



TRAIL LIFE USA

Adventure › Character › Leadership

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Note: It is not the goal of this document to provide a step-by-step “how to” on creating and using the specific features of social media channels. Such guides already exist and can be found elsewhere. Additionally, social media changes regularly, so this document reflects the current guidelines as determined by Trail Life USA and is subject to modifications and amendments from time to time as required.

WHY SOCIAL MEDIA?

Online social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have made it possible for virtually anyone with an Internet connection to create and be part of online communities where people can discuss Trail Life and share stories, photos, videos, and other types of media.

The use of social media carries with it certain responsibilities and presents certain risks. So although using social media is not a Trail Life USA activity, its use to connect with others interested in Trail Life USA and your Trail Life Troop can be a very positive experience. The creation and maintenance of these channels requires forethought, care, and responsibility. **The posting of certain comments, photos, links or references to third party weblogs, social networks and websites could have a negative impact on Trail Life USA, its members and its Charter Organizations. All posts and comments should evidence Christian charity, clarity and respect for the truth.** To assist you in making responsible decisions about your use of social media, we have established this policy for the appropriate use of social media. The safety and protection of youth should always be a key focus.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND CHILD SAFETY CONCERNS

All members should review and strictly adhere to the terms of service and existing guidelines outlined by each individual social media channel. As is true for participation in Trail Life activities, all Trailmen and adult leaders should abide by Biblical principles and the guidelines outlined in the Trailman Oath and Motto when participating in social networking. **Staying true to the commitment of protecting youth and keeping children and their privacy safe, both online and off, should always be the primary consideration where social media usage is concerned. There must be strict compliance with all aspects of the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (“COPPA”)**

All communication with youth on social media channels should be public and follow the two-deep leadership policy. This enables administrators to monitor all communication and helps ensure there is no inappropriate communication between adult leaders and Trailmen or between Trailmen themselves. Therefore, no private channels involving youth or one-on-one direct communication with youth are acceptable in helping to administer the Trail Life USA program. **All communication between adults and youth should take place in a public forum (e.g. the Facebook timeline), or at a bare minimum, electronic communication between adults and youth should always include one or more other authorized adults openly “copied” (included) on the message or message thread.**

While all **communication should be public** and leaders should follow the two-deep rule while communicating with youth via social media channels, it is recommended that personal social media **profiles should be kept private** (e.g., do not display your phone number, address, or personal email address on these profiles). It is also recommended that any youth with personal profiles for social media make those profiles private so the youth’s personal information is not accessible by the public.



INTERNET SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUTH SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Any Trail Life USA Troops or units that plan to use social media should share the following Internet safety guidelines with Trailmen, parents, and leaders. All youth should abide by the following Internet safety guidelines and personal protection rules:

- Keep online conversations with everyone in public places, not in email or private chats.
- Do not give anyone online your real last name, phone numbers at home or school, your parents' workplaces, or the name or location of your school or home address unless you have your parents' permission first. Never give your password to anyone but a parent or other adult in your family.
- If someone sends or shows you an email or any type of direct message/timeline post with images or text 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 someone asks you to keep a conversation private or secret, immediately tell a parent or guardian.
- Be careful to whom you talk. Anyone who starts talking about subjects that make you feel uncomfortable or tells you things that don't fit together, is a warning sign that this person could be lying and may be an adult posing as a child. (Ex. an online "friend" says he or she is 13, and another time says he or she is 15.)
- Never talk to or call anybody by phone if you know that person only online unless you talk to a parent about it first.
- Never agree to meet someone in person if you have met only online.
- Immediately tell an adult if someone online starts talking about hacking or breaking into other people's or companies' computer systems.
- Promise your parent or an adult family member and yourself that you will honor any rules about how much time you are allowed to spend online and what you do and where you go while you are online.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USE

For practical considerations Trail Life USA expects those promoting, sharing or discussing the Trail Life USA program through the use of social media to follow the following:

- Fan Page and Group Headers must be different from Trail Life USA's header. This ensures that the public and media can distinguish between what are official Trail Life USA statements and postings, and what are your postings or those of your Troop/unit.
- Use forethought, care, and responsibility when creating and maintaining social media channels where people share information and media about Trail Life.
- **Social media must be monitored.** A qualified staff member or adult volunteer 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.
- Abide by the guidelines outlined in the Trail Life Oath and Motto, as well as Trail Life USA's child safety policies when participating in social media activities. That includes following recommended safety guidelines (including the use of proper safety equipment) when displaying photos and/or videos of Trailmen and leaders on a social media channel.
- Designate at least two adult administrators who have access to the login, password, and channel management/monitoring information who will be able to monitor that page and post content consistently to help ensure that only appropriate content is posted.
- Before creating a Facebook page, consider whether designated administrators will be able to consistently monitor and post appropriate content. Do not give out personal information (e.g., phone number, home address) on social media channels.
- Never post questionable content or respond to someone else's content in a way that could reflect poorly on yourself, other Trailmen, a Charter Organization, or Trail Life USA.

