

A Parent's Guide to Cross Country

Congratulations! Your son or daughter has joined the Grossmont High School Cross Country Team.

What is Cross Country?

Cross Country is a team running sport that takes place in the fall on a measured 1.5-3.1 mile loop over varied surfaces and terrain. Many Cross Country meets are held on dirt trails, park grounds, school campuses, and sometimes golf courses.

How Cross Country Is Scored

A cross country meet is scored by each team adding up the places of its top 5 finishers. As in golf, the low score wins. For example, a team that scores 26 points places ahead of a team that scores 29 points, as follows.

<u>Grossmont</u>	<u>Steele Canyon</u>
1	2
4	3
5	7
6	8
10	9
<hr/>	<hr/>
Score 26	Score 29

(Grossmont Wins!)

A team's 6th and 7th finishers can also figure in the scoring if they place ahead of the other teams' top 5 finishers. When that is the case, they become "pushers" by pushing up their opponents' scores, as follows:

<u>Grossmont</u>	<u>Steele Canyon</u>
2	1
3	4
6	5
8	7
9 (10) (11)	12
<hr/>	<hr/>
Score 28	Score 29

(Grossmont Wins!)

Only a team's 6th and 7th finishers can be pushers, regardless of how many of its runners may finish ahead of an opposing team's top 5 finishers.

Levels Of Competition/Participation

Grossmont High School is a member of the Grossmont Hills League of the Grossmont Conference. Our dual meets have 4 races usually in the following order (usually 20 minutes apart):

1. Girls' Junior Varsity
2. Boys' Junior Varsity
3. Girls' Varsity
4. Boys' Varsity

All team members can participate in our 5-league dual meets and 5 invitationals during the season.

What It Takes To Be Successful

More than anything else, success in Cross Country takes time...time to learn; time to train; time to sleep, rest and recover; after-school time; weekend time; time away from family and friends; and time away from other interests. With the academic responsibilities of being a high school student, most student-athletes are busy all the time. The willingness to devote the time that success demands is called DEDICATION.

Being a member of the Grossmont Cross Country Team carries other expectations and responsibilities. Doing what is expected of every team member is called COMMITMENT. Attending team practices every day is one of the commitments we expect. Your son or daughter has received a packet of information outlining our team rules and expectations. Ask your son or daughter to see this if you have not seen it already. Our goal is to develop team loyalty and individual responsibility and accountability among all our team members. High school sports are a wonderful vehicle for personal growth. We hope that you as parents will appreciate this and support our goals.

Another commitment we expect is COMMUNICATION with our coaching staff. If a problem or illness is going to force your son or daughter to miss practice or a meet, we expect him or her to tell us about it personally in advance. (This does not mean relaying a message through a teammate or friend.) Many such problems can be solved when athletes communicate with us.

How Can You Help Your Son Or Daughter Before The Season Starts

As your aspiring young runner begins the first weeks of training, you may wonder what you should expect and how you can assist him or her as a parent in terms of recovery, eating, sleeping, and mental attitude. As a rule, we don't recommend you change any aspect of your normal routine of home responsibilities, family meal planning, bedtime, and social guidelines. A normal consequence of beginning to train is muscle soreness, which will soon go away. If your son or daughter has not participated in sports before, this may persist up to 2 weeks. They should communicate this to us so we can adjust their training. Any athlete engaged in intensive training and competition can be subject to injury. We can prevent most injuries when our runners tell us about their aches and

pains before they become disabling. A nutritious, well balanced diet is essential for an athlete. Especially on a race days, fatty and fried foods, and carbonated or acidic drinks should be avoided. Small portions of easily digested foods eaten at least 3 hours before competition are best, but water intake should never be limited. Most athletes feel best when they race a little hungry. You should see your runner gradually starting to eat more carbohydrates.

