

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

A GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA IN SCIENCE OLYMPIAD

Science Olympiad understands that social media has become a common platform for communication and connection for our staff, board members, state and regional leaders, alumni, volunteers, and advisors. While social media can be a wonderful tool to stay connected to the world, it also carries risks and responsibilities, particularly when a person is affiliated with an organization, either formally or informally. To assist you in making responsible decisions about use of social media while affiliated with Science Olympiad, we have established some guidelines.

This policy is not meant to infringe upon personal expression or free speech; rather, it is meant to guide those affiliated with the organization to carefully consider how the organization is represented on their social media accounts and to protect both you and the organization from unnecessary risks or negative consequences.

Protecting Youth

The safety of the students we serve is of utmost importance, and we must stress how vital it is to keep their protection, as well as your own, in mind at all times. If you are a school staff member, follow the guidance of your school and district policies for student communication. If you are an adult volunteer, personal social media account platforms, text messages and individual emails should be avoided as a communication tool with any Science Olympiad participants under the age of 18. If you determine that you have been "followed" or "friended" by a Science Olympiad participant, encourage them to follow public Science Olympiad social media accounts. The exception to this rule is if the person is over the age of 18 AND has graduated from high school, thus ending their status as a Science Olympiad participant. The onus is on you to verify that the person has met both criteria.

Online communication such as tutoring, mentoring and other activities must be aligned with student safety measures. Refer to our **Virtual Mentoring Guidelines** document.

Protecting the Science Olympiad Reputation and Brand

For more than 37 years, Science Olympiad has enjoyed a reputation of fair, honest and inclusive programming. That reputation allows us to do what we do best, and it relies on the people who are affiliated with the organization - you - to represent the organization in the best possible light.

Those whose position or responsibilities require regular interaction with students, schools, public, government or business officials, or others in the community in such a way that they are seen as being affiliated with Science Olympiad, a state chapter, a team, or an alumni group should exercise caution in how they use their personal social media accounts.

This caution is particularly important when your connection to Science Olympiad is very clear: for example, commenting on a Science Olympiad tournament, posting at a Science Olympiad event, wearing Science Olympiad apparel, and other Science Olympiad related events, activities, or representations. Please consider how you choose words, images and actions carefully. Avoid inappropriate comments that may be construed as discrimination, harassment, or threats of violence, even if such comes in the form of humor. No posts should include images or reference to the consumption of drugs or alcohol at Science Olympiad events, including meetings and trainings, in accordance with the [Science Olympiad Alcohol Policy](#).

Speaking on Behalf of the Organization

Express only your personal opinions in social media postings. Unless you are specifically authorized to do so, never represent yourself as a spokesperson for Science Olympiad. If Science Olympiad is the subject of content you are posting, you are strongly encouraged to be transparent about your relationship to the organization (e.g., staff, board member, volunteer, or alumni). Science Olympiad also asks that you make it clear that your personal views do not represent the views of Science Olympiad or its employees, board members, or agents.

Media contacts: Please do not speak to the media on Science Olympiad's behalf without contacting the national office, the board chair, or your state chapter director (whichever is first accessible), to whom all traditional and social media inquiries should be referred.

Guidelines for Team or Organizational Social Media Accounts

Many teams, college alumni chapters, and state chapters run social media accounts. When making decisions about posts that come from a group account, it's important to consider the audience, the reputation of the organization and its affiliated organizations, as well as non-profit compliance concerns.

1. Audience: Consider who is following the social media account(s) and what type of information they are looking for. If the audience is looking for information on tournaments and study sessions, ensure that the bulk of posts address that need and are age-appropriate.
2. Reputation: Teams are often affiliated with a larger entity, such as a school district, college or state organization, in addition to being affiliated with the national Science Olympiad organization. Consider posts as an extension of those institutions and be aware of the implications for controversial or inappropriate posts on all parties.
3. Compliance: Most teams, alumni chapters, and state chapters are either affiliated with a 501(c)(3) non-profit or they are a non-profit themselves. Part of maintaining this status is understanding the rules around non-profits and political advocacy, the most relevant of which is that non-profit organizations are not allowed to be partisan.
 - a. Specifically, this means that social media accounts affiliated with Science Olympiad should not endorse a particular candidate / political organization. You may share content if the content shared is educational in nature and clearly nonpartisan. If you're not sure, it is always safer to share content, for example, from a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, educational source or public media outlet not affiliated with a partisan political campaign. More information on compliance and political activity is described [here](#).