



## Electronic Communications Protocols for Coaches and Skaters/Athletes

<b>Protocol Owner Division / Department</b>	Safe Sport
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### Overview

Electronic communications provides a wide range of benefits. It allows people to connect instantly, it enables the dissemination of information widely, and is a platform to celebrate successes. We encourage the use of electronic communications in a responsible fashion.

### Purpose

In support of our commitment as part of our National Safe Sport Program, Skate Canada has developed this Electronic Communications Protocol for Coaches and Skaters/Athletes ("Protocol") to provide helpful, practical guidance to help everyone keep safe in an online, electronic communication environment.

This Protocol should be read in conjunction with, and all electronic communications conducted in accordance with, the Skate Canada Code of Ethics and the Electronic Communications Standards of Conduct.

### Scope

This Protocol applies to the personal use of electronic communications only where it is directly and clearly related to or there is a specific reference to and/or between, a coach, skater/athlete, including the parent/legal guardian of a minor or another adult related to skating (e.g., team manager).

Any misuse by participants of electronic communications that does not directly refer to the sport of figure skating may still be regulated by other policies, rules or regulations of Skate Canada, including being considered violations and subject to disciplinary action.

### Definitions

Certain terms used herein may not be capitalized; however, for the purposes of this Protocol, the following terms herein have the ascribed meanings as set forth below. In addition, all references in this Protocol to the singular include the plural and vice versa.



**athlete** means any person / skater who competes in the sport of figure skating at the national and/or international level as defined by Skate Canada

**Bylaws** means the bylaws of Skate Canada in force and effect, and as may be amended from time to time

**coach**, pursuant to the Bylaws, means a skating expert with the required National Coaching Certification Program qualifications to provide a remunerated service at Skate Canada sanctioned clubs and skating schools, both on and off-ice. These individuals shall have registered, provided full payment and have met all professional coach registration requirements as set annually by Skate Canada

**electronic communication** means communication using channels including but not limited to email, the Internet, the intranet, instant messaging, text messaging, facsimile, voice communications, social media (such as, but not limited to, blogs, YouTube, Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Threads, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, among others) and messaging platforms

**individual**, for the purpose of this Protocol, means skaters/athletes, parents and/or guardians, coaches

**minor** means a child under the age of majority, as defined in the relevant 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

**personal information**, for the purpose of this Protocol, means information about an identifiable individual. This may include, without limitation, the individual's name, residential address, home and/or cellular telephone number(s), email or other electronic address, social media account name, fax number, date of birth, gender, government issued identification number (e.g., Social Insurance Number, passport number), personal health information, criminal record, login credentials to Skate Canada owned IT resources (as applicable), payroll/employee identification, employment history, personal references, salary/compensation history, financial status, pension contributions, employee benefit information, emergency contact information, credit card payment information and/or direct deposit banking information. Personal information also includes information that may relate to the work performance of the employees, including but not limited to performance appraisals, absenteeism, training history/evaluations.

For all individuals, personal information includes any injury claim reports, allegations, investigations or findings of wrongdoing, misconduct or discipline stemming from (i) a complaint through the Ombudsperson process, and/or (ii) a complaint of misconduct, incident of injury



report and/or general dispute through the Safe Sport process (including the Safe Sport division of Skate Canada, and external authorities as applicable).

For registrants, in addition to the information outlined above, personal information may also include but is not limited to information related to test results and program information for skaters, and qualifications for officials.

For event volunteers, in addition to the information outlined above, personal information may also include information related to training, education, work experience, volunteer experience and qualifications, and expense information.

In general, personal information includes any information that could be used to commit identity theft or other forms of fraud. All information about or received by Skate Canada from an individual should be presumed to be personal information unless the contrary is clear.

By virtue of applicable privacy legislation, personal information does not include business contact information that is collected, used, or disclosed solely for the purpose of communication or facilitating communication with an individual in relation to their employment, business, or profession such as the individual's name, position name or title, work address, work telephone number, work fax number or work electronic addresses.

