

USA Climbing Policy

Event Preparation, Access, and Routesetting



USA Climbing does not tolerate discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, or national origin.

USA Climbing believes that every eligible athlete has the right to compete in a respectful, safe and harassment-free environment and has the right to participate in fair competition in accordance with USA Climbing's rules, policies, and mission.

Purpose & Scope

The USA Climbing Event Preparation, Access, and Routesetting Policy ("this Policy") sets forth the requirements and procedures regarding:

- Host Facilities providing routes/boulders for a competition
- Access to the Host Facility prior to the competition
- Requirements for Routesetters/Forerunners, including Youth/Competitor Forerunners

USA Climbing believes that adherence to this Policy is important in order to best provide fair competitions for all competitors and coaches, minimizing the "home facility" advantage, and recognizing that many competitions involve travel from long distances.¹

Any questions regarding this Policy may be sent to the relevant series manager:

Youth Series	youthseries@usaclimbing.org
Elite Series	eliteseries@usaclimbing.org
Para Climbing Series	paraseries@usaclimbing.org
Collegiate Series	collegiateseries@usaclimbing.org

Policy

New Routes/ Boulders

For a **Championships or National event**, the Host Facility must set new routes/boulders for the competition, which may only be climbed by Routesetters and Forerunners prior to the competition.

For a **Youth or Collegiate QE**, the Host Agreement sets forth the Host Facility's setting of routes/boulders for a competition (e.g., new vs existing/refreshed).²

Facility Closed During the Competition

For a **Championship or National event**, the Host Facility must, on the competition dates, be open only for the competition and otherwise closed to members and the general public. Exceptions may be granted by Sport Discretion.³

For a **Youth or Collegiate QE**, the Host Agreement sets forth whether the facility is or is not open to the public during the competition.

¹ This Policy does not apply to the Speed competitions utilizing a standard Speed route.

² The Info Sheet should indicate if existing/refreshed routes/boulders will be part of the competition.

³ Exceptions may be granted by Sport Discretion, upon written request by the Host Facility submitted at least thirty (30) days before the event. The request must describe the nature, extent, and justification for the exception. Such requests should be sent to the appropriate series manager at the email listed at the beginning of this Policy.

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Definition of Routesetting Period and Activities

The Routesetting Period begins with holds being adhered to the wall⁴ and ends at the competition start.⁵ The start of the Routesetting Period is to be specified in the Host Agreement and in the event's Info Sheet. Routesetting Activities include:

- Adhering holds and structures to the wall.
- Route or lane marking, including marking scoring or out of bounds areas.
- Discussions among Routesetters or between Routesetters and competition officials (e.g., the Jury President), even when these discussions occur outside the Routesetting Period.

Facility Access and/or Entrance

For a competition with multiple sessions, the official schedule (on the Info Sheet) should indicate the **allowed entrance time** for competitors if not otherwise defined in the General or Discipline rules.

From the **beginning of the Routesetting Period** (defined above) to the **allowed entrance time** for a competitor, the access rules in the following table shall apply to the following individuals:

- **Potential Competitor** – an individual who has registered or may register for the given competition.
- **Representative (Representatives of a Potential Competitor)** – an individual who is a Potential Competitor's coach, parent, sibling, teammate, etc.⁶

Competition	Access Rule(s)
• National Team Trials • All Nationals⁷ • Youth Divisionals • Youth Regionals • Collegiate Nationals • Qualification Event (CNQE)	• No Potential Competitor or Representative shall enter or view into the competition's host facility, except as explicitly allowed by USA Climbing.
• QE⁸ – On-sight	• No Potential Competitor shall enter or view into the competition's Competition Area.
• QE – Flash	• No Potential Competitor shall touch/contact any climbing surface or hold designated for competition use. • The host facility should make efforts to prevent Potential Competitors from viewing the competition's routes/boulders.
• QE – Classic Redpoint • QE – Modified Redpoint	• No Potential Competitor shall touch/contact any climbing surface or hold designated for competition use. • The host facility should make efforts to prevent Potential Competitors from viewing the competition's routes/boulders, or the Jury President must publish photos of the routes/boulders no later than midnight (local time) prior to the competition start.
• Rec Series	• No Potential Competitor shall touch/contact any climbing surface or hold designated for competition use.

Table 1 Host Facility Access Rules

⁴ While the Routesetting Period does not include wall/hold preparation ("wall stripping" / "hold washing"), knowledge of which walls are to be used for a competition may provide a competitive advantage and an Event Organizer may consider publishing such information.

⁵ Under their authority, the JP, in consultation with the Event Organizer, has discretion to determine access to the facility between rounds.

⁶ The Jury President is exempt from being considered a Representative of a Potential Competitor.

⁷ Elite, Youth, Collegiate, and Para Climbing Nationals.

⁸ QE in this table refers to both Youth and Collegiate.

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Notes for Host Facilities

Where Table 1 Host Facility Access Rules above (or other policies or Host Agreements) allows a Potential Competitor to view the routes/boulders, Host Facilities must note the following:

- Setting and forerunning should be performed only at times when Potential Competitors are not present, or such that they cannot view the routes/boulders if they are present.
- The climbing surface and holds to be used in the competition must be visibly designated as for use in the competition to avoid a competitor or coach being unaware that the area is for a competition. (E.g., signs indicating "Routes/Boulders for Competition use only")
- The route/boulder identification (e.g., wall placards or similar) must not be visible until the allowed entry of the competitors so that the Categories to be assigned to each route/boulder is not visible.

