



Electronic Communication Policy of the Vernon Hills Swim Team

VHST 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 Team acknowledges the value of these methods of communication, the Team also realizes that there are associated risks that must be considered when adults use these methods to communicate with minors.

All communications between a coach or other adult and an athlete must be professional in nature and used to communicate 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, relationships, family issues, or personal problems;

Note: Any communication concerning an athlete's personal life, social activities, relationships, family issues, or personal problems must be transparent, accessible, and professional.

Whether one is an athlete, coach 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?" To electronic communications, a simple test that can be used in most cases is whether the electronic communication with swimmers is Transparent, Accessible, and Professional.

- *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, innuendos, and expectations.



- *Accessible:* All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of the Team records. Always include another coach or parent in the communication to ensure accessibility.
- *Professional:* All electronic communication between a coach and an athlete should be conducted professionally as a representative of the Team. This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a staff member.

Facebook, Instagram, Blogs & Other Similar Social Media Sites

Coaches may have personal Facebook (or other social media site) pages, but they are not permitted to have any athlete member of the Team 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 methods. The Team has an official Facebook page that athletes and their parents can “friend” for information and updates on team-related matters. Coaches should set their pages to “private” to prevent athletes from accessing the coach’s personal information. Social media reminders:

- Once you post something online, it is public and permanent—even if you delete it.
- Many employers, college admissions officers, and athletic recruiters review social networking sites as part of their evaluation of an applicant. Carefully consider how others may perceive the information and content that you share about yourself.
- Never post your email address, home address, phone number, or other personal information, as it could lead to unwanted attention, stalking, or identity theft.



Texting

Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, texting is allowed between coaches and athletes from 5 am to 9:30 pm. Texting shall only be used to communicate information directly related to team activities. Text messages and photos can be saved as screenshots. Once the message is transmitted, the sender loses control.

Email

Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate between 5 am and 9:30 pm. When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent or another coach must also be copied.

Request to Discontinue Electronic Communications

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