



## Suggested Guidelines for Mobile Devices in Clubs

Mobile devices have changed the way young people communicate. Many devices are no longer an expensive indulgence, and the majority of our members ages 13 and older now have their own phones. Some mobile device users are as young as four years old.

For tweens and teens, the primary means of communication used on their devices is text messaging or in-app messaging. Because of the ubiquity of this new technology, Clubs are dealing with unprecedented issues in both managing the use of this technology within the Club, as well as helping members use the technology safely and wisely.

There are two recommended approaches to mobile device and mobile technology usage in Clubs: 1) Fully integrate them into the Club program, or 2) Make accommodations for their presence in ways that best support positive/effective use. While banning devices may be considered as an option, this is not a BGCA recommendation.

Clubs will need to consider their own comfort level with mobile devices and how to best manage the approach they choose. Acknowledge that members have devices, and their selected method must deal directly with this reality.

*BGCA recommends full integration or accommodation, and recommends against banning devices as we work to expand tween/teen membership.*

### General guideline suggestions

- If staff need to email a member directly, all email communication should go through their work email addresses. At no point should staff contact members through a personal email account. Where possible, emails should be sent to groups of members, rather than to individual members. **If an email is warranted to an individual member, a designated Club staff member should be copied on the email so that it is not a one-to-one communication.**
- If staff need to text message members, this should also be done through their Club work phones, if at all possible. While at certain times this may not be possible (for example, at the Keystone Conference where text messaging may be used to coordinate activities), texts and messages should always be sent to more than one recipient, whether done from a mobile device or work email address. If an individual text or message is warranted, always copy a designated staff member on the message. (See the [Integrating Mobile Technology](#) section later in this document for instructions on sending a text message from an email address.)
- Consider getting parental permission for a member to receive text messages and other instant communications from Club staff. The Club can also include parental phone numbers in their distribution lists so that parents receive the same text as their children or teens.



- Remind staff not to “friend” members in personal Facebook or other social networking site accounts or profiles. The Club can maintain a group page that staff members and Club members can “like.” Staff should consider creating a professional profile that is separate from their personal profile for this task. The professional profile should be focused on their role as a BGCA staff member and should reflect appropriate self-disclosure.

## Integration of mobile devices into the Club Program

Mobile technology is nearly ubiquitous in society and in the lives of all our members. In fact, members have come to expect that the spaces they visit, including their schools, allow mobile device usage.

The most challenging, but potentially rewarding, approach is to ensure Club staff are comfortable seeking ways to integrate mobile technology into the Club program for creative purposes, and as a tool for proactive youth development. Mobile devices, in that way, are seen as a part of the positive Club Experience and must then be messaged as such.

Some policy considerations:

- Staff awareness needs to be heightened.
  - Is a member spending all their time on mobile technology?
  - Do a number of members seem to be calling/texting on their phones? (Could signal an incident is in the works or disengagement from an activity.)
  - Is the mobile technology interfering with other Club activities?
    - Ask members to leave the activity and go to a designated space for mobile technology use.
    - Place time limits on mobile technology use.
    - Incorporate powered-on and powered-down times at the Club.
- Determine times and places where mobile technology use is not appropriate.
  - Some possible times to consider limiting use/powering down mobile technology include:
    - Club assembly times
    - Club meal times
  - Some possible places to limit use/power down:
    - Places where supervision is limited or privacy is important (e.g., restrooms, locker rooms, etc.)
    - Places where attention to detail is important (e.g., a woodshop or other place where potentially dangerous equipment is being used)
    - Situations where face-to-face communications is important (e.g., a group activity where technology is not needed, or a disciplinary setting)

Some ways mobile technology can be integrated into the Club program:

- Use various Essentials activities ([MyFuture.net](http://MyFuture.net)).



- Ask members how mobile technology might enhance an activity.
  - Allows members to be creative in their use of technology.
  - Can be used to help members understand how mobile technology can also be a hindrance to activities; this teaches appropriate times for use.
  - Have members help create the mobile technology policy for the Club. It gives them a sense of inclusion and ownership of the policy.
  - Allow members to help create advertisements and share the highlights for Club events in the community or for the Club website.
  
- With the “always on” access to the Internet mobile technology allows, the educational value of non-technology activities can be enhanced. Looking up information on the Internet in a “just in time” setting helps teach members not only about the subject, but also how to use the Internet to be self-directed learners.
  - Extra care must be taken to include members who do not have access to the Internet through a mobile device. Small-group activities help with this.
  
