

# SOCIAL MEDIA AND SCOUTING

## Time Available

10 minutes

## Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this training session, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the role of social media in Scouting
2. Understand the BSA social media policy
3. Understand the benefits of using social media in district and unit promotion

## Suggested Presenter(s)

The district or council webmaster or the social media coordinator from a unit with a robust social media program

## Presentation Method

An overview of the pros and cons of social media in Scouting and a review of the BSA social media guidelines

## BSA Reference Materials

- BSA Social Media Guidelines, [www.scouting.org/Home/Marketing/Resources/SocialMedia.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/Home/Marketing/Resources/SocialMedia.aspx)
- Unit Website Guidelines, [www.scouting.org/Home/Marketing/Resources/UnitWeb.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/Home/Marketing/Resources/UnitWeb.aspx)
- Cyber Chip, [www.scouting.org/training/youthprotection/cyberchip.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/training/youthprotection/cyberchip.aspx)

## Presentation Content

### Overview

- The BSA acknowledges that social media is here to stay and embraces its proper use to promote Scouting.
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - YouTube
- Social media vehicles enable current and past Scouts and Scouters—and those who are interested in participating or are just interested in Scouting in general—to communicate directly with each other about Scouting.
- Using social media to connect with others interested in Scouting can create very positive messages about your unit and Scouting in general.
- However, the creation and maintenance of these channels requires forethought, care, and responsibility.
- Remember also that the chartered organization may have its own policies about social media. Units should work with the chartered organization so that their social media presence does not conflict with existing policies.

- For that reason, the Boy Scouts of America has developed guidelines to help you navigate the use of social media channels.
- These guidelines are in addition to the BSA's existing Youth Protection policies and training. That includes the practice of no one-one-one communication between adults and youth. Any form of communication between them should always involve a second adult.

### Follow Terms of Service for the Channel

- Review and strictly adhere to the terms of service and existing guidelines created by each individual social media channel (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.).
  - Always post according to the rules of the channel so your account won't be blocked.

### Follow the Scout Oath and Law

- Media inquiries coming through social media should be referred to the Scout executive or a designee for an official response.
- All Scouts and adult leaders should abide by the guidelines outlined in the Scout Oath and Law when participating in social networking.
  - Content contrary to the Scout Oath and Law reflect badly on the unit, the poster, and Scouting as a whole.
  - Comments on social media “live forever” on the internet, sometimes even if the post and/or the account have been deleted.

### Rules for Specific Social Media Channels

The BSA social media guidelines give specific guidance on use of the three most common social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Find the guidelines at [www.scouting.org/Home/Marketing/Resources/SocialMedia.aspx](http://www.scouting.org/Home/Marketing/Resources/SocialMedia.aspx).

### Other Social Media Considerations for Units

- Include a notice that the site is not an official BSA site.
  - In your social media communications, you must be clear that you are not on an official BSA social media channel but instead your own personal/unit channel. You can use the following template as an example:
    - “This site is the personal [specific social media channel] of [your name or organization] and is reflective only of my personal views, thoughts, and opinions. This site does not have the endorsement of the Boy Scouts of America, and it is not an official communication channel of the Boy Scouts of America.”

- Respect copyrights.
  - Photos, music, and video are commonly reused on the web without permission. Plagiarism is also common.
  - Such practices violate the ethics of Scouting. They are also violations of law, and could expose the publishers legally.
- No ads on unit social media sites.
  - “Free” web services used to create unit-level sites often contain advertising. This practice may reflect poorly on the Scouting brand, and should be avoided.
- Of more serious concern are unit sites that engage in fundraising activities not previously approved by the local council.
  - Any independent sales, solicitation, or collection of donations is prohibited by the Bylaws of the Boy Scouts of America and charter agreements.
- Social media must be monitored. A qualified person should have the responsibility of monitoring social media channels daily, and backup administrators/monitors should be designated so there is no gap in the monitoring.
- Integrate your communications by creating and using a strategy that surrounds your intended audience with your key message(s) through print, the web, email, social media, and word of mouth.
- Talk to your audiences and let them talk to and about you.
- Post content on a consistent schedule.
- Stale sites cause people to lose interest. They lead the public to believe your unit isn’t exciting or viable.

- Administrators must be able to monitor all communication to help ensure there is no inappropriate communication between adult leaders and Scouts or between Scouts themselves.
- All communication between adults and youth should take place in a public forum such as the Facebook wall.
- At least one additional, authorized adult must be openly “copied” (included) in the message or message thread of any electronic communication between adults and youth.
- If you feel the information you want to share should not be shared in public, you should not share that information via social media either!
- As you and members of your group create personal social media profiles, the information on these profiles should be kept private (i.e., do not display your phone number, address, or personal email address on these profiles).
- Any Scouts with personal profiles for social media should make those profiles private so their personal information cannot be accessed by the public.
- Everyone should familiarize themselves with and abide by the terms of service of the sites where they create and maintain personal profiles.

**Other Internet Safety Considerations for Scouts**

- Do not give anyone online your real last name, phone numbers at home or school, parents’ workplaces, the name or location of your school, or your home address without parental permission.
- Never give your password to anyone but a parent or other trusted adult in the family.
- If someone sends or shows you email or any type of direct message/wall post with sayings that make you feel uncomfortable, trust your instincts. You are probably right to be wary. Do not respond. Tell a parent or trusted adult what happened.
- If somebody tells you to keep what’s going on “a secret between the two of us,” tell a parent or guardian immediately.
- Anyone who starts talking about subjects that make you feel uncomfortable is probably an adult posing as a kid.
- Pay attention if someone tells you things that don’t fit together. If an online “friend” says he or she is 12, and another time says he or she is 14, that is a warning that this person is lying and may be an adult posing as a kid.

**Follow Youth Protection Policies**

- Safety and youth protection should be a key focus.
  - Private channels and private communication put both the youth and you at risk.
  - Keeping children and their privacy safe, both online and off, should always be at the forefront of social media usage.
  - The channels must be public, and all communication on or through them must be public.
  - No private messages and no one-on-one direct contact through email, Facebook messages, Twitter direct messaging, chats, instant messaging (Google Messenger, AIM, etc.), or other similar messaging features is allowed.

- Never talk to anybody by phone if you know that person only online. If someone asks you to call—even if it's collect or a toll-free 800 number—that's a warning. That person can get your phone number this way, either from a phone bill or from caller ID.
- Never agree to meet in the "real world" someone you have met only online.
- Watch out if someone online starts talking about hacking or breaking into other people's or companies' computer systems; phreaking (the "ph" sounds like an "f"), the illegal use of long-distance services or cellular phones; or viruses (online programs that destroy or damage data when other people download these onto their computers).
- Honor any rules about how much time you are allowed to spend online and what you do and where you go online.