



MY2021

Kick Off!



**A Guide to
Supporting our leaders
through virtual Girl Scouting**

Supporting Your Troop When You Can't Meet in Person

You want what's best for your girls, and maintaining a sense of normalcy is so important right now for girls and their families; how do you keep the Girl Scout spirit going strong when your troop can't actually meet face-to-face?

Even as we all practice social distancing (avoiding close contact with people by staying home or standing at least six feet away from others when you do need to go out), Girl Scouts is still a place where girls can feel supported and share honest conversations about what they're feeling. Knowing that there are tens of thousands of other troops in this sisterhood that are also figuring things out can be comforting to many girls.

Which means that you, troop leader, are also not alone in figuring everything out during this stressful time. Here are just a few suggestions, from fellow troop leaders like you, about how to keep your troop moving forward while staying safe and healthy.

Decide how you'll stay connected. Depending on their ages, ask your girls how they'd like to connect outside their usual troop meeting. Don't worry if they're using a web or social platform you're not as familiar with, because you'll learn alongside them!

If your girls are younger or looking for guidance about how to stay in touch, check out companies offering free webinar services for groups. Try services from Google, Adobe, or Zoom, among many others, and see what works best for your troop. GSEP has had success with the Zoom platform and we have included a tip sheet in this Guide packet.

And if connecting virtually isn't a possibility, you can still show your girls what it means to be a sister to every Girl Scout by giving them a quick phone call to let them know you're there for them.

Keep your troop traditions going. There's comfort in what's familiar, and by continuing troop traditions—whatever they may be—you remind your girls that they're still on solid ground, no matter what headlines they're reading.

If your troop usually opens meetings by reciting the Girl Scout Promise and Law, be sure to do the same with any online meetings you hold. Ask your girls what a virtual friendship circle might look like; instead of squeezing hands, they could share something good that happened in the past week or something they admire about another member. Or you might have the girls sing their favorite Girl Scout song! It's hard *not* to smile while singing, and some girls might really need that positivity boost right now.

Keep it Girl Led! Having your girls take the lead is more important than ever. When they're empowered to make troop decisions, they can gain a sense of control through this uncertain time.

If your older girls are each leading the efforts to earn a badge, for instance, ask them how they plan to adapt it for virtual participation, or how they could complete a service project remotely. For younger girls, ask what they'd like to work on next or how they might "be the expert" at home and teach their families something they learned in Girl Scouts. If an activity can only be completed in person, help the girls brainstorm when they might reschedule it and how they can prepare for it in the meantime.

And be sure to check out the GSEP webpage (for our virtual program, event, and training offerings) for an array of virtual activity ideas!

Engage families. What's true throughout the troop year is still true now: family support goes a long way in keeping the troop running smoothly. Let families know they have what it takes to support Girl Scouting at home, and give them clear ways to do so.

Depending on the size of your troop, you might set up a virtual parent meeting, give caregivers a quick phone call, or email some tips on how their girl can stay connected with her troop during this time. Share how the troop will be moving forward in the coming weeks, what they can do with their girls at home, and your advice for keeping activities girl-led. And be ready to listen; you don't know what each family is going through right now. Remember that families just want what's best for their girls, and by working as a team, you'll show them that they have a network of caring adults who want them to thrive.

If you haven't already done so, ask families which skills they can lend to the troop. For instance, if a troop caregiver loves to camp, you might ask them to record themselves discussing their camp packing list or demonstrating how to pack for an overnight. Bonus: you just might give them the break *they* needed from everything going on right now!

Expand her world. Keep encouraging her sense of wonder and excitement for the world around her, even if it might seem a bit scary right now. Help your girls organize a "field trip," and take them to places they might not see in person. Cultural institutions across the globe are now offering free virtual tours of their spaces or livestreaming performances, so you're likely to find something that will excite your entire troop.

Could your favorite yoga instructor lead an online class for your girls? Could your local park ranger record a video in which she points out local wildlife? If you can connect a virtual activity to a badge or goal the girls wanted to achieve during the troop year, you'll restore that sense of normalcy and remind them that everything will indeed be OK—because it will be.

The most important thing you can do to keep that Girl Scout spirit strong?

