

Introduction:

Social Media has become more accessible than ever and is changing the ways we communicate on a daily basis. The guidelines for functioning in an electronic world are similar to the values and ethics policies individuals are expected to live every day, whether you're posting, Tweeting, talking with co-workers or chatting over the neighbor's fence. Remember, your responsibility to TASO doesn't end when you exit the court or playing field.

Purpose:

To assist TASO members in participating online in a respectful manner that protects the Mission and Reputation of TASO, the sports officiated by TASO, and the official, as well as adhere to the policies of our organization. We have come up with a few guidelines to provide helpful and practical advice when operating on the internet as an identifiable TASO representative. These guidelines apply to members who create or contribute to blogs, wikis, social networks, or any other kind of social media. The list includes but is not limited to: Twitter, Yelp, Tumblr, Google+, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook pages/groups, or comments on online media stories. This includes participation either under the member's name or under an assumed identity or avatar.

Guidelines:

TASO members 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. TASO strongly encourages all members to 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.

Here are a few guidelines when operating on the internet.

- Read and familiarize yourself with the TASO Social Media policy and Guidelines.
- Personal social media posts and comments must not potentially embarrass TASO, damage the TASO reputation or tarnish its image.
- Never misrepresent yourself or TASO by making false or misleading comments or posts. All statements must be true and accurate. General advice: If in doubt, don't post it.
- TASO members should be cautious about making online comment on any topic related to their officiating assignments or TASO duties. Remember that any social media, print, telephone, written, or other form can be made public. Areas to be concerned with include:
 - Specific game or match assignments, locations or dates. While some of these may be public domain, it is not within the scope of TASO member's authority. Only the Executive Director of TASO, or his/her designate, is authorized by TASO to make statements which may be public.
 - The scores or outcome of any game or match. This includes penalties or fouls assessed.
 - Situations or events that occurred in a game or match. Examples would be calls made, interactions with fans, coaches or players.

- The officiating performance of other members, partners or officials in any association, sport or level. While discussions with other sports officials may be privately held (after the event), the topics of sport official performance must be specifically kept out of social media. Keep in mind that even a “generic” comment can be identified, or misconstrued.
- “Friends” or “connections” with coaches, athletic directors, players or any other participants in the sport in which they officiate should be carefully managed on social media. Keep potential changes in the relationship in mind. For example, a sports official may become a coach. In this case, it may be appropriate (or not) to drop this connection. Care should be used to eliminate the perception of an inappropriate relationship.
- Members shall not create TASO specific Social Media profiles, or represent themselves as official TASO websites, pages or blogs, without the written consent of the executive director of TASO. The executive director and/or a designee shall be made aware of any website using the word TASO in reference to the Texas Association of Sports Officials.

Consequences of Violating the TASO Social Media Policy:

Inappropriate activity that is in conflict with this document’s guidelines may result in disciplinary action in accordance with TASO by-laws, ranging from private reprimand to expulsion, and may include fine, probation, suspension, reduction of any classification, or any combination of the above deemed appropriate by the decision making body.

Be smart about protecting TASO, yourself and your privacy. Consider the content carefully. The Internet has a long memory. TASO is our organization, and WE must protect our values and ethics.