



# Social Media Considerations for Coaches

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1. Coaches, like organizations and other individuals, need to resist the impulse of just 'jumping in' to social media without thinking about their strategy and approach.
2. For each social medium that a coach plans to use, the coach needs to:
  - Have a reason to use it,
  - Learn to use it in advance,
  - Use it appropriately,
  - Use it regularly and effectively,
  - Understand it completely,
  - Plan to maintain and upkeep it,
  - Know its limits and benefits, and
  - Incorporate it into your coaching philosophy and strategy
3. Coaches must be acutely aware of the phenomenon of *hyper-personal communication* (the tendency to more readily reveal personal feelings or ask personal questions when using computer-mediated communication media such as Facebook, text-messaging, or instant-messaging).
4. Coaches should develop a strategy for use of **Facebook**. Consider the following:
  - Choosing not to use Facebook is an acceptable strategy – but have good reasons for your choice.
  - If you do engage athletes with Facebook, you can use your personal Facebook account or create a separate 'coach profile' – there are benefits and drawbacks to both (<http://www.sportlaw.ca/2011/03/on-facebook-the-coach-profile/>).
  - Do not 'friend' athletes unless they ask you to. Never pressure an athlete to be your friend or join a Facebook group or page. Do not show favouritism in your Facebook use by accepting friend requests from some athletes and not from others.
  - You and your athlete are not really 'friends'. Be available to interact with athletes on Facebook but try to limit initiating contact with them through this social medium.
  - Be aware that through Facebook you may acquire information about an athlete that imposes an obligation of disclosure on your part.
  - Athletes are observing your behaviour on Facebook. Exercise discretion in your own personal use of Facebook with family, friends, and colleagues. Keep all your Facebook communications appropriate to the standard ethical practices that you must exhibit as a coach.
  - If your athletes are minors, make sure to inform parents that some coach-athlete interactions may occur on Facebook. Subsequently, you may receive friend requests from parents. Be open and honest with them about how you will use this medium in your position as coach.
  - Understand Facebook's security settings and use them appropriately.