- Staff include opportunities in their activity plans to ask members to use their technology (e.g., to look something up online or create digital products to share information).
  - Structure questions so members can look things up using their mobile technology.
  - Use Web-based question and answer activities, such as Kahoot.it or QR Codes.
  - Use the Tech Center creatively so all members have Internet access – some on their mobile devices, others on traditional computers. Information relay races, or activities where members work in teams to create original products, can be a fun way to keep all members engaged, whether they have a mobile device or not.
  
- Clubs can use mobile technology as a way to connect with members outside Club hours.
  - There are software programs that a Club can purchase to manage texting to mobile devices. Using such software can help Clubs develop a robust marketing and communications strategy for their programs using mobile technology.
  - Mobile technology can be a good communication vehicle to support teen programming.
    - Text messages can be sent from Outlook or other email programs. The address would be *5555555555@providerdomainname.com* (e.g., ATT is @txt.att.net; Verizon, @vtext.com; Sprint, @messaging.sprintpcs.com).
      - For safety and monitoring, all text messages to Club teens should be sent from a Club email address or from a Club-owned mobile device. That way, monitoring and follow-up can occur if necessary. Staff should be instructed never to call or text a member from their personal mobile device or computer. For additional safety and monitoring information, see General Guideline Suggestions above.
      - As much as possible, Club staff should avoid one-on-one electronic communications with members. Electronic messages should have a group feel to them (i.e., addressed to a group of teens). If one-on-one communication is necessary, another Club staff member designated for that purpose should be copied on the message.



- Use social networking applications to promote programs and communicate schedules (team practices, field trip dates, etc.).
- Remind staff never to “friend” members with their personal social networking pages, but only to use a Club-established group page or other type of social networking site managed by the Club.
- Remind staff to make sure their personal pages are appropriate for view by all members of the Club, as well as the general public if they connect to the Club’s group page. Their social networking pages reflect back on the Club.
- Communicate with parents through text messaging and social networking.

## **Allowing mobile devices into the Club with restrictions on use**

A middle ground between full integration of mobile technology into the Club program and banning mobile devices from the premises is to create policies and procedures that restrict general use while integrating mobile devices into specific programs or locations.

- Consider when the member can use the device in the Club.
  - Decide how much use is allowed and when mobile devices can and cannot be used.
- Have a procedure for members who receive a parent/guardian phone call or text while in the Club.
  - Designate a specific place in the Club where such calls can be made/received.
    - This may be a program space that has multiple purposes (e.g., a specific area of the Gamesroom). It is important, just like all program areas, that this space be adequately staffed.
      - How is the mobile device space supervised by staff?
      - How long do members spend in the mobile device space? Is there a time limit? A usage limit?
      - How are member requests to use mobile devices handled? Do they need to receive permission to leave the program space to go to the mobile device space? Can they go there at any time?
  - Staff need to monitor the members’ use of this space:
    - How often does a particular member request to make/receive a phone call/text?
    - Is there a change in the member’s demeanor or behavior after making/receiving a call or reading a text message?
    - Does the climate in the Club change after a member has made/received a call or text?
  - Update your disciplinary policy to include procedures for unauthorized use of mobile technology.
    - By having a designated usage space, you can alleviate the “but Mr. Jim said I could” issue.
    - Have a procedure for handling confiscated equipment as noted above.



- Don't forget to include a procedure for handling equipment confiscated on a field trip.
- Educate the members.
  - Include media literacy and Internet safety as part of the Club's Internet and media safety instruction.
  - Develop rules for members and communicate the rules often, including:
    - When to use and not use the mobile device
    - Using the mobile device space
    - Consequences for inappropriate use
  - Include digital citizenship (mobile device behavior, in particular) instruction in the Club's character development and citizenship programming.
  - Include advisor-directed digital activities, as appropriate, to model effective and positive use of personal devices, to enhance the Club Experience.

## Deciding between the two approaches

Here are some questions to consider as you select your own approach:

- What does your local school district do? What expectations have they set, and what opportunities do they provide? Can you partner with them, or benchmark from their policies and/or approaches?
- What are your constituents asking for? What would members, parents and/or the community expect?
- What do you feel prepared to handle, and what else do you need to put into place before moving forward with your selection?

## Conclusion

Digital, Internet-connected devices are nearly ubiquitous in society and our members' lives. By embracing technology, Clubs can be seen as relevant and engaging spaces. Of course, it is essential to manage this technology effectively by engaging all the Club's stakeholders (staff, board, members, parents) in developing the mobile technology (Bring Your Own Device, or BYOD) policy for the Club, and to communicate that policy on a regular basis.

Additional questions can be sent to BGCA's My.Future team at [MyFuture@BGCA.org](mailto:MyFuture@BGCA.org).



## BYOD Acceptable Use Policy Template

The **[Name]** Boys & Girls Club adopts this policy to maintain a safe and secure environment for members, staff, volunteers and others.

