



Electronic Communication Policy of the JCC Bridgewater TIDE

Purpose:

The JCC Bridgewater TIDE recognizes the prevalence of electronic communication and social media in today's world. Many of our swimmers use these means as their primary method of communication. While the TIDE acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, the TIDE also realizes that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

General Content:

All communication between a coach or other adult and an athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about team activities. The content and intent of all electronic communications must adhere to the USA Swimming Code of Conduct regarding Athlete Protection.

For example, as with any communication with an athlete, electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:

- Drugs or alcohol use;
- Sexually oriented conversation, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems; and
- Inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures
- Note: any communication concerning an athlete's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues or personal problems must be transparent, accessible, or professional.

Whether one is an athlete, coach, board member, or parent, the guiding principle to always use in communication is to ask: "Is this communication something that someone else would find appropriate or acceptable in a face-to-face meeting?" or "Is this something you would be comfortable saying out loud to the intended recipient of your communication in front of the intended recipient's parents, the coaching staff, the board, or other athletes?"

With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with swimmer's is **T**ransparent, **A**ccessible, and **P**rofessional:

- **Transparent:** All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be transparent. Your communication should not only be clear and direct, but also free of hidden meanings, innuendos, and expectation.
- **Accessible:** All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be a matter of record and part of the TIDE records. Whenever possible, include another coach or parent in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.
- **Professional:** All electronic communication between a coach and an athlete should be conducted professionally as a representative of the TIDE. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a staff member.

If your communication meets all three of the **T.A.P.** criteria, then it is likely your method of communication with athletes will be appropriate.

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Similar Sites:

Coaches may have personal Facebook (and other social media site) pages, but they are not permitted to have any athlete member of the TIDE join their personal page as a “friend.” A coach should not accept any “friend” request from an athlete. In addition, the coach should remind the athlete that this is not permitted. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “private message” or “instant message” each other through Facebook (or other social media sites).

The TIDE has an official Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter that athletes and their parents can “follow” for information and updates on team-related matters.

Coaches are encouraged to set up their personal social media accounts to “private” to prevent athletes from accessing the coach’s personal information.

Texting:

Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, texting is allowed between coaches and athletes during the hours of 8am to 8pm. Texting only shall be used for the purpose of communicating information directly related to team activities. When communicating with a minor athlete through text messaging, the athlete’s legal guardian must be copied. If a minor athlete communicates with a coach privately first, the coach must copy the minor athlete’s legal guardian on their response. Coaches must have another adult copied on a group text.

Email:

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate between the hours of 8am and 8pm. When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent, another coach, or a board member must also be copied.

Request to Discontinue all Electronic Communication:

The parents or guardians of an athlete may request in writing that their child not be contacted by coaches through any form of electronic communication.