus>
- Government of Ontario
 - <https://covid-19.ontario.ca>
- Government of Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada)

- <https://canada.ca/coronavirus>

6. Our team cannot meet virtually. Can we meet in person?

If a virtual meeting by Google Hangouts/Meet, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Zoom, etc., is not possible, we recommend that you can consider emails, text messages, and phone calls first. If you meet in person and in-person gatherings are permitted under the law, we recommend that you follow guideline 5d. The only exception to this is if all team members do not have COVID-19 and are from the same household.

7. I want to meet in person because I feel lonely. What should I do?

Please see guideline 5d above on what you should do if you are permitted to have in-person gatherings under the law and meet in person.

Furthermore, if you need mental health supports, please feel free to use the following resources. Standard phone and short code text messaging rates apply, where applicable.

- Kids Help Phone
 - Phone: 1-800-668-6868
 - Text message / SMS: Text "CONNECT" to 686868
- Ottawa Distress Centre:
 - Phone:
 - Distress: 613-238-3311
 - Crisis: 613-722-6914
- Hope for Wellness Line for Indigenous Canadians:
 - Phone: 1-855-242-3310
 - Online live chat: <https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>

8. Every team member got tested and everyone's test came back negative, can we meet in person safely?

A negative test result means the test did not detect enough COVID-19 when your sample was taken. It is possible that you may have been infected on the day of your test, shortly before your test, or sometime after your test. It takes a few days for the test to be able to detect COVID-19. Overall, we recommend virtual meetings to minimize the risk. If you are permitted to have in-person gatherings under the law and must meet in person, we recommend that you follow guideline 5d.

- 9.** If the team is made up of members from the same class cohort, why are you recommending against meeting in person when they already go to school together?

The longer you spend time together, the more likely you can catch COVID-19 if anyone else you are with has COVID-19. While students spend a lot of time in class together for their education, minimizing contact outside of school can help to minimize the duration of exposure. This is why we recommend virtual meetings for all teams.

- 10.** Will you allow teams to register if they are comprised of team members from different households and/or class cohorts?

We urge team supervisors to make teams that are composed of just people from the same household and/or class cohort. If you intend to register a team comprised of people from different households, we recommend that they meet virtually and use contactless methods when dropping things off or receiving things.

- 11.** If we follow your guidelines, can we still catch COVID-19?

Our guidelines cover only a small number of interactions and aim to help reduce your risk of catching COVID-19. Thus, our guidelines do not eliminate all potential sources of COVID-19. So, yes, you can still catch COVID-19, even if you follow our guidelines.

- 12.** I organized an in-person gathering with the team and incurred a fine due to laws or regulations. Will you reimburse me for the fine and/or the legal fees that I incur from contesting the fine?

No, you are fully responsible for the fine and/or any legal fees you incur as you seek to contest the fine. As we stated earlier in this document, laws and Section 22 Class Orders and/or Letters of Instruction issued under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* can override any of our guidelines. Public health measures and restrictions are subject to change, which is why we recommend that you always obtain the latest information from the government and/or your local public health unit.

13. Please organize the competition like you normally do!

We would like to get back to normal, but we want to keep everyone safe from COVID-19 as best as we can while having some kind of competition. This is why we are taking the time to organize a virtual competition and developing guidelines like these ones. We will organize the competition as we normally do as soon as we feel that can do it safely.

14. If you organize a normal competition and we all get infected, we will be immune.

We are not entirely sure how long immunity to COVID-19 lasts. There have been documented cases of re-infection. Furthermore, this idea would increase our risk of passing COVID-19 to others, including to those who may be more likely to die from COVID-19 (e.g. older adults, immunocompromised individuals, etc.). As much as we would like to organize a normal competition, we want to organize a competition that allows students to still participate but helps to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

15. What if I follow your advice to get vaccinated and experience an adverse event?

Health Canada has authorized the use of several vaccines as safe and effective against COVID-19. Should you have any questions regarding any authorized vaccines, please consult your healthcare provider. Should you experience an adverse event following the administration of a COVID-19 vaccine, please seek medical attention. If you experience a serious and permanent injury as a result of receiving a Health Canada authorized vaccine administered in Canada on or after December 8, 2020, you have the option to file a claim through the [Vaccine Injury Support Program](#).

References

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