# WGI BEST PRACTICE GUIDE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

WGI recognizes that electronic communication is a vital part of group operations and instruction. This guide is intended to support directors and administrators in managing communication across platforms (email, text, messaging apps, and social media) in ways that align with participant protection and professionalism. This resource is meant to serve as a planning tool, not a policy or regulatory standard. WGI assumes no responsibility or liability for the electronic communication practices of individual groups.

All communication should follow WGI Participant Protection guidance of being observable and interruptible, including digital interactions.

## BEST PRACTICES INCLUDE:

- Use group communication platforms whenever possible over private one-on-one messaging.
- Always maintain professional tone and content. Avoid slang, jokes, or informal comments that could be misinterpreted.
- Avoid sending messages late at night unless it is a safety matter or an urgent logistical update.
- Do not use personal social media accounts to message participants. Use official group or organizational accounts with multiple admins.
- Establish expectations with performers and staff around communication and discuss consequences if those expectations fail to be met.

## WHAT SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED ELECTRONICALLY

- ✔ Group schedules, arrival times, logistics
- ✔ Instructional materials or reminders
- ✔ Uniform, travel, or rehearsal updates
- ✔ Group-wide praise or encouragement
- ✔ Emergency updates or weather-related changes
- ✔ Responses to questions that maintain professionalism

## WHAT SHOULD NOT BE COMMUNICATED ELECTRONICALLY

- ✖ Personal advice or emotional support
- ✖ Romantic, flirty, or sarcastic commentary
- ✖ Disciplinary conversations— these should occur in person or with oversight
- ✖ Venting frustrations about performers, staff, or adjudicators
- ✖ Sharing screenshots or gossip from other private conversations
- ✖ Photos of minors without consent or outside approved platforms

## COMMUNICATING ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR RECRUITMENT

Social media is a powerful tool for recruiting new members and sharing the values and experiences of the group. However, these communications should remain professional, inclusive, and aligned with participant protection expectations.

- Avoid targeting individual minors directly through private messages. Instead, use official group accounts to post public recruitment materials.
- If a minor inquiries about joining via social media, respond on public threads or copy an administrator when replying in private messages.
- Use inclusive language that highlights the experience of the group without using pressure or flattery.

## COMMUNICATING WITH MINORS

**When communicating with minors (under age 18), special care must be taken:**

- Never message a minor one-on-one without including a parent/guardian, school staff member, or designated group administrator.
- Group messages that include minors should also include at least one adult supervisor, educator, or administrator.
- Avoid using disappearing messages, private story features, or encrypted platforms when communicating with minors.
- Scholastic Groups: Always use school-issued platforms and follow district digital conduct policies.
- Independent Groups: Require parental consent for electronic communication and provide transparency in how communication platforms are used.
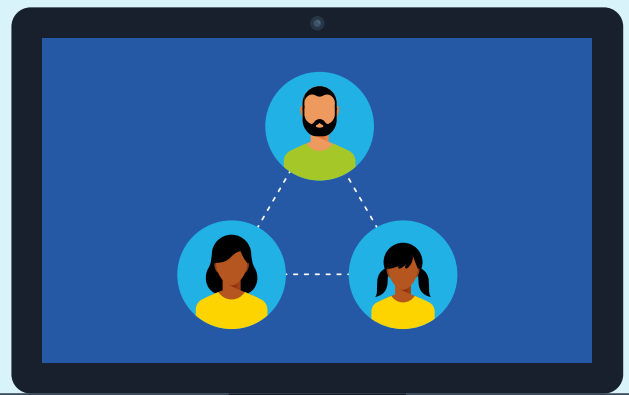
## SCHOLASTIC VS. INDEPENDENT GROUP REMINDERS

| SCHOLASTIC GROUPS | INDEPENDENT GROUPS |
|---|---|
| Follow school policies for communication | Establish and train staff on internal communication policy |
| Use only school-approved platforms | Use group-administered apps with oversight |
| Teachers should not message students from personal accounts | Use group emails or approved platforms with admin access |
| Report any inappropriate communication immediately to school leadership | Report to group director and notify WGI if misconduct is suspected |

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR INDEPENDENT GROUPS COMMUNICATING WITH MINORS

Independent groups may encounter situations where minor performers reach out directly to staff or performers via text, direct message, or social media. While the intent may be innocent, performers and staff must be trained on how to respond appropriately and within professional boundaries.

- Performers should avoid engaging in private one-on-one conversations with minors especially if the performer is a legal adult. If a minor sends a private message, the adult should respond in a group chat or copy another adult in the reply.
- Set group norms that performers should notify a staff member if they receive communication from a minor, especially if the message contains personal information or emotional disclosures.
- Group directors can provide performers with sample language and communication templates that model appropriate, brief, and supportive responses (see below).
- Reinforce that performers and staff are not expected to act as counselors or confidants to minors and should redirect emotional concerns to staff or appropriate adult support.

## SAMPLE RESPONSES

These are responses that can be used by staff or performers in response to another individual they are not the best or appropriate person to be communicating with.

**Asks a General Question about the Group**

*"Hello! Thanks so much for reaching out, I am going to loop in our staff/admin here so they can get you the right information. I would recommend communicating to the group's main account/email and they can help you out!"*

**Someone Shares something Personal or Emotional**

*"Thank you for trusting me – that takes great courage! I'm not the best person to help you in a way you deserve, but I care and I want to make sure someone does help you. I am going to share this with our staff and they can follow up with your support."*

**Someone Tries to Start a Personal Friendship**

*"Thank you and I am flattered, but I keep things very professional when it comes to the group, especially with younger performers. If you have questions about the activity or want to learn about the group, our staff can help with that more!"*

**Someone asks for Advice About Joining**

*"I admire you for asking and wanting to check out the group. I cannot speak for the staff, but I recommend you reach out to the group's account/email and they can walk you through the process and your questions. Remember, everyone starts somewhere!"*