

VIKING CROSS COUNTRY 2025



TEAM HANDBOOK
GRACE LUTHERAN SCHOOL

CONTENTS

Contact Information for Coaches

Cross Country Team Membership Criteria

Team Expectations

Coaching Philosophy

Information on the Sport of Cross Country

- Scoring

- Levels

- The Course

- Our Conference Schools + addresses (Northwest Suburban Conference)

- Running Attire

Grace School's Eligibility Policy

What to Expect at a Cross Country Meet and How to Prepare

2025 Season Schedule

Contact Information for Coaches

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Cross Country Team Membership Criteria

Prospective Cross Country Team members must be academically eligible and abide by the team rules, as well as Grace Lutheran School, Conference, and Lutheran Sports Association guidelines. All ability and experience levels are welcome for students 3rd through 8th grade. **We require the following documents to be turned in to coaches or to the school office before the first day of practice.**

1. Current physical (Physicals are considered current for 13 months)
2. Parent Permission Form (This form requires parent/guardian and student signatures.)
3. Concussion Form (This form requires parent/guardian and student signatures.)
4. Viking Code of Honor signature section (This form requires parent/guardian and student signatures.)

The **\$60 Athletic/Activities fee** must be paid by check or cash to the school office or in your FACTS account. If payment is made through FACTS, please forward your receipt to smccabe@graceriverforest.org

Team Expectations

Strive to be your best.

We expect our athletes to come to practices and meets ready to give their best effort. Put yourself in a position to succeed by planning ahead and bringing the things you need; like appropriate attire (including running shoes), a running watch, and a game spirit!

Contribute in a positive way to the program.

Listening to coaches give directions and insights is an important way to show you are sincere in being a positive part of this team and eager to improve your own performance.

Show respect to coaches, teammates, parents, officials, opponents, spectators, and the environment/equipment. It is fun to bond with teammates and experience the joy of being a part of something bigger than just yourself. Wear the Grace uniform with respect understanding that each athlete represents the whole team, the whole school, and the Grace community. We appreciate that the members of our program are not only runners but also often musicians, participants in other sports/activities, and members of busy families. We hope that our athletes make their best effort to attend as much of our season practices and meets as possible.

Take care of your uniform and turn it in to the coaches at the last meet.

Athletes are responsible for the uniform they are issued at the beginning of the season. The racing jersey and shorts need to be washed with cold water on a delicate setting. Hang to dry. The uniforms will last much longer if treated this way. Families will be billed for the cost of replacing the uniform if both pieces are not turned in within a week of the last meet.

Coaching Philosophy

The Grace Cross Country Program seeks to provide a positive environment to introduce the sport of cross country and to promote all the important values cross country offers. We expect every athlete to be committed to improvement and reaching for his or her best. Our record shows a bright history of success and we want our athletes to gain the most from the valuable experience of setting goals and working towards achievement. We highly regard the development of character, self-discipline, respect, honesty, and responsibility, understanding that these values are just as important as winning. Most importantly, we are God's beloved children! Always remember: even as we strive to be our competitive best, our worth is never determined by our time or race place. We are all absolutely precious in God's eyes and it is in this confidence that we learn and grow.

Information on the Sport of Cross Country

Scoring: In Cross Country, the team with the fewest points wins. The team score is the combined total of the points scored by the first five finishers from each team (a runner's place at the finish of the race determines how many points she contributes to the team score). If a team has fewer than five finishers, they will not be eligible for a team award. Though the sixth and seventh runners do not factor into the team total, they may displace and add points to the top five runners from other teams, therefore affecting the outcome of the race.

Levels: Everyone gets to race at almost all of our meets. Our meets vary in the levels of racing offered; a few of our meets have co-ed races for 3-4th graders, 5-6th graders, and 7-8th graders. Some meets have separate races for boys and girls. Before each meet, you will get an email with details on how the races will be set up.

The Course: Each cross country course is unique. Some are flat and fast and some have a few hills or a wooded section. The courses we will race this season are between 1 and 2 miles long. The State Meet course in Bloomington is 2.0 miles. The starting line consists of boxes for each team or simply a straight line. Races can be started different ways. At a dual meet the starter may say "On your mark" and then fire a starters' pistol or blow a whistle. At larger invitationals there may not be any verbal commands; rather a horn will sound five minutes before the start, one minute before the start, and then the gun will fire. Courses are generally run at large community parks, forest preserve fields, or on a school's campus if space allows.

