



## Irish Judo Association - Communication Policy

The aim of the communication policy is to give guidance on conveying messages and information safely and securely to intended recipients without exposing children to risk of harm. This is to ensure that all personal details cannot be entailed by unauthorised persons. It is also the Irish Judo Association policy to ensure that children have the means to communicate with adults effectively without the need to utilise technology or to seek help from others in doing so.

### General Policy Considerations

Communication is a valuable tool and current technology allows us to send easy and cost-effective mass communications. Adults must understand the power of communication between themselves as adults with children. Communication with children must take place in an open and safe environment. One to one adult/child conversations should always take place in public surroundings and preferably in the presence of another appropriate adult. Group meetings may take place in a separate room. These meetings should be arranged in advance and parents and guardians should be informed so that an appropriate and comfortable environment can be established for the children. Clubs should consider the most effective means of communication between members ensuring that everyone has access to the chosen method; it may be that the use of several methods that is the most effective. Any communication occurring between two individuals is open to exploitation and misinterpretation which can cross the personal boundary between an adult and a child and may cause harm to young people. Children should be able and encouraged to tell a parent/guardian or Club Children's Officer if any communication makes them feel uncomfortable –the Club Children's Officers should ensure this is highlighted in squad/team meetings.

Children should be aware of who they give their phone number and/or e-mail address to. Parents should be aware of the communications taking place and have given permission for the storage their child's mobile number, email, and other contact information. A phone number or e-mail should be changed if child is receiving bullying communications or harassment. Remember that expressions used in verbal communication do not always translate well into the written word, either in an e-mail or in a text message. Also 'texting' language can be very different from usual words. Adults should take care with their expressions and the nature of the language used to avoid any misinterpretation.

### The importance of communication for coaches and players.

Judoka who know how to effectively interact with each other will work together better, forming a stronger overall team. However, learning to communicate one's thoughts and feelings clearly and effectively without hurting or offending others can take time. Fostering this knowledge in players is primarily the responsibility of the team's coach. Coaches who communicate openly with their athletes can model effective interaction by speaking directly, listening attentively and valuing others' opinions. Positive communication in sports can also benefit from common practices like pre-training/ competition meetings, when the team and coaching staff can come together to give feedback, discuss strategies and set goals for the day.



# IRISH JUDO ASSOCIATION

## The importance of communication for adults and coaches.

You have a responsibility to your judoka, the athletes that trust you. The trust is often built on respect. Your judoka respect you, your behaviours, and your opinions. They value your knowledge; they learn through the way that you communicate that knowledge. Quite often, coaches and players encounter misunderstandings and breakdowns when communicating. It can be difficult for coaches to send messages or instruct players because individuals react differently. Furthermore, it can be difficult for players to understand what their coach wants if they are not clear on the message or instruction they give. Effective communication limits misunderstandings and gets everyone on the same page. Coach and player relationships are enhanced when players feel valued, there is a trusting environment, and a positive coaching style is used. When a coach can communicate messages effectively, it always translates into success and enhanced player experience. Some key points to remember when communicating with athletes include:

- Be clear and concise
- Be honest
- Reinforce your message with repetition
- Encourage questions
- Adapt to players

Communication in your Judo club is extended to all adults within the club including Parents, Coaches, Volunteers and any other person or persons who are involved. All adults should be aware of the language and communication styles that they use not only with children within the club but with other adults also. It is crucial to be aware of how adult's actions can easily influence children and the impact that this may have if the adults in the club cannot communicate appropriately and effectively. Bad language, shouting and inappropriate messages and texts are just a few examples of behaviour that should not be accepted or tolerated in any judo club by adults. Not only does it have a negative impact on the athlete but it may also cast a negative light on the club and athletes.

Example of suitable text for Club information or handbook: This Club has a communication policy that includes sending general information via text messaging and/or email. Any information sent by e-mail to members under 18 will be copied to a parent/guardian. Adults should not reply to individual members under 18, save to acknowledge the receipt of a message. Children are encouraged to say if any communication is upsetting. Any use of inappropriate language or incidents will be investigated through the disciplinary process.

## **Communication with people under 18**

Adults should be vigilant in their communications with young people and any such contact should be direct, open, and honest. The voice and written word can be interpreted in a variety of ways by different people and therefore any individual communication should be at the request of or in response to a child. General information can be sent as a mass communication to groups of children. Where more specific individual information is required, this should be copied openly to another responsible person, such as a parent/guardian. For professional individuals (doctors, psychologists etc.) such communication will be in accordance with their professional codes of conduct consistent with their qualifications. For example, a doctor may see/communicate with a 16/17-year-old individually within their professional code of ethics, whereas this is not permitted for leaders in the Irish Judo Association. It is important to remember that any individual communication should be instigated by the child and/or in response to their needs.