A personally owned device includes all member-owned existing and emerging technologies and devices that can take photographs; play and record audio or video; input text; upload and download content and/or media; and transmit or receive messages or images.

Emerging technologies and devices include but are not limited to cell phones, computers, tablets and storage media (e.g., flash drives), as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat and websites.

Not all devices are covered within this policy. Unacceptable devices in this policy include, but are not limited to, gaming devices or consoles, laser pointers, modems or routers and televisions.

Club purposes include program activities, career development, communication with experts and/or Club peer members, homework and Club activities. Members are expected to act responsibly and thoughtfully when using technology resources. Members bear the burden of responsibility to ask staff when they aren't sure of the permissibility of a particular use of technology prior to engaging in the use.

Personally owned devices are permitted for use during Club time for Club purposes and in approved locations only. The Club expressly prohibits the use of personally owned devices in locker rooms, restrooms and other areas where there is an expectation of privacy.

Any inappropriate use of a personally owned device, as determined by Club staff, can lead to disciplinary action including, but not limited to, confiscation of the device, immediate suspension from the Club, termination of membership, or other disciplinary actions determined to be appropriate to the Club's existing disciplinary policies including, if applicable, referral to local law enforcement.

Inappropriate communication includes, but is not limited to, obscene, profane, lewd, vulgar, rude, inflammatory, threatening, or disrespectful language or images typed, posted or spoken by members; information that could cause damage to an individual or the Club community, or create the danger of disruption of the Club environment; personal attacks, including prejudicial or discriminatory attacks; harassment (persistently acting in a manner that distresses or annoys another person) or stalking others; knowingly or recklessly posting false or defamatory information about a person or organization; and communication that promotes the destruction of property, including the acquisition or creation of weapons or other destructive devices. If a member is told to stop sending communications, that member must cease the activity immediately.



Members may not use any technology to harass, threaten, demean, humiliate, intimidate, embarrass, or annoy their peers or others in their community. This behavior is cyberbullying, which is bullying that takes place using emerging technologies and devices. Examples of cyberbullying include mean text messages or emails; rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites; and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites or fake profiles. Any cyberbullying that is determined to disrupt the safety and/or well-being of the Club, Club member, Club staff or community is subject to disciplinary action.

Members must be aware of appropriateness of communications when using Club or personally owned devices. Inappropriate communication is prohibited in any public messages, private messages and material posted online by members.

Monitoring and inspection. Boys & Girls Club of **[Name]** reserves the right to monitor, inspect, copy and review a personally owned device that is brought to the Club. Parents/Guardians will be notified before such an inspection takes place and may be present, at their choice, during the inspection. Parents/Guardians may refuse to allow such inspections. If so, the member may be barred from bringing personally owned devices to the Club in the future.

Internet access. Personally owned devices used at the Club are not permitted to directly connect to the Internet through a phone network or other content service provider. Personally owned devices must access the Internet via the Club's content-filtered wireless network. Boys & Girls Club of **[Name]** reserves the right to monitor communication and Internet traffic, and to manage, open or close access to specific online websites, portals, networks or other services. Members must follow Club procedures to access the Club's Internet service.

Loss and damage. Members are responsible for keeping the device with them at all times. Staff are not responsible for the security and condition of the member's personal device. Furthermore, the Club is not liable for the loss, damage, misuse or theft of any personally owned device brought to the Club.

Parental notification and responsibility. BGCA's Internet Acceptable Use Policy restricts the access of inappropriate material. However, supervision of usage may not always be possible while members use the Internet. Due to the wide range of material available on the Internet, some material may not fit the particular values of members and their families. Because of this, it is not practical for BGCA to monitor and enforce a wide range of social values in student use of the Internet. If parents do not want members to access information beyond the scope of the Internet Acceptable Use Policy, parents should instruct members not to access such materials.



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## BYOD Memo to Parents Template

Boys & Girls Clubs of **[NAME]** has adopted a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy for its Clubs.

This policy will allow members to bring many of their own technology devices – including laptops, tablets and/or smartphones – to the Club for educational use in our facilities. However, members are never required to bring their personal technology to the Club. All members will be able to continue to use our Club technology equipment, and no member will be left out of a program experience because they do not have a personal device.

- If you would like your child to participate in this program, please read and discuss the following BYOD Acceptable Use Policy with your child. If you and your child agree, return the portion with your names and signatures to Club staff.
- If you don't want your child to participate, you do not need to take any action.

Thank you for your understanding and reinforcement of the procedures and expectations for this initiative.

Your suggestions and feedback are always welcome. If you have questions about the BYOD program, please contact **[Club Staff]** at **[Phone]**.