The only time a race must be cancelled is if it is lightning. We race in rain.

Our Conference: NWSLC- North West Suburban Lutheran Conference

St. Andrews- 260 N. Northwest Highway, Park Ridge, 60068

St. Paul- 18 S. School Street, Mount Prospect, 60056

St. Peter- 111 West Olive Street, Arlington Heights, 60004

Grace Lutheran School- 7300 W. Division St., River Forest, 60305

Our Meet Locations:

St. John's Lombard Invitational- race at Terrace View Park in Lombard. Address: 100-110 W View Street, Lombard

St. Peter- race course is behind the school. 111 West Olive Street, Arlington Heights

Walther Christian Academy- on Walther's playing fields, 900 Chicago Ave., Melrose Park

Running Attire: Runners should wear comfortable running shorts and t-shirts for practice. As the weather cools, runners should be prepared with layers. Long sleeve t-shirts or a light jacket over a short sleeved t-shirt is great to have on a chilly day. Tights can be worn under shorts or wind pants over shorts. A good rule of thumb to remember for how to dress for a run is- the temperature will feel about 20 degrees warmer after running for about 5 minutes than the real temperature. The most important item a runner needs is a good pair of running shoes. Spikes can be worn in a race, but are not required. A stop watch/wrist watch is very helpful for practice.

Our team uniforms are for race day only. Please wash in **cold water, gentle cycle, and hang to dry**. (They are expensive and we want them to last a long time!) Students are responsible for the care of their uniform and they must turn in the same uniform they were issued in August at the end of the season in October. Teammates should not switch jerseys or shorts with each other.

Grace Lutheran School's Ineligibility Policy

It is important for students-athletes to understand that participating in athletics at Grace School is a privilege and that academics must always be our first priority. With this in mind, the following policy has been established.

In Grades 7 & 8, a student will be considered ineligible to participate in athletic practice and competition for one week under the following conditions.

- More than one class has a grade below 65
- Grades will be checked on Tuesday each week and students that do not meet the acceptable standard will be ineligible beginning Tuesday through the following Monday.
- If a student is deemed ineligible they will be allowed to call parents at lunch to inform them of their status and if necessary, make transportation arrangements.
- This process and determination will begin after a minimum of 10 school days have passed at the beginning of each trimester and continue each week until the trimester ends.
- Students that are ineligible based on final trimester grades will remain ineligible until the first check of the next trimester. (ex: if two grades are lower than 65 on the final grade report for the 1st trimester, the student may not practice or compete until the first official check for everyone a minimum of 10 school days into the 2nd trimester) Note: Consideration is made for students that have been absent.

In Grades 3-6, at the discretion of faculty members, a student may be held out of a practice or competition for an incomplete major project or if incomplete daily assignments become a reoccurring problem.

Student-athletes may also be held out of practice or competition or removed from a team due to reoccurring inappropriate behavior at any time during a school day or after school event.

What to Expect at a Cross Country Meet and How to Prepare

A Few Days Before: Parents/Guardians are responsible for providing transportation to and from our meets. It's a great idea to arrange carpooling plans ahead of time to help manage the effort of driving and to connect with other families involved in the program. Ideally, athletes will arrive at the meet location a good 30 minutes ahead of the scheduled race time if at all possible to get the lay of the course and have enough time to prepare.

The Night Before: Athletes should pack a bag with running shoes, racing shoes (not necessary but spikes for xc racing do exist), healthy snacks and an extra water bottle. Athletes might need a long sleeve t-shirt and/or a pair of sweat pants for early Saturday mornings late in the season or chilly evenings as the sun sets after a dual meet on a week day. Think about the goal that you would like to accomplish. Parents can confirm the travel plan.

When we arrive at the meet: We gather at our "team camp" and sometimes we bring along a team tent. First, we check out the course and note footing, where we make turns, and get to know the route. About 30 minutes before the scheduled start of the race, we warm-up in assigned groups at an easy jogging pace. Then we stretch at our team camp area. About 10 to 15 minutes before the race we come to the starting line and complete the dynamic warm up drills and any last minute stretching. We take two good pick-ups in the last 5 minutes so our legs are ready to turn over at the start. We want to have our Grace team cheering for teammates, enjoying time together, and paying attention to what is happening at the meet. Athletes should stay with the team until it's time to check out and travel home with their parents.

