

Electronic Communication Policy of the Birmingham Swim League

PURPOSE

The Birmingham Swim League (the “Club”) 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 Club acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, the Club also realizes that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

GENERAL CONTENT

All communications 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; sexually explicit language; sexual activity
 - The adult’s personal life , 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 and 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 swimmers 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, innuendo and expectations.

Accessible: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of the Club’s 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 Club. 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.

The Birmingham Swim League does not currently utilize any form of “social media” because of privacy concerns for athletes and their families. Any reference to the Birmingham Swim League on these outlets is strictly unauthorized and should not be considered as official swim team business. Further, we strongly recommend that our member families discuss proper use of such outlets not only for the protection of all BSL members but for personal protection as well. Finally, any deliberate misuse of this type of media with the BSL name or likeness, or any of its members, may be considered a violation of the BSL Code of Conduct.

FACEBOOK, MYSPACE, BLOGS, AND SIMILAR SITES

Coaches may have personal Facebook (or other social media site) pages, but they are not permitted to have any athlete member of the Club 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” each other through Facebook. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “instant message” each other through Facebook chat or other IM method.

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

TWITTER

Coaches and athletes may follow each other on Twitter. Coaches cannot retweet an athlete message post. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “direct message” each other through Twitter.

TEXTING

Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, texting is allowed between coaches and athletes and shall only be used for the purpose of communicating information directly related to team activities.

EMAIL

When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent, another coach, or a board member must also be copied.

REQUEST TO DISCONTINUE ALL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

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

How to Contact BSL Coaches:

Please use the preferred order of communication posted below when questions arise. Following this order of communication will allow the most accessible point or informed person to address the matter first.

1. Check the website, SwimBSL.com
2. Contact the child's coach
 - a. Immediately before or after practice
 - b. Email
 - 2.1 Contact BSL's Lead Age Group Coach
 - c. By appointment before or after practice
 - d. Email*
 - 2.2 Contact BSL's Head Coach
 - e. By appointment before or after practice
 - f. Email*
 - 2.3 Contact BSL's Board President

Please refrain from communicating with the coaching staff on deck during practice, as each swimmer deserves his or her coaches attention.

Assistant Coaches will occasionally check email and respond appropriately.

* Full Time Coaches will do their best to respond to phone calls or emails within 24-48 hours of normal business hours (8:00am-3:00pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays)

Please refrain from contacting coaches personal cell phones outside of normal business hours

ALL electronic communication between a swimmer and a member of the BSL staff must have a parent/guardian copied to the message. Failure to do so will result in no response from the BSL staff.