

Ohio 4-H Club Guidelines for Social Networking

[Presentation 1/28/2012 by Vicki Schwartz based on resources from Travis West, Mark Light, Andrea Davis, and Nadine Fogt].

Know that OSU is very concerned with all programs done with youth both on Ohio state campuses and around Ohio in the name of 4-H. If you use Facebook (or any social networking media) with your 4-H club, make it such that President Gee would enjoy being a “friend” and/or would not be alarmed as the 4-H communications would have his OSU and 4-H trademarks.

Best practices for 4-H clubs’ Facebook accounts...for etiquette and safety

1. Notify and secure permission for your club to have a 4H Facebook account with county 4-H professional. S/he’s the one who can authorize the use of the 4-H name and emblem on the account.
2. Have an advisor be in charge of the account, and watch it regularly. All postings would be sent to this advisor for review and approval, and then to be posted to the club’s Facebook.
3. The law: children 12 years and under are not allowed to have accounts...must use parents’ profile.
Members 13 years and older not limited by the law, but it is good etiquette to ask parents’ permission. And/or to use parents’ profiles for these youths too.
4. Use the highest secure settings for privacy. For Facebook, make it a 4-H Group and then the advisor administering the group will add members.
5. Include your county 4-H professional as a “friend” on the account so they can know firsthand that all is well with the communications.
6. If you post pictures, the club **must** have signed photo releases. Then for safety, it’s recommended no full frontal pictures of 4-H members. Use profiles, back of head shots, action shots, etc.
7. No personal information of youth should be available
 - no names in pictures
 - no names of buildings where club meets
 - no addresses
 - do not make it easy for predators to find these 4-H children.
8. Avoid last minute reminders like: “Hey Lucky Clovers...See you in 1 hour at the Career Center”. **Creepers** really value that kind of information.
9. Have a club policy to deal with mis-use...
 - Reminder: The Advisor should be reviewing and managing the posts. But if something slips by,
 - Remove those who misuse from the “friend” list

10. Never allow the communications to be used to ridicule, embarrass, harass, or bully another member or adult.

- A recent Supreme Court ruling determined that in cases of cyberbullying, a child's safety is more important than another person's right to freedom of speech, aka protecting the safety of the victim of bullying rather than the freedom of speech of the bully

11. When members send comments to be posted, ask them to consider, "Would I say this to his or her face?"

- If something upsets a member, ask them to first notify the advisor monitoring the account, and then to wait 24 hours before sending that advisor any kind of response to be posted.

12. Keep in mind the little things too: COMMENTS WRITTEN IN ALL CAPS ARE PERCEIVED AS YELLING.... Avoid yelling at the members.

Misuse of social networking...

- Can result in 4-H club's account being closed by the advisor in charge of it, and
- Can result in the club being suspended by the Extension Staff if the misuse tarnishes the good name and emblem of 4-H, and create an unsafe environment for the members.

If you're still in doubt, remember President Gee. Our university president wants all Ohio State programs, including 4-H programs, to be safe and fun.