How I Make Virtual Meetings Work for My Troop

Here's how you make virtual meetings work for your troop.

Consider your tech specs.

- GSEP has had success using Zoom because families don't need to download any type of program on their computer; they can simply click on the link at the appropriate time or call in to join the meeting. Zoom also supplies a dial-in number in case internet access is not available.

Think about your meeting logistics.

- Keeping the same meeting time as your in-person meetings may be best. Although it might be tempting to hold a meeting or activity during the day, remember that girls could have schoolwork and their caregivers may be working from home or helping their other children. Each school district has their own reopening plans.
- Treat the first virtual meeting as you would with any first meeting; set up expectations and ground rules, such as not using the chat log for side conversations during the meeting—something that can be hard for middle school girls to resist!
- Remember that Zoom technology might be new to the girls and their families. It could take twice as long to cover content during your first virtual meeting because everyone is trying to figure out how to use it. You'll need to show them some of the features, such as how to mute their microphones.
- Depending on the ages of your girls, you may want to ask their caregivers to stay in the virtual room to meet safety guidelines.

Adapt meeting traditions when possible.

- With Brownies, you may decide to create a PowerPoint presentation to help lead the meeting and keep them focused. Zoom and other platforms allow the meeting host to share their screen.
- Know that audio can sometimes be delayed from the video, especially now that more people are using online platforms to meet. This can be hard if you have your troop reciting the Girl Scout Promise together or the closing circle. It may work better to ask for a volunteer to take a turn.
- For a closing circle, a fun idea is to virtually high-five the girl whose picture is next to them until everyone has done it. To help facilitate, you could call the girls' names as they gave a high five. "Jane" then "Sofia" until it comes back to the first girl, who then says, "Good night, Girl Scouts." It is a creative way to do the closing circle.

Keep troop activities moving forward.

- If you had field trips or similar activities planned with your troop, see if virtual tours or a virtual guest speaker is possible.
- Check the GSEP web page for Girl Scouts at Home updates and virtual programs/events.
- Encourage your families to look at the safety awards at their girl's level. Most focus on being prepared. Chances are they can apply the things they have been doing lately toward these requirements. For example, part of the Cadette requirements say, "With your family, make sure you have enough food, water, and medical supplies on hand to last at least three days in case of a natural disaster."





Virtual Troop Meetings Safety Activity Checkpoints (SAC)

Council Approval: May Be 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 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 girls 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 you are able 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 Girls with Disabilities

Hosting or leading virtual meetings provides a unique opportunity to increase inclusion in new ways. Communicate with girls 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.

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Have girls take the Internet Safety Pledge to teach, encourage and support web safety and respectful “netiquette” 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 sign-up 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's 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 girls do not record troop meetings. Some virtual meeting platforms offer a consent option for all participating members prior to activating the recording feature; however, the majority of girls are minors and are not of the age to legally consent, so 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 legal guardian, as with any special activity, as well as council staff approval to record the session. Also please be aware that some virtual meeting platforms 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's very important to be respectful of that. Also similar to recording meetings, note that some virtual meeting applications will save, and can potentially re-use, photographs taken on their technology.

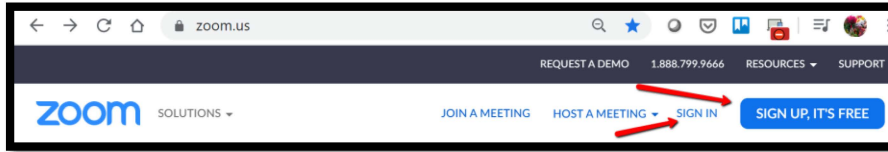
When sharing any material developed by a third party, be mindful that third party products and services may have their own terms of use and privacy policy. The user should always read through, understand abide by third party terms of use.

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.

Hosting Your Own 30 Minute Virtual Girl Scout Meeting Using Zoom

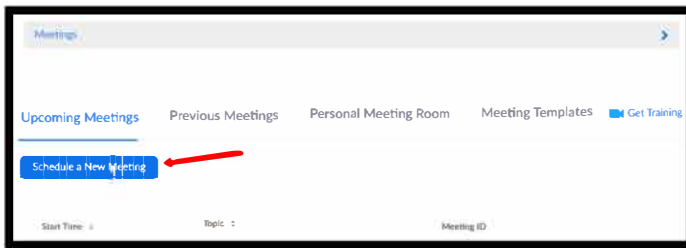
1. Create your personal Zoom account by going to zoom.us. Once you sign up, you'll receive an email to authenticate your account.