This information can be in any form including but not limited to correspondence, paper, electronic, electronic communications, video or voice recording, photograph, film, sound recording, videotape, machine-readable record, and any other documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, and any copy of any of those things.

***personal health information***, with respect to an individual, as applicable, means:

- information concerning the physical or mental health of the individual
- information concerning any provision of health services to the individual
- information that is collected in the course of providing health services to the individual
- information that is collected incidentally to the provision of health services to the individual (such as the individual's entitlement to payment for health care, the individual's entitlement to payment for an insurance claim for an injury, the individual's health card number, the identity of providers of health care to the individual or the identity of substitute decision-makers on behalf of the individual)

***skater***, pursuant to the Bylaws, means (i) a person who is registered at a club or skating school with Skate Canada and who is subject to all applicable rules, regulations and policies of Skate Canada but who is not a member; and (ii) a person who is engaged in any activity provided, sponsored, supported, sanctioned or recognized by Skate Canada and registered directly with Skate Canada but who is not a member



**social media** means interactive digital-media technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks (examples include but are not limited to WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and all other similar social media and messaging platforms, sites, forums and blogs)

**they, their, you, your** means an individual to whom this Protocol applies, unless noted otherwise

**we, us, our** means Skate Canada, unless noted otherwise

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**

To the extent there is a conflict in definitions between this Protocol and the Skate Canada Privacy Code, the Privacy Code prevails.

Notwithstanding the forgoing, to the extent there is a conflict between the Skate Canada Privacy Code and applicable legislation / law, the applicable legislation / law will prevail.

## Protocols

As part of the Skate Canada emphasis on safety, electronic communications involving skaters/athletes should be appropriate, productive, and transparent. All electronic communication between a coach or other adult and a skater / 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 ("Standards"), the Skate Canada Code of Ethics ("Code"), and the Skate Canada Misconduct Reporting and Resolution Policy ("Policy").

With respect to electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with skaters/athletes and in general is **Transparent, Accessible and Professional (T.A.P.)**.

**Transparent (T):** 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 (A):** 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 (P):** 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 must be appropriate.



The following are key protocols and principles which apply to all forms of electronic communications:

I. **Understanding privacy concerns – set yourself up securely**

Never give your password, pin, or login details online or face to face. These should be private to you and shared with nobody. You should also ensure that you log out after use and do not leave your social media accounts open on a shared device as other people could post in your name.

Before posting anything online all individuals should ensure that their social media accounts are set up as securely as possible. Each website, app or device will require slightly different configuration to set it up correctly so for guidance on how to set up specific apps, website or devices as safely as possible, please visit [www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org).

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 regularly as they may change without your notice. Most social media platforms default privacy settings to ‘public’ several times a year, so you should check regularly to ensure that your accounts remain private.

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

***Remember – there is no such thing as privacy online***

We would encourage all individuals to consider three (3) questions before posting anything online:

1. Would you say this in front of your parents or grandparents?
2. Would you say this in front of the youngest child in the club / skating school?
3. Would you say this to a journalist at a press conference, sitting next to your coach?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, think very carefully before posting.

Keeping yourself safe online is more important than ever. It’s possible that everything you send, or post could potentially become public. One that has happened, it could be seen by anyone and everyone, forever. Once it has been sent or posted, the image/words/video are completely out of your control.

Once something starts to spread on the internet, it’s impossible to control it, even once the original is deleted. An ill-advised comment or photograph could still pop up when someone searches your name years from now – including potential sponsors, employers, etc. As such, check your privacy settings regularly. You have worked hard for many years to become who you are – an up and coming skater or high performance athlete in a public sphere or a respected



coach. This means that people will form their opinions based on your sporting performance, but also on other aspects of you that they see portrayed publicly.

