



October 2021

To Our Boulders Community:

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

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:

Comment: *It would be awesome if you could carry a range of sizes in your shirts at the downtown location!*

Response: We generally stock both locations with a range of sizes and colors (if applicable), but we order small runs to keep much of our merchandise "limited edition". We're working on getting some more basic designs that we can keep around in wider size ranges for longer, but otherwise, make sure to grab the cool new designs while they're around!

If there is a size that isn't being created at all that folks need, please let us know!

Comment: *If you guys are going to have the east side closed for basically the whole month of October you really should be comping people for their membership fees seeing as we are getting half of the facilities we pay for yet are being charged full price as if that isn't the case.*

Response: We understand the frustration here, and tried to give a range of options based on information we have regarding client use. The vast majority of folks use one location more than the other, so cutting membership dues in half didn't really make sense for us. Instead, we offered free membership suspension for anyone during this time, which would allow someone to pause their membership and switch over to day passes or other access options as they saw fit. We also allowed all of our grandfathered Eastside-only members to climb at our Downtown location free of charge.

If the baseline cost of membership is an issue, we have sliding scale pricing options always available (check out climb4community.org to learn more).

It is also worth noting that we have spent over half a million dollars during COVID on improvements to the gyms. While we understand that our being closed for a few weeks was frustrating, we believe that our customers did receive value from that closure in the long run. We appreciate everyone who has continued to buy into this community and support its growth. We couldn't do it without you.

Comment: *Free Stickers*

Response: Free stickers are coming, and we need your help! As part of our re-launched climb for a cause initiative, free stickers will be available each month for anyone who makes a donation to our partner cause and shows us proof of that donation. We will also be creating unique and limited edition stickers specifically for this purpose, so keep an eye out for staff dog stickers, retro stickers, and whatever else the community comes up with.

If you have an idea for a sticker design, send the image over to info@bouldersgym.com. If your design is chosen, you'll get five free stickers to pass out to your friends (or keep them for yourself). Community-designed stickers will only be available as incentives for donation, and will not be sold to profit BCG.

Comment: *I don't like the new "all-gender restroom" labeling. I don't feel comfortable showering here anymore. I felt that the previous "use whatever bathroom you're comfortable with" was both inclusive and safe*

Response: We went in-depth on this issue in our last response, so check that one out for a more detailed explanation of our decision. As for your specific comment, we hope the femme+ designated bathroom will help with this issue, and we are working with contractors to install locking shower doors in the near future.

We appreciate everyone in our community who is shouldering a small amount of discomfort as we work through the growing pains of change and forward progress.

Comment: *First-time climber + I LOVED it! The circuits were challenging, the staff was kind + helpful + I was never bored! Definitely coming back!*

Response: We are so glad to have you!

Comment: *Suggestion - get rid of the seating area and put in some weights, pullup bars, and mats! As there is no place to warm up and stretch. I have never really seen anyone sitting there anyway.*

Response: We've played around with this idea a bit, and will certainly prioritize a warmup/workout area in future gyms. In pre-COVID times the lounge area was used extensively for socializing and community building, and we are still hoping that this crazy pandemic era will shift and allow for that sort of space to be fully utilized again.

Comment: *More bike parking please <3*

Response: While there is extensive bike parking available in the underground parking structure below our gym at 122 W. Doty, we are working with the city to get more bike racks installed directly outside the downtown gym. Our facility manager (an avid biker himself) is just now returning to work from an unexpected bike-on-car accident that left him hospitalized and unable to work for the last few weeks. He is home and recovering now, and we are sure you'll be forgiving as we work through some delays caused by that incident.

Comment: *Yoga or Pilates in the evening downtown :)*

Response: Noted! We are still sussing out availability and interest as we re-start many of these programs post COVID, and we will note this interest! The downtown gym is typically quite busy in the evenings, but we will work with our staff to see if this can be accommodated.

Comment: *restock vending machine and more nut-free snacks (granola bars)*

Response: Can do, thanks for the suggestion!

Two comments addressed together- #1: *we should have a specific comp wall with a foam pit so that we could set cool climbs that would normally be sketchy that would be safe to try.* #2: *We should have a foam pit below a bouldering area so you could set more dangerous moves without the risk of being injured as a result of a fall*

Response: This would be freaking awesome. To be honest, it's probably unlikely to happen in either of our current gyms, since that type of renovation would be super extensive in terms of time closed and cost. However, if you two don't already know each other, you should meet up and plan a deep water soloing trip (which is essentially this concept over water rather than foam).

Routesetting Feedback:

Comment: *Please stop setting so many dynamic routes over 5.11*

Response: We will let the setting team know that this is a preference for some. However, please understand that we aim to set a wide range of routes since not everyone's route preferences typically align.

Comment: *more reds*

Response: thanks for the feedback, we will pass this along to the setting team. Please note that the specific circuit or wall that is being re-set at any one time can impact the number of climbs in a grade range. The front desk staff will always have more information regarding upcoming re-sets.

