



Computer and Internet Use and Virtual Troop Meetings

Council Approval: Not Required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

Includes:

- About Virtual Troop Meetings
- Tips for a successful Troop Meeting
- Privacy and Safety

About Computer and Internet Use

Girl Scouts use the internet for a variety of reasons such as:

- **Earn a technology award or other such award online.**
- **Research topics.** Girls can search for other Girl Scout council or group websites or research a badge or community resource.
- **Visit Girl Scouting sites.** Girls can visit the [World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts](#) (WAGGGS) online or member countries' websites. They can also use Girl Scout vendor websites to learn more about product activities.
- **Build a website.** Girls could create a static webpage on the internet (one that looks the same each time users view it, with no commenting or posting capabilities) or set up a secure, password-protected website with a calendar and information for girls and families.
- **Blog about Girl Scouting.** Groups that are planning a Take-Action project, road trip, or camping adventure can consider documenting their plans and experiences on a council or national blog, and divvy up the documentation duties (photography, writing, editing, and so on) among the group.
- **Sales.** Participate in online Girl Scout product sales programs.

Adults should monitor websites that girls view, ensuring that they are safe and actively controlled. No girl or adult acting on behalf of girl members can conduct money-earning activities online with one exception: The GSUSA approved product sales programs. For more information, please see the safety activity checkpoints for [Cookie and Product Sales](#).

Most girls will go online from their home computers, and older girls may access the internet on their mobile phones. For girls who cannot go online from home, check with your Girl Scout council for suggestions on sites where computers are available for use.

When planning a group learning session, identify locations—such a library, a Girl Scout program center, a school or college computer lab, a computer retail store with training facility, or a

museum—that provides group members with opportunities to use computers and to access the internet.

Learn More:

- [Girl Scouts of the USA](#)
- [Go Girls Only](#) (for girls in grades 1–6)
- [Stop, Think, Connect](#)

Ensure girls' safety in website design. Girls must understand that the internet is an open means of communication that anyone can access. As such, websites will often attract people other than their intended users. It is therefore imperative that any information that could jeopardize the safety and security of girls and adults not be disclosed on a website. The following measures help to ensure girls' safety while online:

- Use only first names, and never last names.
- Never post addresses, phone numbers, or email addresses of girls.
- Always have a parent or guardian's permission when using pictures of girls on a website. This is important for all girls, and special regulations apply for children younger than 13 years of age.
- Do not post addresses of group meeting places or dates and times of meetings, events, or trips. Instead, an adult who wishes to communicate about upcoming events with families of Girl Scouts should send an email to the families.
- Do not allow automatic posting of messages to a website. All postings on sites such as message boards or guest books should have adult oversight and be screened prior to posting live.
- Ensure that websites do not show personal email addresses of girls but use a troop or group email or an adult's email address.

Be aware of shared content. When linking to other websites from your site, make sure site contents are in keeping with Girl Scout principles and activities. Avoid linking to commercial sites selling merchandise to avoid implied Girl Scout endorsement of the products they offer. Instead, seek out sites that support girls' participation in Girl Scouting. These sites should be tasteful and program-level appropriate. They should show diversity; be beneficial to girls, adults, and families; and be consistent with the mission of Girl Scouting. As a courtesy, consider emailing the site's webmaster for permission to link to the site.

Use similar criteria to determine which sites you support linking to your group's website.

Respect copyrighted material. The basic principle is, if it is not yours, don't use it. A group's website may not use copyrighted designs, text, graphics, or trademarked symbols without specific permission from the copyright or trademark holder.

Girls may use trademarks owned by GSUSA, which include the trefoil shape; Girl Scout Daisy pin and Girl Scout Brownie pin; contemporary and traditional Girl Scout pins; the words Girl Scout Daisy, Girl Scout Brownie, Girl Scout Junior, Girl Scout Cadette, Girl Scout Senior, Girl Scout Ambassador, Girl Scouting, Girl Scouts, and Girl Scout Cookies; Girl Scout Brownie Try-Its, Girl Scout Junior badges, and all Girl Scout Cadette and Ambassador interest project awards, names, and symbols; and all Girl Scout Journey insignia. Information on the use of

GSUSA trademarks can be found on the [national website](#) under Girl Scout Central: Graphics Gallery, and under [Terms and Conditions](#) on the footer of each page of the national site.

Keep in mind that Girl Scout trademarks can be used only in accordance with guidelines for their use. The Girl Scout Trefoil, for example, may not be animated or used as wallpaper for a website. Check with your council's website for complete graphic guidelines and approval information.

Note, too, that some names (such as commercial products and cartoon characters) are trademarked and cannot be incorporated on most websites. Permission is also required from the author or publisher for the use of videos and music on websites—so don't post words from copyrighted songs, poems, or books, as permission must be granted from the record label, publisher, artist, poet, or author, and is nearly impossible to obtain.

A troop/group social networking site may be set up by groups whose girls are at least 13 years old and who have obtained parental permission to do so. In addition, all social networking sites (such as Facebook and Twitter) must be approved by the council and must meet age limits set by the provider—usually 13 years old and older in most cases, which is in accordance with the United States Child Online Privacy and Protection Act (COPPA) and the Child Online Protection Act (COPA).

