



### About Virtual Troop Meetings

Holding virtual troop meetings creates an array of challenges and exciting opportunities to deliver a powerful Girl Scout experience into the lives of members. As with all the special experiences that Girl Scouts offers, meeting virtually creates not only the ability for Girl Scouts to participate regardless of busy schedules, physical ability, lack of childcare, distance, and other barriers to joining in.

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

### 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 on by others as favorable and/or transparent about the issues they (the provider) may have experienced and the steps they are 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 youth while holding virtual meetings and communications online.

- Maintain control of virtual troop meetings. Be ready to block intruders.
- Keep meetings set to private. Do not post meeting links or passwords publicly.
- Teach troop members to use first names only, and keep background space invisible or obscured, keeping photos and images of members offscreen.
- 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. Stay away from that sort of situation by making educated choices. More specific safety steps to follow are included below.

### Tips for a Successful Troop Meeting

**Make sure everyone can participate.** You may have members in your troop or group who live in remote areas without internet access, have limited access to technology, share devices with multiple family members, or other circumstances. Make certain to accommodate and include all, regardless of their internet access, 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 FaceTime because it is only available to those with an Apple brand device. Also, the video program should work the same on a cell phone as it does on a laptop or tablet, considering that participants may or may not be using the same types of devices.

**Adults and volunteers are encouraged to prepare some fun and respectful protocols to agree upon when meeting virtually.** For example, you might agree to speak in turn and not speak over each other, or mute yourself when there is background noise. You might also consider whether the group will use the chat feature. Think through your meeting and prepare meeting and agenda notes for what you aim to accomplish during the virtual meeting, as virtual meetings will flow differently than in-person meetings. Also consider the types of experiences that happen during in-person meetings (such as group check-in, snack break, etc.) and how you can recreate those in a virtual setting.

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

**Consider the grade level and age groups of troop members 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 Girl Scouts.

### **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 members. 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. For more ideas for holding virtual meetings, visit:

- [Protect Your Zoom Meeting from Hackers](#)
- [The 7 Best Free Video Conferencing Platforms](#)
- [Tips for Video Chatting with Young Children](#)

**Include all Girl Scout members in a virtual setting.** Hosting or leading virtual meetings provides a unique opportunity to increase inclusion in new ways. The virtual setting can also present new challenges around access. Recognize that everyone has things they need in order to participate in an online meeting, such as a device, internet or data access, microphone, camera, and a quiet space. Some may also need closed captions, headphones, or a screen reader to take in what others are saying during the meeting. Some may need a break from screens or the ability to move around to stay present.

Talk to Girl Scout members and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. The goal is that everyone can participate, as they are.

Once underway, virtual meetings can provide a way for all to have a voice and input into the meeting, potentially drawing in those who are hesitant or less likely to either attend in person or speak up in a face-to-face meeting. Some may enjoy reactions or the chat feature, for example, where they can become more comfortable expressing themselves.

**Equity.** 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 and have access to whatever is needed to fully participate, such as proper equipment, prior experiences, and the skills needed to enjoy the activity. See the Equity section of the [Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) for general advice about expense,

**Emergency Action Plan (EAP).** Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) before starting any activity and review it so all are prepared. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury, missing person, sudden illness, or sudden weather or water emergencies.

## Virtual Troop Meeting Checkpoints

Have Girl Scout members take the [Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge](#) to teach, encourage, and support web safety and respectful “net-iqutte” while online. Review the [Computer and Internet Use Safety Activity Checkpoints](#) and share with participants.

**Make sure 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 Girl Scouts under the age of 13. However, this should always be practiced with all in Girl Scouts.

**Be sure to research the video conference service when selecting and implementing an appropriate video conference service provider as a virtual troop meeting host.** Be sure 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 sign-up links so that anyone can join. Instead, invite participants individually.

**Make sure there is nothing on the virtual stream that identifies someone 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. Participants can also pick fun nicknames to identify themselves on the meeting attendee list or use their first name only. Let the group know about these options so that they can learn about them.

**Continue to adhere to the “two unrelated adult volunteers” rule when gathering with youth virtually.** It is important that everyone understands they are in the same safe Girl Scout space when in a virtual meeting as they are when attending in-person meetings. They are cared for, and they still have two dedicated unrelated adults whom they can count on.

**An adult must be present in the room with each youth.** When meeting virtually, ensure a caregiver is nearby and listening in on the virtual meeting for each child present.

**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 in attendance 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 the group wants to prepare a special recording session, make sure to obtain permission slips from each 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 reuse recordings on their technology.

**Screen shots taken of the group, particularly when all involved are not aware that it is happening, are strongly discouraged.** Girl Scouts 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 children, 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 reuse 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, understand, and abide by third-party terms of use.

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

**Remain up-to-date on developments related to online meeting safety** from your council and from the meeting platform you choose.