



SAFE ONLINE BEHAVIOUR AND COMMUNICATION INFORMATION SHEET

This info sheet outlines the minimum expectations and practical rules for adults and clubs/associations communicating with children online.

1. NO ONE-TO-ONE COMMUNICATION

Adults must never communicate directly on a one-to-one basis with a child online, via text, or over the phone.

- **The copy rule:** If you must message a junior player, you must include a parent/guardian and/or another club representative in the communication
- **Email groups:** Use group email lists provided by parents, or email the parents directly rather than emailing a child individually
- **Phone calls:** If you must call a child, ask them to put the phone on speaker with a parent present

2. PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES IN MESSAGING

When communicating with children, adults must maintain strict professional boundaries.

- **Keep it to rugby:** Restrict all communication to issues directly associated with delivering rugby activities, such as advising of a cancelled training session or match logistics
- **Keep it professional:** Limit personal or social content to what is required to convey the message politely. Communication must be completely devoid of sexualised language or inappropriate banter
- **No personal social media:** Do not communicate with children using internet chat rooms, game sites, or instant messaging from personal profiles. Coaches must not “befriend” or accept friend requests from children they coach on personal social media accounts
- **No secrets:** Never ask a child to keep communication secret from their parents or guardians
- **No social invites:** Do not use communication to promote unauthorised social activity or arrange unauthorised contact outside of rugby

3. CLUB WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Clubs have a duty of care to ensure all digital content is safe and appropriate.

- **Protect identities:** Never publish personal information that could be used to identify a child, such as their full name, address, or school
- **Prior consent:** Always gain permission from both the child and their parent/guardian before posting an image or video where the child is clearly identifiable
- **Appropriate content:** Ensure no content on the club website or social media humiliates, criticises, or places undue pressure on a child



4. CHILDREN-LED GROUP CHATS

Children often use messaging apps (like WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger) to talk with teammates. While this is normal, clubs/associations and parents should remind children of safe online habits.

- Group chats are not an extension or representation of the club
- Children should be taught never to engage in cyberbullying, share anything they wouldn't want in the public domain, or share images of a sexual nature

5. REPORTING CONCERNS AND CYBERBULLYING

If you witness inappropriate online behaviour, cyberbullying, or suspect online grooming (such as an adult sending frequent non-rugby messages or showing favouritism online).

- Do not delete the evidence, take screenshots of the content and note usernames and timelines
- Contact our club's/association's designated Child Safety Contact immediately. The designated Child Safety Contact MUST report directly to Rugby Australia via the online Report a Concern page
- If a child is in immediate danger, call 000

In an emergency call 000.

REPORT A CONCERN ONLINE (RUGBY AUSTRALIA)

Rugby Australia reporting pathway: (<https://australia.rugby/about/codes-and-policies/reporting-a-concern>).