- Be timely in updating social media channels and responding to information requests on social media channels.
- Integrate your communications. Create a strategy to surround your intended audience with your key message(s) through multiple media methods: print, the Web, email, radio, TV, word of mouth, and social media.
- Understand that the public may view your social media activities, and members of the public may engage in an online dialogue with you as a result.
- The use of social media requires a “thick skin.” Negative comments are bound to happen, but don’t delete them unless they violate the terms in this policy – and only respond if a response is warranted.
- Talk to your audiences and let them talk to and about you. By posting content on a consistent schedule, you can tell your story and encourage conversations in the community.
- Direct media inquiries to the appropriate person. Media inquiries coming through social media requesting information or official statements from Trail Life USA should be referred to the Trail Life USA designee (media@trailifeusa.com) for an official response.
- Be a true Christian. When disagreeing with others’ opinions, remain appropriate and polite. If you find yourself in a situation online that looks as if it’s becoming antagonistic, do not get overly defensive and do not disengage from the conversation abruptly. Contact Trail Life USA for advice on how to disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner that reflects well on Trail Life USA.
- Always be open and transparent. Share information and what the challenges and opportunities are for Trail Life in your community.
- Do not use the copyrights, trademarks, or other intellectual property of third-parties in online social media (including copyrighted video) without the necessary permissions of the holder(s) of such rights.
- Under the Internal Revenue Code, all section 501(c)(3) organizations are absolutely prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office. Public statements of position (verbal or written) made on behalf of the organization in favor of or in opposition to any candidate for public office clearly violate the prohibition against political campaign activity. Violating this prohibition may result in denial or revocation of tax-exempt status and the imposition of certain excise taxes.

KEY SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR USE

There are many social media channels available to users, and new channels are being introduced frequently. As such, it would be impossible to provide information on all of them. We will provide practical guidelines for three of the most popular and most applicable. Please click the links below to see these guidelines. [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [YouTube](#).

FINAL THOUGHTS

It is important to remember that all social media channels are, by nature, designed to be social, that is, shared with members of the public. As such, whatever social media activities you engage in should be completed with the understanding that the public will see them and may engage in an online dialogue with you as a result. You should not do anything on a social media channel that reflects poorly on you, other individuals in your troop, Charter Organization, Trail Life, or anyone else. Before posting any content on any social media channel, you should first ask yourself if that content is in keeping with the precepts of the Trailman Oath and Motto.

As an additional consideration, once created, social media channels and the content on them “live forever” on the Internet, sometimes even if the accounts have been deleted. That means social media channels created today may still exist five, 10, or 15 years from now, in some cases long after those who started them are no longer involved directly with Trail Life or your Charter Organization. As such, considerations should be made regarding the transitioning of administration rights and duties if and when the initial administrators end their direct involvement in Trail Life or their Charter Organization.

Also, organizations wishing to use social media must accept the fact that listening is just as important as speaking in these channels, and those wishing to participate in this space should be prepared to listen if they are to reap any value.

Social media can be a powerful tool for sharing the joys and triumphs of Trail Life, but if not executed properly, it can be a detriment to everything Trail Life USA represents. As such, engage in social media activities wisely. Also realize that social media is a new and evolving form of communication that requires flexibility, patience, and commitment, but the rewards of increased connection with, and understanding of, your target audience can be great.

In your social media communications, you should be clear that it is not an official Trail Life USA social media channel but is instead your own personal channel. You can use the following template as an example:

"This site is the personal [reference your 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 Trail Life USA, and it is not an official communication channel of Trail Life USA."

Should you have questions regarding any of the guidelines and/or recommendations or concerning the use of a specific social media channel not covered here, please feel free to contact the Trail Life's social media team at **socialmedia@trailifeusa.com** for further guidance.

Facebook

Facebook is a wonderful way to form online communities where groups of people can gather to have conversations and share information. Indeed, Trail Life USA as well as those interested in establishing Trail Life units or communicating the need for and value of Trail Life USA are already using Facebook to communicate about Trail Life USA. Of course, creating and maintaining a Facebook page for a Trail Life Troop or Area is a big responsibility and should not be entered into lightly.

It may be valuable to think of a Facebook page as a little like a troop meeting that doesn't end, and where anyone – even members of the public -- may drop by and watch or share their thoughts at any time of day or night. It is a way of being even more involved in sharing the fun and excitement of the Trail Life and be a more active part of the group discussion—even when they're at home. But it's also easy to see how, if left unstructured or unattended by leaders, this never-ending meeting could create problems.

When considering whether or not Facebook might be a good option for your Troop or Charter Organization, it is important to remember that Facebook requires all users to be at least 13 years of age. Before creating a Facebook page, you should educate yourself about what Facebook is and how it is used, and familiarize yourself with its terms of service and the possible dangers. This will help you navigate carefully in your development of a fan page.

When creating a Facebook page, you should make it a public fan page. In addition, you should designate at least two administrators who have access to the page management and monitoring information. This conforms to the two-deep leadership requirement of Trail Life USA. At least one of these individuals should be a registered adult leader who has taken child safety training. All child safety policies that govern the use of email are applicable to the use of the messaging capabilities of Facebook.

