

USA SOFTBALL UMPIRE SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION: Social Media has become a tool for everyone to voice an opinion, to congratulate, to complain, to find out information on a real time basis. It can be a tool for highlighting the positives of your organization and / or pointing out the negatives of your organization, a team, a coach or an umpire. Social Media has become more accessible than ever and is changing the way we communicate on a daily basis. It has taken the place of sharing information face to face. The guidelines for functioning in an electronic world are similar to the values and ethics policies individuals are expected to live by every day, whether you're posting, Tweeting, talking with coworkers or chatting over the neighbor's fence.

PURPOSE: To assist members of the USA Softball Umpire Program participating in respectful Social Media in all its forms as well as protecting the mission, reputation and membership of USA Softball. It is also our goal to layout a few helpful guidelines and to provide helpful and practical advice when operating on the internet as an identifiable representative of USA Softball. These guidelines apply to members who create or contribute to blogs, forums, wikis, social networks, or any other form of social media. The list includes but is not limited to: Text, Twitter, Yelp, Tumblr, Google+, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook pages/groups, or comments on online media stories. USA Softball umpires, as members of the National Governing Body of Softball, should exercise care in setting appropriate boundaries between their personal and public online behavior, understanding that what is private in the digital world often has the possibility of becoming public, even without their knowledge or consent. USA Softball expects all members acting as independent contractors carefully review the privacy settings on any social media and networking sites they use and exercise care and good judgment when posting content and information on such sites.

THING TO REMEMBER WHEN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- Consider 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, consider your communication may be read by anyone at any time.
- On Social Media, you may be publicly associated with the Umpiring industry, USA Softball, your Local Association, your assigners and/or your partners. Act accordingly.
- Communications among officials for learning purposes should be done privately and not through the use of social media. Be mindful that emails and other forms of direct communication can be made public.

THE DO'S OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- Be very sparing in the sharing of your personal information, including photos, surroundings and settings accordingly. Report fake profiles or posts to the appropriate authorities/governing bodies in a timely fashion.
- Do use social media as a means for sharing information with members of your local association. Some local groups in various states across the country have created association pages and have their group members on their friend lists. This can be a great mechanism for information dissemination and can also be a page for recognition of group members and to give potential new members a first look at becoming an USA Softball UMPIRE.
- Do use social media as a recruitment tool. Given the median age of most users of social media, it can be a great means of getting new members into the avocation.
- Do remember to keep things positive if you post information on these sites. If you come home from a game wherein everything went smoothly, it is okay to generically post about it. For example, you could say, "I had a great softball game tonight. Both teams displayed great sportsmanship. Reminds me why I umpire."
- Be aware that posts on social media are visible to the general public. Even if you limit access to your page to friends, it is likely that your post will be viewed by someone beyond the circle of people you intended to see it.
- Think twice before you post. If there is anything in your post that could be construed as a criticism of officials, of officials' decisions, or of leagues, teams, administrators, coaches or athletes...it's better left unsent.

THE DON'TS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- Avoid posting specifics about your schedule.
- Do not post any disparaging comments about players, coaches, teams, leagues, fans or fellow umpires online.
- Do not advertise where you are umpiring at any time.
- Do not be a "cheerleader" for any league, team, coach, player or umpire on these sites.
- When posting a picture of yourself wearing the shirt of your alma mater online and then call a game for that team the following week, you may be setting the stage for allegations of bias by that school's opponent.
- Do not post specifics about games, whether good or bad.
- Do not start posting online after you have had a rough game.
- Do not post details about other umpire assignments, to playoff games for instance, until that information has been officially released. Don't use social media as a news service.
- Do not use social media to criticize state or local association policies, assigning practices, etc.
- Do not post regarding calls made by umpires in other games, whatever the level. You and other umpires might debate the call you saw on TV, but debating the call on Facebook or Twitter is a no-no.

- Do not post pictures of yourself while at a Championship after or in between games.
- Do not post items that pertain to your debrief after your game is over.
- Avoid texting, instance messaging, Facebook@ing or any other forms of communication while umpires are in the heat of the moment.
- Do not post any inappropriate pictures, statements, or emails of yourself on any social media site.
- Do not post any inappropriate pictures, statements, or emails of anyone or anything on any social media site under the USA Softball umbrella.

Basic Principles

- Integrity is our most important commodity: Avoid writing or posting anything that would embarrass The Times or compromise your ability to do your job.
- Assume that your professional life and your personal life will merge online regardless of your care in separating them.
- Even if you use privacy tools (determining who can view your page or profile, for instance), assume that everything you write, exchange or receive on a social media site is public.
- Just as political bumper stickers and lawn signs are to be avoided in the offline world, so too are partisan expressions online.
- Be aware of perceptions. If you “friend” a source or join a group on one side of a debate, do so with the other side as well. Also understand that readers may view your participation in a group as your acceptance of its views; be clear that you’re looking for story ideas or simply collecting information. Consider that you may be an observer of online content without actively participating.

Use of USA Softball’s Name or Trademark(s) without USA Softball’s Consent is Prohibited.

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<p>DISCLAIMER and LIMITATIONS: The content provided in these guidelines is intended solely for general information purposes, and is provided with the understanding that the author is <u>not</u> providing professional advice or services for any particular situation. Social media activities are driven by specific circumstances unique to each situation and to extent you are concerned about a particular situation, you should consult a professional advisor. The information in these guidelines was posted with reasonable care and attention. However, it is possible that some information in these guidelines is incomplete, incorrect, or inapplicable to particular circumstances or conditions. USA Softball does not accept liability for direct or indirect losses resulting from using, relying or acting upon information in these guidelines.</p>
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