Used well, social media has the potential to give you greater control of this than ever before, and to build a reputation for being dedicated, interesting, positive and inspiring. So before posting anything, first ask yourself the following:

- How you wish to be portrayed?
- What messages do I want to get across?
- Will my post reflect negatively upon my 'role model' status?
- Is what I am posting going to affect future opportunities for my personal brand?

## **II. 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. Social media is a great way to connect and celebrate success and hard work, but the reality is that much of what you say, or post are seen not only by the intended person(s) but also by strangers. Never say/post anything negative on others' professional performance, be they an athlete/skater, official or coach. Never post / say anything contradictory or in conflict.

Before saying or posting anything electronically ask yourself who is my audience.

- Would I make this comment to this person face-to-face?
- Could this statement be misunderstood by someone who doesn't know me?
- Would I be happy to see this comment in the newspapers tomorrow?

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 this regard, before posting ask yourself the following:

- How will the people who have helped me progress in figure skating (coach, family, club/skating school, Skate Canada) feel about me posting this?
- How will this post affect the way the sport of figure skating is viewed in Canada and internationally?
- If I am tempted to discuss a contentious issue within the sport of figure skating, how important is it for me to have my say in public?



- Will this be a constructive contribution?
- Will what I say undermine the hard work of those who came before me or make life harder for those who come after?
- Could my post upset a current or potential sponsor for me or the sport of figure skating?
- Would I expect my own skating heroes to post in this manner?

In addition, other examples of electronic 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.

### **III. Be honest and transparent**

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.

#### **If things go wrong - be the first to respond to your mistakes**

If you make an error or post something which you later regret, there are a few steps you can take to try to minimize any resulting issues. You can start by being up front about your mistake and correct it quickly. If you choose to modify or delete 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. Nor does it erase any damage that may already be done if an image or text is already in the possession of others.

If you are receiving upsetting messages or posts, the best response is often no response. Tempting as it is to reply, this can escalate the situation. Instead, you can step away from your phone or computer and make your club/skating school aware of the messages and ask for their advice.



**Block or report anyone who sends abuse text messages to you, and if you receive indecent images or sexually explicit messages, contact Skate-Safe ([www.skate-safe.ca](http://www.skate-safe.ca)) , child protection agency and/or the Police immediately.**

#### **IV. Rules and 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 the relevant 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. The coach should remind the skater/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.

Lastly, in keeping with the *Rule of Two*, the coach should advise the parent/guardian of the minor of the friend request received and declined and that they may wish to review the privacy settings with their minor child related to social media.

##### **ii. X (formerly known as Twitter), Threads, 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 legal 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/legal guardian of the skater/athlete should be included.

**iv. Team Applications and Similar Electronic Communications**

A club / skating school Facebook group page or group chat via WhatsApp are the preferred methods of electronic communication. This allows for electronic communication on scheduling and availability and other skating related information. All electronic communication of any kind must be non-personal and professional in nature and for the purpose of communicating information about skating activities.

**Resources and Related Documents\***

Skate Canada

*Coach Guide*

Code of Ethics, and Code of Ethics Appeal Procedure thereunder

Electronic Communications Standards of Conduct

*Misconduct Reporting and Resolution Policy and Misconduct Reporting and Resolution Procedure*

*Professional Coach Membership Policy*

*Privacy Code*

[Safe Sport resources \(policies, procedures, Safe Sport Handbook, Code of Ethics training, etc.\)](#)

[Trans Inclusion Protocol](#)

Coaching Association of Canada

[Responsible Coach Movement](#)

[Rule of Two](#)

\*Current and in force and as may be amended from time to time

**Questions/ Contact Information**

For questions and/or further information, please contact Safe Sport at:

Email: safesport@skatecanada.ca

Telephone: 1-888-747-2372 ext.: 703



## **Appendix: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

*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/legal 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/legal guardian be copied on an electronic communication sent by a coach/adult to a group of minor skaters/athletes, however, another adult must be copied such as the team manager.

*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, the Code, and or the Policy with the potential for disciplinary action 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.