A note regarding how to view competitors: The people we compete against are there to help push us to our best efforts. View racing at a meet as a chance to find out where you are in your development on that day. *Think the thoughts that are going to help you!* It's natural to get a little nervous, just don't let yourself get overly nervous. Developing self-control is an excellent skill to practice. Get the butterflies flying around in your stomach to fly in formation. 😊

Cooling down: It is very important for athletes to cool down appropriately after a hard effort. Jog at an easy pace or walk for a few minutes and complete your full static stretching. This helps you recover and reduces soreness that might have developed later. Over time it can prevent injury.

A Few Rules to Know: The team uniform is for race day. It consists of a jersey and racing shorts. On cold days we can wear a white, plain t-shirt (short or long sleeved) under the jersey. Black tights are fine to wear under the shorts if the weather is cold. Teammates and fans may not run alongside runners in a race (pacing violation). Any interference with a race will cause the disqualification of the team member or the person causing the problem. Flags and cones are *not* optional or just suggestions!

Sportsmanship: Grace athletes are classy. We encourage each other. We do not need to put others down because we are focused on our own performances. We respect our competitors and rise to the challenge of racing, making sure competition brings out our best efforts.

Note to Parents: Come and cheer! You are our best (and only) fans. Wear sensible shoes so you can move around to cheer for the Vikings at different spots on the course.

Meets are a tremendous opportunity to learn. Competing is very challenging, and offers fantastic rewards. We ask all our athletes to try their best and focus on improvement. Parent support makes an important difference!

Grace Cross Country Schedule 2025

Practices are at Priory Park. Done by 4 pm.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8/17	8/18 4:30-6:30 pm Back to School Night	8/19 Teacher meetings	8/20 1 st Day School Early Dismiss. No practice	8/21 Practice Starts! 3:00-4:00 pm 4:00 Parent Meeting@Priory	8/22 3:00-4:00 pm Practice for Runners 5-8	8/23
8/24	8/25 3:00-4:00 pm Practice	8/26 3:00-4:00 pm Practice	8/27 Early Dismiss. No practice	8/28 3:00-4:00 pm Practice	8/29 3:00-4:00 pm Practice for Runners 5-8	8/30
8/31	9/1 Labor Day No practice	9/2 3:00-4:00 pm Practice	9/3 Early Dismiss. No practice	9/4 3:00-4:00 pm Practice	9/5 Team Pictures- 3:20 3:00-4:00 pm Practice	9/6 MEET St. John, Lombard
9/7 Grace Picnic	9/8 3:00-4:00 pm Practice	9/9 3:00-4:00 pm Practice	9/10 Early Dismiss. No practice	9/11 3:00-4:00 pm Practice	9/12 3:00-4:00 pm Practice for Runners 5-8	9/13
9/14	9/15 Meet St. Peter, Arlington Heights	9/16 3:00-4:00 pm Practice	9/17 Early Dismiss. No practice	9/18 3:00-4:00 pm Practice	9/19 3:00-4:00 pm Practice for all Runners 5-8	9/20
9/21	9/22 Meet St. Peter, Arlington Heights	9/23 3:00-4:00 pm Practice	9/24 Early Dismiss. No Practice	9/25 3:00-4:00 pm Practice	9/26 No Practice	9/27 Meet Fred Martin, St. Peter, Arlington Heights
9/28	9/29 3:00-4:00 pm Practice	9/30 Last Practice for all (except State Team) 3:00-4:00 pm Practice	10/1 Meet Early Dismiss. Walther Academy Whole team races Turn in uniforms!	10/2 3:00-4:00 pm Practice only for State Team going forward	10/3 Walkathon 11:30 Dismiss No Practice	10/4
10/5	10/6 3:00-4:00 Practice for State Team	10/7 3:00-4:00 Practice for State Team	10/8 Early Dismiss. No practice	10/9 11:30 Dismiss. 11:30 – 12:30 for State Team P-T Conferences	10/10 Fall break No Practice	10/11
10/12	10/13 No School Fall Break	10/14 3:00-4:00 Practice for State Team	10/15 Early Dismiss. No practice	10/16 3:00-4:00 Practice for State Team	10/17 No Practice	10/18 State Meet @ Bloomington for Qualifiers
10/19	10/20 For Nationals 3:00-4:00 Practice	10/21 For Nationals 3:00-4:00 Practice	10/22 Early Dismiss. No practice	10/23 For Nationals 3:00-4:00 Practice	10/24 No Practice	10/25 Nationals For Qualifiers



Team Celebration! TBA