



Electronic Communications Protocols for Coaches and Skaters/Athletes

Effective: July 20, 2021

Overview

As part of the Skate Canada emphasis on safety, communications involving skaters/athletes should be appropriate, productive, and transparent. All communication between a coach or other adult and an athlete must be professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about skating related activities. The content and intent of all electronic communications must adhere to the Skate Canada Electronic Communications Standards and the Skate Canada Code of Ethics

With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with athletes is **Transparent, Accessible and Professional**.

Transparent: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes must be transparent. Your communication must not only be clear and direct, but also free of hidden messages, innuendo and expectations.

Accessible: All electronic communication between coaches and athletes must be considered a matter of record and part of the Skate Canada's records. Whenever possible, include another coach or parent in the communication so there is no question regarding accessibility.

Professional: All electronic communication between a coach and an athlete must be conducted professionally as a representative of Skate Canada.

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

Protocols:

Respect your audience, Skate Canada and the skating community

The public in general, Skate Canada, and the skating community at large reflect a diverse set of values and points of view. Do not say anything contradictory or in conflict. Always be yourself, but do so respectfully. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, offensive comments, defamatory comments, personal insults, obscenity, etc.) but also use proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be objectionable or inflammatory - such as politics and religion. Use your best judgment and always make it clear that the view and opinions expressed are yours alone and do not represent the views of Skate Canada.

In addition, other examples of communication that would not meet the T.A.P. criteria, include but is not limited to 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

Understanding privacy concerns:

Coaches and skaters/athletes are encouraged to set their profiles to “private” to prevent access to their personal information. Be mindful of information that you would not want the public to see. Check your privacy and security settings on photos and other content on social media accounts as they may change without your notice. Remember, your privacy is never guaranteed. Assume your emails and the content you post can be accessed or altered.

Respect the privacy and confidentiality of personal information at all times.

Be honest

Do not blog anonymously, using pseudonyms or false screen names. We believe in transparency and honesty. Use your real name, be clear who you are. Do not say anything dishonest, untrue, or misleading. Protect yourself and your privacy. What you publish will be around a long time, so consider the content carefully and also be cautious about disclosing personal details.

Be the first to respond to your own mistakes

If you make an error, be up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so.

However, removing content from social media after it has been posted (either publicly or privately) does not excuse the individual from being subject to Skate Canada policies as applicable.

Appropriate interaction between coaches and skaters/athletes

Coaches should model the behaviour they expect of their skaters/athletes.

Coaches must maintain professional boundaries electronically at all times, as outlined below:

- i. **Facebook, Instagram, MySpace, Blogs and Similar Sites**



Coaches and athletes may have personal pages or blogs. A coach should not accept any “friend” request from any athlete or coach who is a minor (minor means a child under the age of majority as defined in each province or territory of Canada, as may be amended from time to time. It is the responsibility of the adult to know the age of a minor. In addition, the coach should remind the athlete or other coach who is a minor that this is not permitted.

Direct messaging or private messaging between individuals where one individual is in a position of authority is prohibited.

ii. Twitter, SnapChat, Instant Messaging and Similar Media

All posts between individuals must be for the purpose of communicating information about skating activities.

Direct messaging or private messaging is prohibited between coaches and skaters/athletes

iii. Texting, Email and Similar Electronic Communications

All electronic communications must be for the purpose of communicating information about figure skating activities.

Electronic communications between an adult and a minor must always include the parent or guardian of the minor.

A guiding principle for all electronic communications is to always use the *Rule of Two*. All electronic communications should include another adult. In the case of communication between a coach and a skater/ athlete, the parent/guardian of the skater/athlete should be included.

iv. Team Applications and Similar Electronic Communications

A club / skating school page is the preferred method of communication. This allows for communication on scheduling and availability and other skating related information. All communication of any kind must be non-personal and professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about skating activities.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What do I do about my pre-existing electronic/social media connections with minor skaters/athletes:

A: Coaches/adults are required to discontinue existing social media connections with minor skaters/athletes as outlined in the Skate Canada Electronic Communications Standard.

Q: When does a minor skater/athlete's parents/guardian need to be copied on an electronic communication to a minor skater/athlete?

A: Coaches/adults with authority over minor skaters/athletes must not send a one-on-one communication to a minor skater/athlete. A minor skater/athlete's parent/guardian must be copied on all electronic communication sent by an adult coach with authority over minor skaters/athletes to the minor skater/athlete.

Q: How should a coach/adult communicate with a group of minor skaters/athletes?

A: If a coach/adult sends a message to a group of minor skaters/athletes, another adult must be copied on the communication. It is not required that each minor skater's/athlete's parent/guardian be copied on an electronic communication sent by a coach/adult to a group of minor skaters/athletes.

Q: What would be an emergency circumstance?

A: An emergency circumstance should be an isolated incident that is an objectively reasonable emergency in order to justify an electronic communication sent outside the scope of the Skate Canada Electronic Communications Standards. An example would be to notify the skater/athlete that morning practice is cancelled at the last minute.

Q: Is a telephone call considered to be an electronic communication?

A: A telephone call is similar to a one-on-one interaction. Therefore, a telephone call between a coach/adult and a minor skater/athlete must be observable and interruptible by another adult.

Q: If a skater/athlete member turns 18 years old and becomes a coach, can that skater/athlete member still communicate with minor skater/athlete friends through social media and electronic communication?



A: Yes, if the coach/adult follows the provisions set out in the Skate Canada Electronic Communications Standards and the Code of Ethics.

Q: What conduct could be considered a violation of Skate Canada Electronic Communications Standards and the Code of Ethics?

A: Examples of conduct that could be considered a violation of the Standards or the Code include but is not limited to the following:

- a) Posting a disrespectful, hateful, harmful, insulting or otherwise negative comment on a social medium that is directed at an individual, at Skate Canada, or at other individuals associated with Skate Canada.
- b) Posting a picture, altered picture, or video on a social medium that is harmful, disrespectful, insulting, or otherwise offensive, and that the directed at an individual, at Skate Canada, or at other individuals associated with Skate Canada.
- c) Creating or contributing to a Facebook group, webpage, Instagram account, Twitter feed, blog, or online forum devoted solely or in part to promoting negative remarks or commentary about Skate Canada, its stakeholders, or its reputation.
- d) Inappropriate personal or sexual relationships between individuals who have a power imbalance (position of trust) in their interactions, such as between skaters/athletes and coaches, Directors and staff, officials and skaters/athletes, etc.
- e) Any instance of cyber-bullying or cyber-harassment between one individual and another individual (including a teammate, coach, volunteer, official, or another skater/athlete), where incidents of cyber-bullying and cyber-harassment can include but are not limited to the following conduct on any social medium, via text-message, or via email: regular insults, negative comments, vexatious behaviour, pranks or jokes, threats, posing as another person, spreading rumours, or lies, or other harmful behaviour.