



U.S. Figure Skating – Social Media Policy for Officials

(accountants, announcers, ice technicians, judges, music officials, referees, and technical panel officials)

Introduction

This Social Media Policy is specifically focused on communication through social media but should be considered in conjunction with other conduct standards and codes for officials, such as the Judges Standard of Conduct and the Technical Panel Code of Ethics, and the U.S. Figure Skating SafeSport program.

Regard social media communications as public at all times, even if created with private intentions. If you are going to use social media in any form, recognize that your communications might be read by anyone at any time and that postings on the internet may be permanent. Be careful in the sharing of your personal information, including photos. Adjust security settings accordingly.

1. As an official you represent U.S. Figure Skating at all times. Act accordingly.
2. Promote officiating in a positive light and with a general feeling of pride and professionalism. As an official, you are an ambassador for skating at all times.
3. You have unique access to information. The same ethical restrictions that apply to any form of speech also apply to social media. It is inappropriate to communicate specifics about other officials, skaters, coaches, parents of skaters, club representatives, volunteers, or any related personnel, including employees of U.S. Figure Skating as well as your assignments or other such decisions made by U.S. Figure Skating. Be thoroughly familiar with the U.S. Figure Skating Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct, Harassment Policy, and SafeSport Handbook in addition to standards and codes for officials.
4. Do not engage in commentary or speculation on any specific evaluation or result, whether it be of an event you officiated, one that you witnessed, or in general about the impact of officials in any event.
5. Do not engage in negative or critical commentary on how a competition or test session was run, how a competition or test session was officiated, or any negative or critical comments regarding any specific official or group of officials at such an event. Should such concerns arise, there are appropriate channels where these concerns can be raised.
6. Communication among officials for learning purposes should be done privately and not through the use of social media. Be mindful that e-mail and other forms of direct communication might be made public.
7. U.S. Figure Skating expects that officials will self-monitor their conduct. Rules for reporting communications that violate this Social Media Policy are covered in the associated rules of the Technical Panel, Judges, Safe Sport, Ethics, Grievance and Competitions Committees.
8. Any person whose acts, statements, or conduct violate the provisions of this Social Media Policy is subject to a review of their officiating privileges by the appropriate U.S. Figure Skating committee and appropriate action under applicable rules, policies and procedures of U.S. Figure Skating.

Adapted from the National Association of Sporting Officials – Social Media Guidelines



U.S. Figure Skating Social Media Tip Sheet for Officials

As a professional courtesy, we are supplying some specific examples of Social Media "do's", "don'ts" and "what if's". Keep in mind that this list is neither complete nor comprehensive, but merely a sampling.

"Do's"

Q: Is it OK to congratulate a local organizing committee (LOC) for a well-run competition on social media?

A: Yes. Our LOCs work hard, and acknowledging their commitment is always appreciated.

Q: If I am a team leader or an official traveling internationally, is it okay for me to post pictures with the entire team?

A: Yes, since you are focusing on the entire team, this is an acceptable social media activity. We do not recommend posting photos to your personal social media accounts of you with skaters in social situations, unless it is a formal event such as a team dinner. You also should not single out any particular skater/team to congratulate on social media, instead, congratulate Team USA on their accomplishments.

Q: Is it okay to be "friends" with, or follow skaters on social media?

A: Yes; however, it is imperative that you manage your social media accounts so that they are appropriate for those skaters to see public content. We do not recommend that you maintain social media relationships with any skaters who are minors.

Q: Is it a violation of the social media policy to post an invitation to a group meeting (such as a prayer group) if the invitation is a general post, directed to no one in particular?

A: No. Personal posts on social media which do NOT reference your position within U.S. Figure Skating and which do NOT purport to express the opinions of U.S. Figure Skating do not violate the social media policy.

Q: If a reporter contacts me via social media, should I respond?

A: Yes, but explain that you are not an official spokesperson of U.S. Figure Skating and then politely refer them to headquarters. (U.S. Figure Skating has three official spokespersons: the president, executive director and senior director of external affairs). After headquarters receives this request, you may be asked if you would like to be interviewed.

"Don'ts"

Q: Is it OK for officials to complain on Social Media about their assignments (qualifying or nonqualifying)?

A: No. Not only is this a violation of the Social Media Policy, depending upon how it is written, it may also be a violation of our General Rules under GR 1.01, GR 1.02 or GR 1.03.

Q: Is it okay to post photos with competitors I know from my club/rink?

A: No. This may give the impression that you are biased in support of a particular skater/team and that you would not be able to judge others fairly who are competing against that skater/team.

Q: May I post photos of the judges in the hospitality room during competitions?

A: Do not post photos of any person who has not explicitly given their permission for you to do so. Additionally, do not post photos from dinners or social activities that include alcohol or unprofessional behaviors during a competition. An example of an acceptable photo to publish is a face shot of yourself and a friend, with a caption that it is nice to catch up with him/her.

Q: May I comment on a skater's social media post?

A: You should never comment on the social media post of a skater you are going to judge in this competitive season. You should also not comment on a skater's post if it involves: a). any intimate/sexualized behavior; or b). any skating elements such as a video of him/herself landing a triple Axel. You should limit your comments on skaters' posts to very general comments. e.g., if a skater posts that they are safe during a hurricane, you can say that you are glad they are safe.

Q: I am offended by one of our senior competitor's skating outfit at U.S. Championships. Is it okay for me to comment on their personal appearance on social media?

A: Absolutely not.

Q: I am an adult skater as well as a judge. Is it acceptable for me to comment on the competitors in my group at Adult Sectionals (giving them positive comments)?

A: No. That is inappropriate!

Q: Can I promote my skating dresses on social media?

A: You cannot serve as an official and also promote skating related goods or services (see the Conflict of Interest Policy).

What if??

Q: What if somebody posts a photo of me on social media that is unprofessional, or attributes a negative statement to me on social media (e.g., says I complained about an assignment)?

A: Reach out to them and ask them to remove the content immediately. If the problem persists and the individual does not remove the social media posts, contact the chair of the Judges Committee and/or the chair of the Ethics Committee.

Q: What if I see an official's post on social media that is inappropriate?

A: Contact the chair of the Judge's Committee (or chair of the Technical Panel Committee if the official is a technical panel official). If possible, send a screenshot of the inappropriate post or any other evidence you may have.

Q: If I make a complaint against an official who has posted something inappropriate on social media, can it be anonymous?

A: Yes. Please reach out to the appropriate committee chair and provide evidence of misconduct, such as a screen shot.