Any appearance in a Girl Scout–related online video or picture requires permission from each girl's parent or guardian, using the GSUSA girl/adult permission form. These completed forms should be held by the adult and/or council.

For information on online product programs, see the [Cookie and Product Sales](#) chapter in Safety Activity Checkpoints. Girls may only post about their participation in Girl Scout programs on social media sites that allow them to restrict access to friends and family, such as Facebook, and not to social media sites open to anyone, such as Craigslist or eBay.

Girls may create their own Girl Scout program website to showcase their program activities. Girls should only share program activity website links with family, friends, and others they know firsthand. When selling cookies online, girls should use the Digital Cookie platform.

To keep girls safe when they use their own websites, keep in mind:

- Parents/guardians must review and approve a girl's website before it goes live.
- For girls under 13 years old, a parent or guardian must manage the girl's website and be responsible for all content, communication, and information posted.
- Parents/guardians must review and approve any pictures and videos before they are posted to a girl's website. If the girl is under 13 years old, a parent or guardian must personally post the pictures and videos to the girl's website themselves—girls under 13 are not permitted to do this.

About Virtual Troop Meetings

Holding virtual troop meetings creates an array of new challenges and exciting opportunities to deliver a powerful Girl Scout experience into the lives of girls. As with all the special experiences that Girl Scouts offers, meeting virtually creates not only the ability for girls to get comfortable and tech savvy but to gain character, confidence, and courage by expressing themselves and learning leadership skills to take them into the virtual world.

There are so many ways to encourage girls to learn and grow and experience life virtually. For every adventure that can be done in-person, there is another that can be shared and taught and experienced virtually. Adult volunteers will find it exciting and challenging to bring new experiences to girls through video troop meetings. Whether it be community service projects, outdoor adventures, cookie sales, badge work or STEM – there is a way for Girl Scouts to meet girls where they are and keep them connected.

Tips for a Successful Troop Meeting

You may have members in your troop or group who are facing unique issues due to living in remote areas without internet access, or with limited access to technology, or other economic circumstances. Make certain to accommodate and include all girls, regardless of their issues, before moving forward with plans to go virtual.

Ensure that your troop utilizes a video conferencing service that is accessible on all types of devices. For example, you may need to stay away from Face Time because not everyone has an Apple brand phone (Face Time is only available on IOS). Also, the video program should work the same on a cell phone as it does on a laptop or tablet considering that girls may or may not have the same devices.

You may wish to prepare some fun and respectful protocols for girls to agree upon for their virtual meeting, and this is encouraged. For example, to speak in turn and not speak over each other. Think through your meeting and make some notes for the agenda with what you aim to accomplish during the time, a virtual meeting may flow differently than an in-person meeting.

Consider if your girls would like to dress a certain way to encourage and strengthen their sense of belonging. Some troops wear uniforms to their meetings and others may not. You may want to suggest having girls wear their vests for the virtual meeting to reinforce their camaraderie or have the girls vote on how they would like to show their Girl scout pride when meeting online.

Consider the grade level and age groups of the girls when planning virtual meetings. Be mindful of the meeting time(s) that are set or any other factors that may differentiate the context of a virtual meeting between younger and older girls.

Privacy and Safety

As with all aspects of technology, it is important to keep in mind that virtual troop meetings can be the target of unwanted intruders. This can mean either directly by interrupting or lurking in a live virtual meeting or, more covertly, using data behind the scenes in a manner that has not been authorized or made transparent. Do all that is possible to learn about the platforms being used to host virtual troop meetings. Choose platforms that are publicly recognized, reported about by others as favorable or transparent about the issues they may have experienced and the steps a company may be taking to protect users. Become knowledgeable about the terms of use and do not choose a company that you are unsure about, for any reason, without consulting your council for advice.

It is imperative to personally protect both adult volunteers and girls while holding virtual meetings and communications online. This can mean keeping personal background space invisible or obscured, keeping photos and images of girls secured from public viewing, keeping

meeting lines set to private and making sure to protect personal email addresses or passwords and other situations that could compromise girl privacy or safety. Operate in a manner and with the knowledge that anything recorded or photographed or “saved” to a particular site may be misused in the future and stay away from that sort of situation by making educated choices. There is more on specific safety steps to follow below under Safety Activity Checkpoints.

Learn More:

There are many choices when it comes to free video conferencing services and countless skills one can learn online ranging from protecting your troop meeting to creating fun ways to interact with girls. Explore blogs and news articles to stay current and to enable you to make the best and safest selections for your virtual troop meetings. If you are unsure about something, always consult your council. Some examples are below:

- [Protect Your Zoom Meeting from Hackers](#)
- [10 Best Video Conferencing Tools to Choose From](#)
- [Tips for Chatting with Young Children Online](#)

Include Girl Scout Members with Disabilities

Hosting or leading virtual meetings provides a unique opportunity to increase inclusion in new ways. Communicate with Girl Scout members with disabilities and their caregivers on how to best manage their participation in virtual meetings. Once underway, virtual meetings can provide a new way for all girls to have a voice and input in the meeting, potentially drawing in those girls who are shy or hesitant or less apt to either attend in person or speak up in a face-to-face meeting. Some girls may enjoy the chat feature, for example, where they can become more comfortable expressing themselves.

