



Unit Website Guidelines

It's an exciting time to be part of the BSA for many reasons. One of those is that new communication vehicles now enable current and past Scouts and Scouters, as well those who are interested in participating or are just interested in Scouting in general, to communicate directly with each other about Scouting. Online social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have made it possible for virtually anyone with an Internet connection to create and be part of online communities where people can discuss Scouting and share stories, photos, videos, and other types of media.

We've long recognized that unit sites created by individuals at the unit level of Scouting are essentially personal, and therefore beyond the National Council's control or liability. We do offer advisory guidelines to those who publish Scouting-related sites on their own responsibility, and we urge local councils to take the same approach. These guidelines are established to help avoid several common mistakes.

Protection of personal information pertaining to our youth members and volunteers should be our greatest concern. This organization has used COPPA, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, as its standard in this area. You can read the details on compliance at <http://www.coppa.org/comply.htm>. It would be a good practice to share them with unit-level publishers in your council.

A second concern about individual unit sites is **copyright infringement**. Sadly, photos, music, and video are commonly reused on the Web without permission. Plagiarism is also common. Such practices violate the ethics of Scouting. They are also violations of law, and could expose the publishers legally.

Our third concern is **commercialism**. We don't allow ads on council sites. We recognize that "free" Web services often used to create unit-level sites may contain advertising. This practice may reflect poorly on the Scouting brand, and should be avoided. A more serious concern would be sites that engage in any fund-raising activities not previously approved by their local council. Any independent sales, solicitation, OR collection of donations is prohibited by our bylaws and charter agreements.

- The content of the unit site must be appropriate to the Scouting movement.
- The unit site cannot link to any sites that contain material that is not appropriate to the Scouting movement.
- The unit site should not contain any advertisements or commercial endorsements.
- The unit site cannot engage in the electronic sale of BSA Supply Division merchandise or competing products.
- The unit site cannot replicate any BSA publication currently for sale through the Supply Division.
- Unit sites must abide by all laws regarding copyrights, trademarks, and other intellectual property, and by those pertaining to the Internet.
- Unit sites must consider the safety and privacy of their members and participants by obtaining the necessary permissions to release information about or images of any individual.
- Unit sites cannot engage in fund-raising except as directly approved by, and under the supervision of, the local council.