



Virtual Troop Meetings

Includes:

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

Activity Permitted for: *D, *B, *J, *C, S, A

Council Approval: Not Required

Council Notification: Required; Submit virtual troop meetings details to info@gsvsc.org

Required Training: GSUSA Facilitating Virtual Troop Meetings as part of 281 Virginia Skyline New Leader Learning Path - Part 2 (gsLearn)

About Virtual Troop Meetings

*Girls younger than age 13 should participate in virtual troop meetings under the supervision of a parent or guardian, someone who can advocate for them and/or assist with technology.

Holding virtual troop meetings creates an array of 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 become more comfortable and tech savvy but to gain courage, confidence, and character by expressing themselves and learning leadership skills they can take 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, 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.

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 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. More specific safety steps to follow are included below.

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, limited access to technology, or other economic circumstances. Make certain to accommodate and include all girls, regardless of their internet access 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 be using the same devices.

Adults and volunteers are encouraged to prepare some fun and respectful protocols for girls to agree upon when meeting virtually. For example, to speak in turn and not speak over each other. 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.

Consider if your girls would like to dress a certain way to encourage and strengthen their sense of belonging. Some troops may wear uniforms to their meetings and while 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.

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. For more ideas for holding virtual meetings, visit:

- [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. Talk to Girl Scout members with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. 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 and have access to whatever is needed to fully participate, such as proper equipment, prior experiences, and the skills needed to enjoy the activity.

Infectious Disease Guidelines. Girl Scouts use a commonsense approach to health and safety. Before participating in Girl Scouting activities, members are to undergo health checks at home for any symptoms such as fever of 100.4 (or need for fever-reducing medications) chills, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, stomach aches, nausea, or vomiting. Members with any of these symptoms or in need of fever-reducing medication **MUST** stay home until fully recovered.

Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) before taking girls out for any activity and review it with the girls so they too are prepared. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident, physical injury to a girl, missing girl, sudden illness, or sudden weather or water emergencies.

Virtual Troop Meeting Checkpoints

Prerequisite Training: Troop/Group Program leaders must complete GSUSA's online leadership courses.

Required Training: GSUSA Facilitating Virtual Troop Meetings as part of 281 Virginia Skyline New Leader Learning Path - Part 2 (gsLearn). Adult volunteer chaperones must complete GSVSC's 281 GS 104 Orientation for Support Volunteers online course in gsLearn.

Notify the council that the troop will be meeting virtually by emailing virtual troop meeting information to info@gsvsc.org. Include details about the date, time, duration, frequency, and the type of video conferencing platform the troop will be using.

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

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 girls under the age of 13. However, this should always be practiced with all girls 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 signup links so that anyone can join. Instead, invite participants individually.

Make sure 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. 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 volunteers” rule when gathering with girls virtually. It is important that girls understand 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 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 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 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 girls know that screenshots 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, understand, and 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.

Remain up to date on developments related to online meeting safety.