

COVID-19 Virtual Troop Meeting Guidelines

Welcome to a new Girl Scout year! As we all adapt to new safety measures, Girl Scouting has new guidelines and strongly recommends virtual troop meetings for the 2020-21 school year. Please read over these virtual troop meeting guidelines before meeting with your troop to make sure that you can provide a safe, fun and engaging experience through virtual Girl Scouting. Please contact the Council with any questions 907-456-4782 or 800-478-4782.

Planning Your First Meeting

- Send out a communication to all parents/guardians to discuss your troop's plan to meet virtually. Make sure girls have access to a reliable internet connection as well as an internet capable device.
- Find a virtual platform that works for your troop.
 - Zoom – Service Units have licensed Zoom accounts and can help troops set up reoccurring meetings with no time limit.
 - Skype – Up to 10 participants for free.
 - Other platforms – Call the office for approval of other virtual technology platforms.
- Host a virtual parent meeting to give parents/guardians and volunteers a chance to communicate and check the technology platform that you've chosen. Establish ground rules for troop meetings and expectations for parents/guardians in troop meetings. Ask parents/guardians to communicate with girls about what they can expect to see at their virtual meetings.
- Plan your first official virtual troop meeting similar to in-person meetings with an opening, activity time, snack (optional) and a closing. Be sure to stay flexible at first to make adjustments. Then, try to stick to a routine. Make sure to have back-up games or activities just in case the girls finish early, or if your planned activity doesn't translate well on a virtual platform.
- It may take a couple meetings to figure out what works well for your troop. Don't get discouraged, and call the Council for support or troop activity ideas.

Troop Meeting Activities

- Find creative ways to incorporate Girl Scout traditions and activities with your troop to maintain certain aspects of normalcy. (i.e. bring a stuffed animal to hold during the Friendship Circle.)
- Plan your activities with girls' access to resources in mind. You can drop off activity kits to girls' homes (or have them pick up from yours) or give a supply list ahead of time so girls have a chance to acquire the needed supplies.
- Use the Council website to find troop activities and to download free PDFs of badge requirements.
- Search the internet for games and activities for virtual meetings.

Your First Official Virtual Meeting

- Start your first meeting with a virtual meeting etiquette lesson.
 - **Change Your Name:** Show girls how to change their screen names and have them use a name they go by, with no last names.
 - **Know Your Platform:** Show girls how to use the virtual platform, even if they've used it before. Show them special tools you plan on using (i.e. hand raising, muting, chat feature, thumbs up).
 - **Be Present:** Avoid doing other things during your meeting. Give your full attention to the presenter.

- **Limit Distractions:** This includes audio and visual distractions (pets, siblings, TV, conversation in the background).
- **Mute your Microphone:** If you're not speaking, keep your microphone muted to minimize background noise, unless the Troop Leader says otherwise.
- **Speak Clearly:** Speak loudly and confidently into your microphone.
- **Use Visual Cues:** Raise your hand when you'd like to speak. Give a thumbs up instead of unmuting and shouting "Yes!".
- **Use the Girl Scout Sign:** Raise your Girl Scout sign for girls to pay attention and listen for instructions.
- Go through the internet safety pledge (in the Girl Guides) before starting any internet research.

Virtual Ice-Breakers

- What is your favorite color?
- Do you have a pet?
- Go find 2 items that describe who you are.
- What is your favorite subject in school?
- What did you do this summer?
- Show us the silliest face you can make!

Tips for a Successful Virtual Troop Meeting

- Plan ahead and be flexible
- Communicate clearly with your Girl Scout families about your plans
- Engage each girl equally and by name
- Find creative ways to engage girls without requiring too much from families
- Use the Council website as a source for Girl Scout activities
- Reach out to other Troop Leaders via the Service Unit Facebook Pages or contact the Council office for ideas and suggestions
- Find ways to include Girl Scout traditions, like a virtual Flag Ceremony, or a virtual Friendship Circle to your troop meetings.
- Have fun!

Note: The Girl Scout Council staff are available for questions, trouble-shooting and to host a virtual meeting with troops. This may be a way to ease into this new method of troop meetings. Just give the office a call or email us, 907-456-4782, 800-478-4782 or membership@gsak.org.