Equity

In addition to physical and social-emotional disabilities consider the history, culture, and past experiences of the Girl Scout members in your troop that could affect their ability to equally participate in an activity. Work with members and families to understand how an activity is perceived. Ensure that all Girl Scout members and their families feel comfortable that they have access to whatever is needed to fully participate such as the proper equipment, prior experiences and skills needed to enjoy the activity.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Have Girl Scout members to take the [Internet Safety Pledge](#) to teach, encourage and support web safety and respectful “net-iquette” while on line. Review the Computer and Internet Use safety activity checkpoints [Computer and Internet Use](#) with girls.

Make sure that the adult volunteer troop leader(s) are still co-leading the virtual meeting and are the person(s) initiating and doing the inviting to the virtual troop meeting. This is especially important for girls under the age of 13 however should be practiced always, with all girls in Girl Scouts.

Be sure to research the video conference service prior to selecting and implementing an appropriate video conference service provider as a virtual troop meeting host. Be sure use to read and understand the terms of use of the selected platform. Also learn about the privacy

guidelines and precautions that are available concerning the platform prior to implementing your virtual troop meeting.

Make sure the virtual lines are set to private so that only invitees can attend (not a public meeting space). Do not share signup links so that anyone can join. Instead, invite people individually.

Make sure that there is nothing on the virtual stream that identifies a girl or volunteer personally or reveals a personal address, home address, or a person's physical location. To further protect privacy of personal space, there is typically an option to obscure the background in the room, if that is helpful. Girls can also pick fun nicknames to identify themselves on the meeting attendee list or use their first name only. Let girls know about these options so that they can learn about them.

Continue to adhere to the two unrelated adult volunteer rule when gathering with girls virtually, whenever possible. It is important that girls understand they are in the same safe Girl Scout space as they are with in-person meetings. They are cared for, and they still have two dedicated unrelated adults who they can count on.

Maintain control of images shared. Set meeting controls so that you can mute or disable screen sharing by any participant. Make sure your co-leader knows how to do the same. If an unauthorized person enters your meeting space, take action to remove them immediately.

Do not record troop meetings and ask that those attending do not record troop meetings. Virtual meeting platforms may or may not offer a consent option for all attending prior to activating the recording feature. However, most Girl Scout members are minors and not of age to legally consent. Because of this, recording of regular recurring troop meetings is not permitted.

If girls want to prepare a special recording session, make sure to obtain permission slips from each girl's parent or legal guardian, as with any special activity, as well as council staff approval to record the session. Also please be aware that virtual meeting platforms may have the capability to save, store, and can potentially re-use, recordings on their technology.

Make sure that girls know that screen shots taken of the group, particularly when all the girls involved are not aware that it is happening, are strongly discouraged. Girls love to take pictures and share them on social media. When done in the right manner, this is a fun and safe thing to do. However, parents, guardians and caregivers have their own feelings and personal rules in their homes about photographs and social media, particularly with younger girls, so it is very important to be respectful of that. Also, as with recording meetings, note that some virtual meeting applications will save, and can potentially re-use, photographs taken on their technology.

When sharing any material developed by a third party, be mindful that third party products and services may have their own terms of use and privacy policy. The user should always read through, understand abide by third party terms of use.

Be sure that any girl emails are not available to anyone but the Troop leader. It is important to protect against unauthorized, uncleared individuals having access to a girl's email or be able to contact her outside of the meeting in any manner.

Keep up with developments on online meeting safety.

Computer Internet Safety Pledge

Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge for All Girl Scouts

On my honor I pledge that,

I will not give out personal information such as my address, telephone number(s), parents' or guardians' work address/telephone number(s), and the name and location of my school without the permission of my parent or guardian.

I will tell an adult right away if I come across or receive any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.

I will always follow the rules of internet sites, including those rules that are based on age of use, parental approval and knowledge, and public laws.

I will never agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parents or guardians. If my parents or guardian agree to a meeting, I will arrange it in a public place and bring a parent or guardian along.

I will never send a person my picture or anything else without first checking with my parent or guardian.

I will talk with my parent or guardian so that we can set up rules for going online. We will decide on the time of day that I can be online, the length of time that I can be online, and appropriate areas for me to visit. I will not access other areas or break these rules without their permission.

I will not use the internet to collect money for Girl Scout products other than what is specifically permitted and outlined in the safety guidelines related to Girl Scout product sales.

I will practice online "netiquette" (good manners) at all times when online.

I will not spam or hack others.

I will not bully, nor will I tolerate bullying (and I will always tell a trusted adult if this is a problem).

I will not use bad language.

I will be guided by the Girl Scout Promise and Law in all that I do online.

The GSUSA Online Safety Pledge is based on the Online Safety Pledge developed by the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#).