2. Then sign in.

A screenshot of the Zoom Sign In page. It has a title 'Sign In'. Below it are two input fields: 'Email address' and 'Password'. The 'Email address' field contains the text 'lbeverage@gsema.org'. A red rectangular box highlights the text 'Your username should be your email address.' next to the email field. The 'Password' field is filled with dots. Below the password field is a blue 'Sign In' button. At the bottom left, there is a link 'Forgot password?' and at the bottom right, there is a checkbox labeled 'Stay signed in'.

3. You'll land on your page for scheduling and launching your virtual meeting.



4. **Schedule meetings using the schedule tool.** Name your meeting and add the date, time and duration. (For your meeting to remain free, it needs to be 40 minutes or less. If you schedule your troop/group meeting time for 30 minutes, you can use 5 minutes before to get ready and 5 at the end for those few last minute comments before you close up.)

A screenshot of the Zoom 'Schedule a New Meeting' form. It has a 'Topic' field with the text '1:1 Meeting about gsLearn (LB/NO)'. Below it is a 'Description (Optional)' field with the placeholder text 'Enter your meeting description'. Below the description field is the 'When' section, which includes a date field with '03/12/2020', a time field with '4:00', and a dropdown menu for 'PM'. Below the 'When' section is the 'Duration' section, which includes a dropdown menu for '1' hour and a dropdown menu for '0' minutes.

Time Zone (GMT-4:00) Eastern Time (US and Canada) v

Set up recurring meetings here. ☐ Recurring meeting

Meeting ID ☒ Generate Automatically ☐ Personal Meeting ID 332-294-5936

You likely won't require meeting passwords.

Meeting Password ☒ Require meeting password 485576

Video Host ☒ on ☐ off

Set video for you and your attendee here. Participant ☒ on ☐ off

Audio **Allow both telephone and computer audio options for everyone in the meeting.** ☐ Telephone ☐ Computer Audio ☒ Both

Dial from United States of America [Edit](#)

Meeting Options ☒ Enable join before host

Choose parameters for your attendee. ☐ Mute participants upon entry

☐ Enable waiting room

☐ Only authenticated users can join

☒ Record the meeting automatically on the local computer

You can choose to record to your computer. Recordings will generate after your meeting is over and zoom is closed. They are found in your computer's DOCUMENT Folder in the Zoom Folder found there.

Remember to save your meeting.

[Save](#) [Cancel](#)

Time Mar 12, 2020 04:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Add to [31 Google Calendar](#) [Outlook Calendar \(.ics\)](#) [Yahoo Calendar](#)

Meeting ID 820-162-015

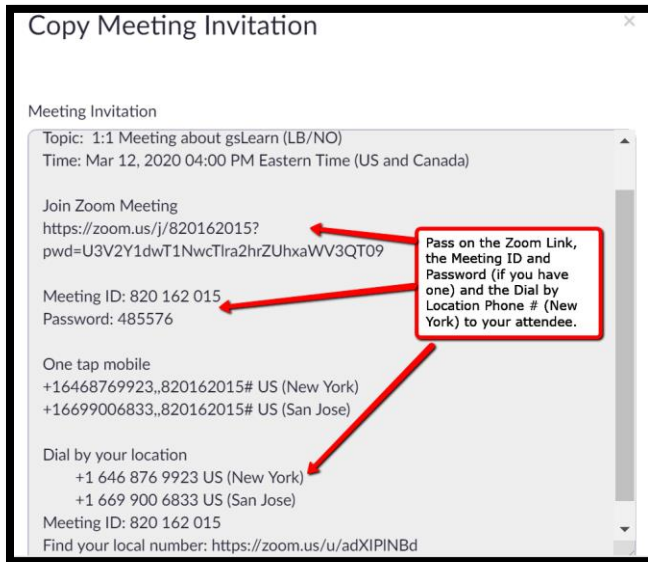
Meeting Password ☒ Require meeting password 485576

Join URL: <https://zoom.us/j/820162015?pwd=U3V2Y1dwT1NwcTlra2hrZUhxaWV3QT09> [Copy the invitation](#)

Your scheduled meeting information will appear. Save it to your Outlook Calendar and copy the invitation here.

