

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES for COACHES and ATHLETES

The Social Media Guidelines for Coaches and Athletes is a separate document from the Social Media Use Policy

Definitions

1. The following term has this meaning in these Guidelines:
 - a) “*Social media*” – The catch-all term that is applied broadly to new computer-mediated communication media such as blogs, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter

Purpose

2. These Guidelines provide coaches and athletes with tips and suggestions for social media use. Coaches and athletes are strongly encouraged to develop their own strategy for social media use (either written down or not) and ensure that their strategy for social media use is acceptable pursuant to Swim Alberta’s *Code of Conduct and Ethics*.
3. Given the nature of social media as a continually developing communication sphere, Swim Alberta trusts its coaches and athletes to use their best judgment when interacting with social media. These Guidelines are not hard and fast rules or behavioural laws; but rather ideas that will inform coaches’ and athletes’ best judgment.

Social Media Guidelines for Coaches

4. The following tips should be used by coaches to inform their own strategy for social media use:
 - a) Choosing not to engage with social media is an acceptable social media strategy. But you must have good reasons for your choice and be active in other communication media
 - b) Despite what Facebook says, you are not actually “friends” with athletes. Resist commenting on athletes’ personal activities, status updates, or tweets on Twitter
 - c) Consider monitoring or being generally aware of athletes’ public social media behaviour to ensure compliance with Swim Alberta’s *Code of Conduct and Ethics*
 - d) Coaches may not demand access to an athlete’s private posts on Twitter or Facebook
 - e) Do not “friend” athletes on Facebook unless they request the connection. Never pressure athletes to “friend” you
 - f) If you accept some “friend” requests, or follow one athlete on Twitter, you should accept all friend requests and follow all the athletes. Be careful not to show favouritism on social media
 - g) Consider managing your social media so that athletes do not have the option to follow you on Twitter or “friend” you on Facebook
 - h) Seek permission from athletes before posting pictures or videos of the athletes on publicly available social media like a blog or on YouTube
 - i) Do not use social media to ‘trap’ athletes if they say one thing to you in person but their social media activity reveals they were doing something different
 - j) Keep selection decisions and other official team business off social media
 - k) Never require athletes to join Facebook, join a Facebook group, subscribe to a Twitter feed, or join a Facebook fan page about your team or organization
 - l) If you create a fan page on Facebook for your team or athlete, do not make this social media site the exclusive location for important information. Duplicate important information in more official channels (like on a website or via email)
 - m) Ensure that parents are aware that some coach-athlete interactions may take place on Facebook

- n) Exercise appropriate discretion when using social media for your own personal communications (with friends, colleagues, and other athletes) with the knowledge that your behaviour may be used as a model by your athletes
- o) Avoid association with Facebook groups or Twitter feeds with explicit sexual contact or viewpoints that might offend or compromise the coach-athlete relationship
- p) Never misrepresent yourself by using a fake name or fake profile
- q) Be aware that you may acquire information about an athlete that imposes an obligation of disclosure on your part (such as seeing pictures of underage athletes drinking during a trip)
- r) Attempt to make communication with athletes in social media as one-sided as possible. Be available for athletes if they initiate contact via social media – athletes may wish to have this easy and quick access to you – but avoid imposing yourself into an athlete’s personal social media space unless explicitly requested to do so

Social Media Guidelines for Athletes

- 5. The following tips should be used by athletes to inform their own strategy for social media use:
 - a) Set your privacy settings to restrict who can search for you and what private information other people can see
 - b) Coaches, teammates, officials, or opposing competitors may all add you to Facebook or follow you on Twitter. You are not required to follow anyone or be Facebook friends with anyone
 - c) If you feel harassed by someone in a social medium, report it to your coach, club official, or to Swim Alberta
 - d) Do not feel pressure to join a fan page on Facebook or follow a Twitter feed
 - e) Content posted on Twitter and Facebook, relative to your privacy settings, is considered public. In most cases, you do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy for any material that you post
 - f) Avoid posting pictures of, or alluding to, participation in illegal activity such as: speeding, physical assault, harassment, drinking alcohol (if underage), and smoking marijuana
 - g) Model appropriate behaviour in social media befitting your status as a) an elite athlete, and b) a member of your club and of Swim Alberta. As a Member of Swim Alberta, you have agreed to Swim Alberta’s *Code of Conduct and Ethics* and most follow that Code when you post material and interact with other people through social media
 - h) Be aware that your public Facebook page or Twitter feed may be monitored by your club, coach, or by Swim Alberta and content or behaviour demonstrated in social media may be subject to sanction under Swim Alberta’s *Discipline and Complaints Policy*

Club Responsibilities

- 6. Clubs should not attempt to impose social media restrictions onto coaches or athletes. There are many situations where social media contact is desirable and necessary; yet many situations where social media contact is unwanted and risky. Coaches and athletes should be trusted, pursuant to Swim Alberta’s *Code of Conduct and Ethics*, to navigate social media using their best judgment.
- 7. Clubs should monitor social media use by its athletes and coaches and should consider regular surveys and reviews to understand how coaches and athletes are using social media. Coaches and athletes may need to be reminded that behaviour in social media is still subject to Swim Alberta’s *Code of Conduct and Ethics*.
- 8. Complaints and concerns about an athlete’s or a coach’s conduct or behaviour in social media can be addressed under Swim Alberta’s *Discipline and Complaints Policy*.