Perhaps the biggest strength of Facebook is also its biggest weakness: Facebook fan pages are open to the public, which means any information shared on that fan page can be viewed by essentially anyone. As such, you should make sure that any information shared on that page by you or by your fans is information that is appropriate to share with the public. This is especially true regarding the level of detail you provide regarding Trail Life members and activities.

Once you have created a Facebook fan page, invited people to "like" your page and started gathering "fans," it is important for you to post good and appropriate content and monitor the content that is posted to your timeline. Unfortunately, not all the content posted to the timeline by your fans may be appropriate. All content posted by you or by fans on the Facebook timeline should conform to the moral teachings of the Bible and the Trail Life Oath and Motto. Content that does not meet these standards should be removed immediately.

If a user posts highly offensive content, the content should be removed immediately, and you may need to block or ban the user who posted it. Such an action should not be used liberally but only when content is truly objectionable.

This type of careful monitoring requires vigilance. Before creating a Facebook page, you should consider whether you or someone else who will administer the page will be able to monitor that page and post content consistently to help ensure that only appropriate content is posted. Pages with inconsistent and infrequent updates can cause your fans to become disinterested, and your page can become a target for spammers or other predatory parties who recognize that you appear not to be actively involved on your page.

As with any online site, it is highly important that you do not give out personal information about Trailmen – neither youth nor adults -- to anyone on Facebook. Every effort should be made to help ensure that your fans and those Trailmen that use the Facebook page are protected. Keeping all of us safe and keeping our private information safe should be the primary concern in any endeavor involving Trailmen —whether that’s keeping them safe on an activity, at a meeting, or keeping them safe on a Facebook fan page.

Twitter

Because of its 140-character-per-post limit and relative lack of multimedia capabilities, Twitter is designed for quick, simple updates and also can be used like instant messaging or email to have conversations with one or more people in a mostly public forum.

Twitter can be a great place to share quick observations, provide updates about programs, share training deadlines, link to other websites with event details, share great Trail Life stories and photos, and have an informal conversation with followers. In general, Twitter has a more personal voice, meaning posts on Twitter are expected to be relatively informal and friendly. It is also important to remember that, just like Facebook, Twitter is a public forum and is viewable by virtually anyone. That means content placed on Twitter should be acceptable to your specific intended audience of followers as well as a wider audience.

Some direct-messaging capabilities exist with Twitter; however, adults should **not** use these direct-messaging capabilities when dealing with youth. All child safety policies that govern the use of email are applicable to the messaging capabilities of Twitter. Before starting a Twitter account for your Troop or Charter Organization, familiarize yourself with Twitter’s terms of service and adhere to those guidelines.

When creating a Twitter account for your Troop, unit or Charter Organization, you should designate at least two administrators who have access to the login, password, and page management/monitoring information. This conforms to the two-deep leadership policies of Trail Life USA. At least one of these page administrators should be a registered adult leader who has taken child safety training. All child safety policies that govern the use of email are applicable to the use of the messaging capabilities of Twitter.

In addition, all content posted on your Twitter account should be in line with the Trail Life Oath and Motto. That includes never “tweeting” (posting) content that is inconsistent with Biblical values or responding to a tweet in an un-Christian-like manner to anyone interacting with you through your Twitter account.

Twitter should be updated regularly and watched closely so responses can be provided to people requesting information or trying to start a conversation.

YouTube

YouTube is primarily a video-hosting and -viewing platform. It lets you upload videos to a channel you manage. Once on your YouTube channel, each video has an individual URL and can be viewed on YouTube or shared as a link or embedded (by you, your fans, and members of the public) via other social media outlets and on websites. Before starting a YouTube channel for your Troop or Charter Organization, familiarize yourself with the site's terms of service and adhere to those guidelines.

When creating a YouTube channel, your channel must be public. There should be no private groups that involve or include youth. It is important to remember that YouTube requires all users to be at least 18 years of age. In addition, you should designate at least two administrators who have access to the login, password, and page management/monitoring information. This conforms to the two-deep leadership policies of Trail Life USA. At least one of these page administrators should be a registered adult leader who has taken child safety training.

Like the other social media channels, the public at large has access to your videos and may view and comment on them unless you set viewing restrictions in your settings. If you enable comments, you should monitor those comments regularly to be sure they are appropriate. YouTube also has messaging features (similar to email). All child safety policies that govern the use of email are applicable to the messaging capabilities of YouTube.

Having a YouTube channel is a great way to share videos of events, how-to videos, awards ceremony videos, and other videos that would be good to share with members of the group as well as the public.

An important consideration for YouTube or any similar site that features videos and/or images of youth is that all videos/images should adhere to recommended child safety policies and should protect the privacy of individual Trailmen. Additionally, all videos should show Trailmen and leaders following designated appropriate guidelines and wearing proper attire for whatever activity is being undertaken in the video. All child safety policies must be followed for any Trail Life activities, including those being captured on video.