

9.1 – WSL Communication Policy

The Williston Sea Lions swim club has adopted a communication policy consistent with USA Swimming's Model Policy. For the purposes of this document, "Club" in this policy refers to the Williston Sea Lions swim club. USA Swimming clubs are now required to implement an electronic communication policy. The policy must be reviewed with and agreed to by all athletes, parents, coaches and other adults affiliated with the club. The following policy is for establishing appropriate electronic communication between adults and athletes.

A. Purpose

1. 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.

B. General Content

1. 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:

- a. drugs or alcohol use;
- b. sexually oriented conversation; sexually explicit language; sexual activity
- c. the adult's personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems; and
- d. 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. For additional information go to www.usaswimming.org/protect

2. 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 Transparent, Accessible and Professional.

C. Transparent

1. 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.
2. All electronic communication between coaches and athletes should be considered a matter of record and part of the Club’s records. Always, include another coach or parent in the communication so that there is no question regarding accessibility.
3. 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.

D. Social Media

1. 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 any social media platforms. Coaches and athletes are not permitted to “instant message” each other through and social media platforms. Coaches and athletes are no permitted to text each other privately without a parent on the same thread.

2. The Club has an official Facebook page that athletes and their parents can “friend” for information and updates on team-related matters. Coaches are encouraged to set their pages to “private” to prevent athletes from accessing the coach’s personal information.
3. Alternative Option: Coaches and athletes may follow each other using the Band App.

E. Texting

1. Subject to the general guidelines mentioned above, texting is not allowed between coaches, board members and athletes, but is only allowed on a board approved app during the hours from 8am until 8pm only (such as crew). Texting only shall be used for the purpose of communicating information directly related to team activities.

F. Email

1. Athletes and coaches may use email to communicate between the hours of 8am and 8pm. When communicating with an athlete through email, a parent, another coach, or a board member must also be copied.

G. REQUEST TO DISCONTINUE ALL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

1. 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.