## **Types of Communication available to Clubs and Members**

- Noticeboards Post



# IRISH JUDO ASSOCIATION

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- Email
- Phone/Mobile phone including the use of text Internet and Websites

## Notice boards

All Clubs should have a noticeboard in the facility where the majority of sessions take place. A noticeboard is accessible to every member and, Clubs should note, to members of the public. A child can access the information on a noticeboard without the need to ask or use some form of technology. If Clubs use more than one facility check to make sure every child has the opportunity to view the noticeboard; in some case this may require a noticeboard in each facility. Information that should be on the noticeboard includes:

- Name and contact details of the Club Children's Officers and Designated Person: An Irish Judo Association template is available for this display.
- Policies and Procedures for the club as set out by the Sport Ireland Safeguarding Club Self-Assessment.
- Event information: often in the form of a calendar with qualifying information posted when it becomes available.
- Committee members: detailing the name and role (contact details of the Secretary should be included, it is optional for the other roles)
- Club ethos and logo: the squad members should be proud of the Club ethos and the logo

## Post

The use of the post provides a direct line of communication with an individual. Letters should be addressed to the parents of a child or where the letter is sent directly to a child the parents must receive a letter informing them of this together with a copy of the letter their child/children is to receive. It is important for children to receive good information concerning them directly, i.e., obtaining a place on a squad, an achievement of a personal best, etc.; remember to copy their parent/guardian on all correspondence.

The disadvantages of the postal system are: it is possible for a letter to be lost in the system and each individual communication costs a set fee.

## E-mail

E-mails are another individual method of communication with a person and can be used for very personal communication especially if access to the email account is password protected. E-mails tend to be a cheap form of disseminating information to a large number of people. Any e-mails sent to children should be done as part of a group or in response to a direct communication received by a child. Where it may be necessary to e-mail an individual child the-mail must be copied to another responsible person, thus creating a safe communication for a child.

## Phone/ mobile phones

The use of a phone or mobile phone to communicate is a personal interaction. Phone calls with children should be at the instigation of the child and preferably with a parent/guardian present. It is not possible unless on a conference type call or on speaker phone to have a third-party present to monitor the conversation between an adult and a child. Mobile phones can also be used to text individuals and groups with short written messages. The use of group text reduces the risk of an individual message causing upset and misinterpretation. Mobile phones are often given to children for security, enabling parents to keep in touch



# IRISH JUDO ASSOCIATION

and to make sure their children are safe. Young people value their phones highly as it offers them a sense of independence. In addition, mobile phones allow quick and easy contact, which can make a safe and efficient way to carry out club business. However mobile phones are individual, and therefore can be used for very personal communications.

Mobile phones should not be used at unsuitable times or in certain locations, e.g., changing rooms or where camera (if fitted) use is unauthorised. The IJA recommend that camera phones should not be allowed in changing room areas due to the possible inappropriate use that may cause upset or offence to another person. Clubs should decide on appropriate use of mobile phones and ensure that any sanction involving the restriction of use is clearly communicated to parents/guardians and children. For example, it may be necessary to remove mobile phones from a group where they are being used inappropriately late at night; such a sanction must be a clear possibility in any pre-planning information.

## **Safe sending and replying of text and e-mail**

To reduce the risk to everyone using either text messaging on mobile phones or e-mails for contact, these guidelines should be followed by any adult within the Irish Judo Association:

### Sending messages

Obtain the agreement of the parent/guardian and young person – this can be included in Club information, handbook, or agreement at registration.

Word/phrase messages using appropriate language without use of endearments.

Send messages by group communication method Copy any individual message to either a parent/guardian and/or coach (as applicable).

### Replying to messages

Reply to a text message in response to one sent by an individual child, e.g., a child sends a text to a coach to say they will be late for a training session; coach should reply acknowledging the message, this is in response to the child.

Use appropriate language without the use of endearments in the reply

Copy e-mail replies to the parent/guardian, coach, or other responsible adult. Issues or difficulties should be dealt with verbally with the child (the parent/guardian should always be included).

## **Internet based social media communications**

There are several options to communicate with individuals through web based/internet facilities using social networking sites where individuals have their own page/account and information can be posted to this page. These pages can be viewed privately or can be open to the general public. The information posted to any of these types of sites can be public and viewed by anyone. This should encourage individuals to only post information they are comfortable with sharing with strangers. However often young people do not recognise the dangers of this and will treat the site as a means of personal interaction where they expose detailed information about themselves. Children must be encouraged to be careful with the type of information they post to such sites. Where a site is public it should be used to transmit very general information only and not to become a personal conversation.

Clubs should encourage the safe use of social media sites especially where the Club uses such a site.



# IRISH JUDO ASSOCIATION

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Any information posted to social media sites should not contain any personal facts or details and should be positive in nature. Even networking sites viewed by invitation only can be infiltrated by potential abusers; parents should understand the need for monitoring content and any public interactions involving children to be moderated. Young people must be actively discouraged from entering into private exchanges with unknown individuals. Coaches and Volunteers should not interact with a child under 18 in any inappropriate manner.

## **Who to turn to?**

Children should always know who to talk to in the event that any communication is a concern or makes them feel uncomfortable. Children should firstly be fully aware of the types of communications the Club uses and how they may be contacted. They should also know who to talk to – their parents, the Club Children's Officer, their coach, their Team Captain, or another trusted adult. Any information received from a child regarding inappropriate communication must be treated seriously. In many instances the matter can be dealt with informally by the Club Children's Officer.

However, if the matter is more serious or intentional concerning an Irish Judo Association member this can be dealt with as a breach of the code of conduct. Further information on the safe use of the internet, email and social media sites can be found on their website: [www.internetsafety.ie](http://www.internetsafety.ie)