Comment: *I love boulders and how accepting it is. A refreshing place to be. The walls are very fun but I wish there were a couple of easier ones.*

Response: Thanks, we're glad you're here! Getting this community's feelings on difficulty is always helpful, we will pass this along to our setting team. Please feel free to note specific comments on specific climbs on the KAYA app as well.

Comment: *Some crack holds would be great in order to practice hand jamming - thanks*

Response: Oh nelly the people really want crack climbs. Okay, we've gotten this request a few times now, and due to popular demand, we will seriously look into making this happen.

Comment: *More boulders for very short people pleaseee! Thanks :)*

Response: Thanks for the feedback, we will pass it along! In the meantime, we highly encourage you to come in and climb during our youth team practices (5-7 pm most days at the east side). Those **very** short children have some amazing beta that might help you in your climbing endeavors :)

Big Picture Feedback*

**This is a new segment of feedback we are going to dig into as a community. Here we will address one or more issues that came up during this feedback period that feel core to the construction of community, who we are as a business, and how we would like to engage with each other moving forward. Please feel free to email community@bouldersgym.com if you have any questions, or if you would like to engage in further discussion regarding any of our Big Picture Feedback comments or responses. We think this works best as a dialogue and would love your input.*

Three comments addressed together: #1: *A climber is not a fan of the circuit grading. They say that there is too large of a margin of error. They say no one can set a perfect V3, it may be a V2-V4. For example, they see orange as V0-V4 and they want more consistency. #2:* *Can you go back to assigning normal ratings to the climbs & problems? I have no idea what I'm climbing #3:* *Please consider switching to a 1 grade = 1 color scheme. This is not friendly to beginners and frustrating for an advanced climber. Thanks! :)*

Issue #1: Grades

Response: Grades have long held a seat of importance for many climbers. For some they're used to measure progress, for others they serve as a marker of overall climbing ability. The decision to uphold grades as an important marker of climbing success is an active one made by many, and a passive one gone un-questioned by many more. Our transition to circuit grading has brought to the surface a series of values that are often subconsciously upheld by gyms and climbers alike.

The reality is, Boulders has a responsibility to examine the values we hold and promote and make sure that those values align with our missions and visions. We believe that shifting focus away from grading actually makes for a more thoughtful climbing environment where folks can engage with their climbs in a whole multiplicity of ways, rather than just categorizing by grade.

As we all know, a "v2 is not a v2 is not a v2". The style, movement, hold types, and even height-set of a climb influence the way that climb is perceived by the climber. A climber might be able to send v4 in a climb that matches their "style" while falling off of a v2 that is out of style. By

shifting focus away from the numerical grade of a climb, we are hoping to encourage that sort of rounded thinking, while still providing a loose guide, via the circuit tags, for folks who are less comfortable with route-reading.

Issue #2: “Progress”

Response: Some climbers use grades as a way to mark or measure their progress. While we understand that progressing through grades can be exciting, we also want to challenge the unspoken norm of valuing “progress”, or increasing in grade, above all else. Firstly, we believe that focusing on movement up through the climbing grades quickly leads to frustration.

Think of it this way: in bouldering, there are only 16 v-grades in the world. In the gym (ours or any other), we can go ahead and cut that back to maybe 10 in all likelihood. The vast majority of climbers will never climb v10. Climbing at that level requires (for most) an extensive amount of training which costs time, energy, and effort, not to mention a magic concoction of luck, genetics, and privileges. Many (most, we would wager) of us, don't have that kind of time on our hands. So if we knock out the grades that require extensive off-the-wall training, that leaves about 6 or 7 grades that *might* be attainable for *most* people throughout their climbing careers. When we look at the numbers this way, it suddenly makes a lot of sense that most people aren't “progressing through the grades” very quickly.

The point we're trying to make here is that climbing can be challenging and engaging without “progress” as the main goal. There are plenty of life-long climbers, many of our staff included, who reach their comfortable peak and hang out in that grade range semi-indefinitely. Do they still find challenges there? Absolutely. Are they still developing new skills? Certainly. We don't need to focus on progress through the grades to understand our own progress as a climber.

De-emphasizing grades and thus de-emphasizing “progress” once again allows for a more well-rounded perception of one's self as a climber. That climber who is quickly moving up towards v8 isn't necessarily a “better” climber than that which is hanging out around v3 for years and we believe that it's high time we acknowledge that fact.

Concluding Thoughts:

Another key point to this argument of de-emphasizing grades is that **the grades are still available for viewing on KAYA**. If one feels that grades are absolutely key to their positive climbing experience, they are more than welcome to download KAYA and see (and vote on) the grades for each climb. Not only do the community grades on KAYA allow for those who need grades to see them, but they also challenge the structure of grading by allowing the community to collectively determine a grade, rather than giving that power to a small number of setters.

When we as a gym take on the responsibility of curating a space, we have to take all the decisions we make through the lens of our missions and visions, even those which often go unquestioned. We believe that de-emphasizing grades, while it might be an adjustment in the short term, creates a more well-rounded and less grade-obsessed community in the long run.

Bottom line: climb what's fun, be proud when you do something that felt hard **for you**, and please let us know if you aren't finding enough stuff in your ability range, whatever that ability range may be. Happy climbing :)