Access Rule Exceptions

Access Rule Exceptions for **Representatives of a Potential Competitor** may be granted by Sport Discretion⁹ and, in the case of a USAC Judge or a Regional or Divisional Coordinator who is a member of the competition organizing team, by Jury President Access Discretion.¹⁰

⁹ Exceptions may be granted by Sport Discretion, upon written request by the Host Facility submitted at least thirty (30) days before the event. The request must describe the nature, extent, and justification for the exception. Such requests should be sent to the appropriate series manager at the email listed at the beginning of this Policy.

¹⁰ The Jury President has the discretion to grant entrance access to a USAC Judge or a Regional or Divisional Coordinator who is a member of the competition organizing team and who is otherwise subject to access restrictions set forth in this Policy.

The access may be specified to be limited by time and location on an individual-by-individual basis. As an example, the JP may grant access to a particular individual to the isolation area only starting at a particular time the day before the competition starts, while the JP grants different access (time/place) to other individuals.

The Jury President must notify USA Climbing of any discretionary access they grant by emailing the relevant series manager (using the address listed at the beginning of this Policy). The email must include the details the grant, including of who, where, when, and other pertinent information. This notification should be sent no later than seven (7) days before the competition.

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Routesetter/Forerunner

A Routesetter/Forerunner is an individual involved in Routesetting Activities (including adhering holds and structures to the climbing surface, forerunning, etc.). The terms Routesetter/Forerunner and Routesetter are used interchangeably in this Policy.

At all levels of competitions, a Routesetter/Forerunner must have an active USA Climbing Routesetter Membership.

Competitive Fairness

A Routesetter/Forerunner must not discuss any aspect of the routes/boulders or the routesetting process with anyone other than the routesetting team or the Head Judging Officials (e.g., with coaches, competitors, or others), so as not to provide an advantage to a competitor or create an objective appearance of impropriety.¹¹

A Routesetter/Forerunner must not compete in the competitions for which they are working as a Routesetter/Forerunner.

A Routesetter/Forerunner who is also a Coach is subject to the following restrictions.

Competition	Head Routesetter Coaching Restrictions
All competitions	A Head Routesetter shall not engage in any coaching activities during the routesetting period for that competition or during the competition itself

Table 2 Head Routesetter Coaching Restrictions

Competition	Other Routesetter Coaching Restrictions
• National Team Trials • All Nationals¹² • Youth Divisionals	A Routesetter/Forerunner shall not engage in any coaching activities during the routesetting period for that competition or during the competition itself.
• Youth Regionals • Collegiate Nationals Qualification Event (CNQE)	A Routesetter/Forerunner shall not be allowed to enter the competition's Isolation Zone.
• Youth QEs • Collegiate QEs	A Routesetter/Forerunner is allowed to engage in coaching activities.

Table 3 Other Routesetter Coaching Restrictions

Exceptions

Exceptions to the routesetter/coaching restrictions may be granted by Sport Discretion.¹³

¹¹ During a competition, a Routesetter/Forerunner may discuss details of a route/boulder at the competition with the relevant belayers and Climbing Judges assigned to that route/boulder, as directed by the Jury President.

¹² Elite, Youth, Collegiate, and Para Climbing Nationals.

¹³ Exceptions to the routesetter/coaching restrictions may be granted by Sport Discretion, upon written request by the Host Facility or routesetter submitted at least thirty (30) days before the event. The request must describe the nature, extent, and justification for the exception. Such requests should be sent to the appropriate series manager at the email listed at the beginning of this Policy.

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Youth Forerunners

Youth Forerunners must register for a Non-Certified Routesetter membership and sign the Routesetter Code of Conduct. (All forerunners are considered part of the Routesetting team and must have an USAC Routesetter membership, regardless of age).

In-region/division Youth Forerunners *must not be used* for events within their region/division regardless of their lack of participation in the competition. The use of Youth Forerunners at National events requires Sport Discretion approval.

All interactions with Youth Forerunners must be observable and interruptible per MAAPP & Safe Sport protocol.

Under 17 yr Youth Forerunners

Youth who are under 17 yrs old will not be able to complete Safe Sport and the Routesetter membership will stay in an "action-required" state, which is acceptable.

The important element is that they sign the Routesetter Code of Conduct and adhere to it ensuring competition integrity.

The Youth Forerunner's parent/guardian must provide written consent for the youth to participate as a forerunner. Parental consent and written confirmation that the membership and code of conduct requirements have been met must be emailed to:

Head Routesetter for the event

Event Officials – Event Organizer/JP

CC: athletesafety@usaclimbing.org

Sanctions

Failure to comply with this Policy or other rules and regulations may result in competitor and/or coach disqualification from the competition, disciplinary action including revocation of membership for individuals involved, and/or the loss of USA Climbing Sanctioning for the event.

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Grievance Process

Individuals who believe that an action or decision was inconsistent with USA Climbing bylaws, rules, regulations, codes, or policies may submit a grievance by way of the [USA Climbing Grievance Policy](#). That policy is administered by the USA Climbing Judicial Committee and outlines the grievance submission process as well as how a grievance is processed. Grievances and/or questions may be sent to the Judicial Committee at judicial@usaclimbing.org.

External References

- [USA Climbing Rulebook](#)
- [USA Climbing Policies](#)
- [USA Climbing Grievance Policy](#)

Terminology

See the USA Climbing rules and regulations.

Approvals / Dates

Approved	USA Climbing CEO 2025-11-14
Effective	2025-11-14
Review	Yearly

Revision History

Date/Version	Changes
20251114	Initial version