Staying Virtually Connected with Your Troop

We’re so grateful to our volunteers for their response during this uncertain time. No one told you that you had to keep troop meetings going, but so many of you reached out, told us you want to keep girls engaged, asked questions about meeting virtually, and shared ideas and resources.

We naturally seek companionship and turn to each other to share in joy when times are good and for comfort when times are difficult. Nurturing these connections reminds us that we share a greater humanity even as we hunker down in our respective homes.

If you are ready to take that step with your troop, know that it may take some time to adapt your in-person troop meetings to this new virtual realm. The good news is that the prep and flow of a virtual meeting is quite similar to an offline meeting. The better news is that we are here to help!

Here are some best practices for making your virtual troop meeting a success.

**GETTING STARTED:**

Choose a platform.

- Ask families what technology they have available and ask for their input. Is there a parent who is very familiar with a platform and can help out?
- The resources below can help you get started, but feel free to use other tools you have found online.
- Privacy settings are key to keeping girls stay safe. Work with the parents/caregivers in your troop to ensure girls have permission to participate and that they can login through their parent’s or caregiver’s account.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Basic Features</th>
<th>Links</th>
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<tr>
<td>Zoom</td>
<td>Video conferencing with up to 100 participants and ability to screen share. There is a 40 min limit on group meetings (paid version available with unlimited time).</td>
<td><a href="https://zoom.us/">https://zoom.us/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Hangouts</td>
<td>Video call one-on-one or invite friends for a group call with up to 10 people.</td>
<td><a href="https://hangouts.google.com">https://hangouts.google.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Google Duo</td>
<td>Simple, high quality video calls for up to 8 people</td>
<td><a href="https://duo.google.com/about/">https://duo.google.com/about/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Host a video or an audio conference with up to 50 people</td>
<td><a href="https://www.skype.com/en/">https://www.skype.com/en/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>YouTube Live Stream</td>
<td>Host a livestream to communicate with a larger group of people at a certain time.</td>
<td><a href="https://support.google.com/youtube/topic/9257891">https://support.google.com/youtube/topic/9257891</a></td>
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Set a meeting day and time. Will you meet during your regularly scheduled meeting time or do you want to set up a new time to accommodate new schedules – yours and/or the girls?

Communicate the agenda. Plan activities in advance. Will you lead hands-on activities during your meeting? If so, send out a list of supplies girls will need. (Also, consider what girls have access to at home so no one needs to venture to the store to purchase anything.) Do you want girls to complete steps on their own before meeting and use the meeting to share experiences and to check-in? If so, send out instructions beforehand.

**HOLDING THE MEETING:**

Login a few minutes early to ensure technology is working.

Engage the girls equally and by name so they feel included and know you can see them.

Build in traditions. Virtual meetings may feel a little strange to girls who are used to getting together in person, so build in parts of your traditional meetings. For example:

- Have a pre-meeting activity (maybe it’s a check-in question that girls can answer in the chat box)
- Have girls can take turns leading the Girl Scout Promise and Law
- Review troop business
- Sing songs to close the meeting

Create a group agreement with ground rules during your first meeting

Be present. Avoid multitasking.

Limit distractions. Something that distracts you will distract others, too. This includes anything participants can hear, like background noise.

Mute your microphone when you are not speaking. This will prevent accidental background noise from disrupting the meeting.