

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

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

The Social Media Policy is focused on communication through social media but should be considered in conjunction with other conduct standards and codes, such as the Code of Ethics, Officials' Creed Standard of Conduct, the Ethical Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest for both Judges and Technical Panel Officials, and the SafeSport Program Handbook.

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, even when they are deleted. 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. Be thoroughly familiar with the Code of Ethics, Officials' Creed Standard of Conduct, the Ethical Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest for both Judges and Technical Panel Officials, and the SafeSport Program Handbook in addition to other conduct standards and codes for officials.
3. Promote officiating in a positive light and with a general feeling of pride and professionalism. As an official, you are an ambassador for figure skating at all times.
4. You have unique access to privileged 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/teams, coaches, parents of skaters, club representatives, volunteers, or any related personnel, including employees of U.S. Figure Skating as well as your officiating assignments or other such decisions made by U.S. Figure Skating.
5. Do not engage in negative, critical, or unprofessional 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.
6. Do not engage in negative, critical, or unprofessional commentary on how a competition or test session was organized or 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 those concerns can be raised, such as with the Domestic Officials Recruitment and Management Committee or SafeSport Committee.
7. Do not post articles, pictures, and/or videos of skaters/teams that you know and/or judge. This may give the impression that you are biased in support of particular skaters/teams.
8. Communication among officials for learning purposes should be done privately and not through the use of social media. Be mindful that email and other forms of direct communication can be made public.
9. 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 and policies of the Domestic Officials Recruitment and Management, Competitions, Ethics, Grievance, and SafeSport Committees.
10. Any person whose actions, 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(s) and appropriate action under applicable rules, policies and procedures of U.S. Figure Skating.

## Social Media Policy for Officials Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Last Revised – February 2021

### Interacting with Skaters/Teams

**Q:** Is it acceptable to be friends with or follow skaters/teams on social media?

**A:** Per U.S. Figure Skating’s SafeSport Program Handbook, Adult Participants, including Officials, are prohibited from being friends with or following Minor Athletes on social media. It is not recommended for an Adult Participants to join a personal social media page of Adult Athletes and vice versa.

### Articles, Pictures, and/or Videos

**Q:** Is it acceptable to share and/or post articles, pictures, and/or videos with skaters/teams whom I know?

**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 fairly.

**Q:** If I am assigned as a team leader or an official traveling/officiating internationally, is it acceptable for me to post pictures with the entire U.S. delegation?

**A:** Yes. Since you are focusing on the entire delegation, this is acceptable.

However, we do not recommend posting pictures to your personal social media accounts of yourself with skaters/teams in social situations, unless it is an official event. You should not single out any particular skater/team to congratulate on social media nor post a picture with a particular skater/team.

**Q:** A skater has just passed a senior moves-in-the-field test. After the test session, the skater requests a picture with the judges. Is it acceptable to be in such a picture?

**A:** No. It is not appropriate to take a picture with a skater when you have just judged the skater whether it be at a test session or a competition.

**Q:** An official at a competition had discretely taken great pictures of skaters/teams while they were competing. The official is planning to post the pictures on his/her personal social media with the intent to promote the competition and the sport of figure skating. Is this acceptable?

**A:** No. This is a violation of the Social Media Policy for Officials. Officials need to eliminate the appearance of impropriety. Additionally, this may give the impression that an official is biased in support of a particular skater/team and that the official would not be able to judge fairly.

**Q:** May I post pictures of the officials in the hospitality room during competitions?

**A:** No. Do not post pictures of any individual who has not explicitly given permission for you to do so. Additionally, do not post pictures from dinners or social activities that include alcohol and/or unprofessional behaviors.

## Commenting

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

A: Yes.

Q: Is it acceptable for officials to complain/vent on social media about officiating assignments (qualifying or nonqualifying)?

A: No. This is a violation of the Social Media Policy for Officials as officials are prohibited from engaging in negative, critical, or unprofessional commentary or speculation on any specific evaluation, result, competition, or test session.

Q: May I comment and/or react (i.e., “like, love, etc.”) to a post on a skater's personal social media page and/or on a team’s official social media page?

A: No. You should never comment and/or react on the social media post of a skater/team whom you are going to judge in the current competitive season.

Additionally, you should not comment and/or react on a skater’s/team’s post (whether or not you are going to judge the skater/team in the current season) if it involves:

- any intimate/sexualized behavior or
- any videos showcasing particular elements.

Q: I am offended by a skater’s/team’s costume. Is it acceptable for me to comment on their personal appearance on social media?

A: No. The policy states officials are not to engage in negative, critical, or unprofessional commentary.

Q: I am an adult skater as well as an official. Is it acceptable for me to comment on the competitors in my same group at a competition?

A: No.

Q: Is it acceptable for me to post my opinion about the calls of the technical panel and/or scores of the judges on social media?

A: No. It is unacceptable to comment on the calls of the technical panel and/or scores of the judges on social media. It undermines your peers and is completely inappropriate.

## Miscellaneous

Q: Is it acceptable to post an invitation to a personal group meeting (such as a prayer group) if the invitation is a general post which is directed to no one individual in particular?

A: Yes. 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, will not violate the Social Media Policy for Officials.

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

A: Yes, but only to explain that you are not an official spokesperson of U.S. Figure Skating. You should refer the reporter to headquarters. (*U.S. Figure Skating has three official spokespersons: the president, executive director, and senior director of external affairs.*)

Q: Can I promote my skating dress business on social media?

A: No. You cannot serve as an official and also promote skating related goods or services (see the Conflict of Interest Policy).

Q: An official discovers a great clip of a +5 element from a figure skating themed YouTube channel. Is it acceptable for the official to repost and share this clip on their personal social media for the purposes of learning and sharing information with other officials?

A: No. Communication among officials for learning purposes should be done privately and not through the use of social media.

### Courses of Action

Q: What if somebody posts a picture of me on social media that is unprofessional or attributes a negative statement to me? What if I see an official's post on social media that is inappropriate?

A: Contact the chair of the Domestic Officials Recruitment and Management Committee. If possible, send a screenshot of the inappropriate post. If the post is construed as harassment or abuse, report it to U.S. Figure Skating's SafeSport Program.

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

A: Yes. When filing an anonymous complaint, please ensure all relevant information (such as screenshots, whether the page is public or private, etc.) is included in the report as the recipient of the report will not have your contact information to ask additional questions.

Q: Where can I file a complaint?

A: <https://www.usfigureskating.org/safesport>

Click on "Report a Concern to U.S. Figure Skating" to access the Formsites.

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