How To Buy Running Shoes

If possible, go to a store that deals primarily with running footwear and apparel. These stores have experienced runners as sales persons who can help you choose the right shoe with the right fit for your athlete. The store that I generally recommend is Movin Shoes Running Center, which is located in Pacific Beach. There is no getting around the fact that running shoes are expensive. The best way to prolong the life and function of a new pair of running shoes is to wear them for running only, not as school shoes or for P.E. class. It is not necessary to purchase special running apparel. Loose fitting T-shirts and shorts are adequate for daily training, and your athlete will be issued a team uniform for competition.

Cross Country Vocabulary

- **Dual Meet-** a meet between two teams
- **Invitational Meet-** a multi-team meet
- **Top 7-** the scoring members of a Cross Country team
- **Course-** the marked and measured route of the race
- **Starting Box-** designated area to which a team is assigned on the starting line
- **False Start-** leaving the starting line before the gun or whistle sounds
- **Finish Chute-** a rope bordered funnel past the finish line that moves runners into their single file order of finish
- **Pace-** running speed over a particular distance
- **Surge-** a tactical increase in pace during the race
- **Kick-** a burst of speed at the finish of the race
- **Pack-** a group of runners in close proximity
- **Personal Record (PR)-** best-ever performance on a given course
- **Racing Flats-** special, lightweight shoes designed for racing, rather than daily training
- **Training Flats-** running shoes designed for long wear in daily training (called “flats” because they have no spiked bottoms)
- **Warm-Up-** a running and stretching routine that gradually warms up the body for intense running
- **Cool- Down-** a jogging routine that allows the muscles to purge themselves of lactates and the body to gradually lower its temperature to normal
- **Workout-** a daily training session

Preparing To Watch Your First Cross Country Meet

When you arrive at the meet site, ask us to see a map of the course. First, locate the start and finish, then try to scout central points where you can see as much of the race with as little moving around as possible. Many schools share similar uniform colors, so try to observe the differences while teams are warming up before the start. Be aware that our league meets feature 4 races at various levels and last about 2 hours. We will have informed your son or daughter about the correct race division and time beforehand. Some of our invitationals, however, have as many as 50 teams and a schedule of races that lasts all morning or afternoon.

Do not expect the attention of your son or daughter once we get to the meet. The athletes need time to warm-up on the course, be briefed by their coaches, and prepare for the race with their teammates. Many parents are initially surprised at the seriousness their son or daughter shows prior to and during a race. The intensity of competition may reveal a side of your young athlete's personality you haven't seen before.

During the race, you can move from point to point along the course to cheer the runners as they pass. Be careful, however, to stay off the runners' path and out of their way. Allow race officials and coaches to direct runners if they become lost during their race. Many times, when parents try to direct runners along the course, it compounds the problem. Rules also forbid running alongside a competitor to pace or encourage him or her.

At the finish of the race, the runners file through a finish chute. It's ok to greet them once they have completely exited the finish chute. Our runners have responsibilities after a race. We expect them to jog and cool-down as a team and actively support their teammates who have yet to race. Some runners are more spent than others after a race. Typical symptoms of their effort and fatigue are breathlessness, general weakness, rubbery legs, glassy eyes, salivating, and sometimes nausea. A mistake parents sometimes make is to take their sons or daughters off by themselves to try to take care of them. Please do not do this! Our coaches are experienced in dealing with these symptoms, trained in first-aid, and responsible for their care. To aid recovery, water is the best thing to drink immediately after a race.

Expect the possibility of some disappointment by your athlete after the race if his or her team did not win, and/or if he or she failed to achieve all goals. Athletes may need some emotional space afterward from both you and their coaches. Later on, they will need verbal support rather than criticism.

Once an away meet is over, if your son or daughter came on our bus, they must return to Grossmont on our bus. Please do not ask if they can leave with you. It is a district rule that is strongly enforced by our administration that athletes return on the bus if they were transported to the meet by bus. Once they have arrived back at Grossmont, they can be released to you.