

*SOCIAL MEDIA
POLICY FOR
LIFTERS*

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Introduction

This guide contains suggestions; not hard and fast rules. We have no desire to control what you do online. But we can help you think about the possible advantages and pitfalls offered by social media as your career goes from strength to strength, and you find yourself becoming a more public figure.

We encourage lifters to consider the following question before posting anything online:

- 1. Would you say this in front of your family members / your coach / employers / teachers / staff & volunteers within WW / a journalist?**

If the answer to this question is 'no': think very carefully before posting. Just about everything you say online could eventually be read by anyone.

Why do I need guidelines?

We want to help you think about how you, your coaches and the WW staff can work together to build a great reputation for you and for your sport, both online and in real life. The purpose of these guidelines is not to stop you enjoying social media or eliminate your individualism and personality.

If you're used to using social media freely, it might seem unfair that you now have to think a little more before you post, but this is part of the responsibility of being a successful athlete who may gain more public attention as they progress through their career. The great thing is that your increased profile may also bring you lots of new, excited followers, and you have the chance to talk directly to them.

There is no such thing as privacy

It's important to review your privacy settings regularly on any social network. But it's also important to remember that it's possible that everything you send or post – even to your friends – could potentially become public. Once that has happened, it could be seen by anyone.

Even if you are using a private messaging service like WhatsApp, the people you are communicating with can take a screenshot of your message and share it with others. If this happens, the image/words/video you've sent are completely out of your control. It only takes your friend to send it to a friend of theirs, and your private message is in the hands of a stranger, who can post it anywhere they like.

Once something starts to spread on the internet, it's impossible to control it, even once you've deleted the original.

An ill-advised comment or photograph could still be popping up when someone searches for your name years from now – including potential sponsors, employers, etc. Check your privacy settings regularly, but also bear in mind that you can never be completely sure that what you post online will remain private.

Ask yourself:

- Am I happy for what I am about to post / send to be seen by anyone and everyone?
- Am I happy for this post to be attached to my name forever?
- If my post was to appear somewhere I never intended it to go, would I be happy about it?

Respect yourself

Remember how hard you have worked to be where you are. Reputation can be fragile, and you should protect yourself and your reputation by behaving responsibly, in real-life and online.

Used well, social media has the potential to give you greater control of your reputation. Used irresponsibly, it could ruin your reputation and simultaneously cost you sponsorships and NGB support.

Ask yourself....

- How do I wish to be portrayed?
- What messages do I want to get across?
- Will my post reflect negatively upon my “role model” status?
- What parts of my life do I want to keep private?
- Is what I am posting going to reflect negatively on my public profile?
- Is what I am posting going to affect future opportunities for my personal brand?
- Is what I am posting conflicting with the ethos of my sport / NGB?
- Remember: You can still be humorous and have a personality online – just think before you post.

Respect your sport

In the same way that your actions while training and competing reflect on Weightlifting in general, so do your actions online. As an athlete competing at a high level of sport, you have rightly earned the respect of many others, from grassroots competitors and club volunteers to elite coaches and other elite athletes.

You can use social media to build on their pride in you and in their sport. Don't comment negatively on others' professional performance, be they athletes, officials or coaches. When you post online, make sure your facts are accurate and don't swear or engage in insulting behaviour. Don't be afraid to be yourself; but do so respectfully.

Ask yourself...

- How will the people who have helped me progress in my sport (such as my coach, my family, my club) feel about me posting this?
- How will this post affect the way Weightlifting is viewed in Wales and further afield?
- If I am tempted to discuss a contentious issue within Weightlifting, how important is it for me to have my say in public? Have I thought carefully about my opinion, rather than offering a knee-jerk reaction? Will this be a constructive contribution? Are there other ways I could pursue the matter (face to face, in a private email, or on the phone, for example)?
- Will what I am about to say undermine the hard work of those who came before me, or make life harder for those who come after?
- Could my post upset a current or potential sponsor for me or for the sport?
- Would I expect my own sporting heroes to post in this manner?

Respect your Audience

Social media offers a great way to connect with friends and family but the reality is that much of what you say to them on social media you also say to strangers, including fans and the media.

There may be many people out there who want to feel as though they know you and social media gives them the chance to engage with you on certain level. You may find yourself talking to strangers with a level of familiarity you would usually reserve for people who know you well. Remember that people who don't know you personally are less likely to pick up on the context of your comment, or to know when you're joking/being flippant.

Never post anything that's rude, abusive or discriminatory.

Ask yourself...

- Who are my audience? Are they just friends and family? Are they fans? Are they media?
- Would I make this comment to this person face-to-face (for example, would I say this to someone I don't know, who has approached me in public?)
- Could this comment be misunderstood by someone who doesn't know me, or know my sense of humour?
- Would I be happy to see this comment in the newspapers tomorrow?

Some athletes prefer to keep a personal account for friends and family separate to their public facing profile open to people who follow their sporting journey.

Social media and your performance

Be aware of the effect using social media may have on your mental state and your performance, particularly around the time of major competitions.

The media are likely to be paying particularly close attention to what you say online in the build-up and during important events, such as the Commonwealth Games. Be aware of how airing your thoughts when emotions are running high after a performance may receive more attention than usual.

Ask yourself...

- Is the amount of time/attention I am spending online affecting my focus or performance?
- If I saw a negative comment about myself now, how would it affect me?
- Will I feel differently in a day or two, when my emotions have settled?
- Is this the best place to express any disappointment – could I pick up the phone to a friend instead?

If things go badly

Sometimes people mess up online! Once done- it can rarely be undone; but you can consider some steps to control the damage. If you do come to realise that you have posted something you shouldn't have, start by deleting your post and tightening your privacy settings as much as possible.

If you are receiving upsetting messages or replies, the best response is often no response. As tempting as it may be to reply, that could escalate the situation for you.

Block and report anyone who abuses you, and if you're genuinely concerned, you may turn to WW for some guidance on how to deal with this. Your club should also have a Welfare Officer who may also be able to advise you.

Responsibility

Weightlifting Wales can provide advice and guidance on using social media, but at the end of the day it's up to you individually to take responsibility for your online reputation. Make it clear that your posts are your own opinions, and not those of Weightlifting Wales and own what you say with pride.