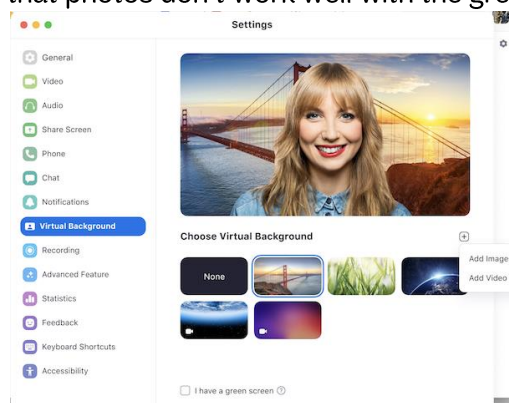
- 5. Send the Zoom Meeting Link to your Troop/Group attendees.** They can join zoom with desktop, laptop, tablet, or smartphone. If they don't have audio/microphone capabilities, they can dial in via phone and watch on another device. Cameras are not a must, but they are great to have and make the experience more engaging and fun.

Once three (or more) people are there, the clock on your 40 minutes begins to tick. So before your meeting starts, be sure that there are not more than you and one other person, (maximum) in the space. You can always reset your time by having an everyone leave the room and then reenter.



A Few Zoom Tips

- Set up your meeting with participants on mute and webcams off on upon entry to let them settle in and prepare. They can then turn them on when they are ready.
- You can hand off hosting duties to anyone in the group to share their screen and reclaim your hosting duties as needed.
- All participants can use the annotation and drawing tools to participate in the meeting at any time. You can clear your own drawings as host, their drawings, or all drawings anytime.
- During your first zoom meeting with your troop, don't plan too much content so girls have a chance to connect and catch up.
- When possible try to have each person on their own device, they can access Zoom from a smart phone or tablet. This way each person can contribute fully.
- You can upload fun zoom backgrounds (search online for free ones) if you don't want to show your own live background. Note that photos don't work well with the green screen feature.



What Can You Do in a Virtual Meeting?

While you don't need to use meeting time for snack or clean up, you can still do some or all of the other parts of a traditional meeting.

The Arrival Activity: (5 minutes) Consider having a WELCOME QUESTION on the screen for the girls to answer either in the chat box or on screen if you enable the annotation tool. You can also do a fun progressive drawing by letting each girl add something to a blank word document using the drawing tools.

Opening Ceremony: (5 minutes) Recite the Girl Scout Promise and Law, do the Pledge of Allegiance, even sing a song together. Whatever you'd normally say or sing together... do it!

Business: (3 minutes) You can share any news and agenda here.

Your Activity: (12 minutes) This is a great time to work on badge or Journey activities! Think about what you can send the girls the day before or the morning of the meeting so that they can come in prepared to interact. That helps you make the most of your time.

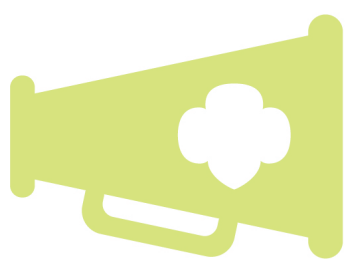
Here are some specific ideas to get started:

- **Get silly:** Play charades, Taboo, or Pictionary. Have a scavenger hunt for silly items that might be around the house.
- **Get the wiggles out:** Do yoga or have a dance party together.
- **Quiet together time:** Read stories aloud or do a group add-a-Line story. If you have a Daisy troop, read a Petal story!
- **Get artistic:** Draw portraits of one another and share.
- **Explore STEM:** Create a race car from found materials. Share favorite recipes and send them out for others to try. Create a cookbook. Have a Top Chef Challenge. Share science experiments.
- **Learn more about each other:** Share best and worst things that happened today (Roses and Thorns).
- **Include all Girl Scouts:** Learn the Promise (and Law) in American sign language or other languages. Check out [WAGGGS](#) resources for international ideas.
- **For older girls:** Watch a TED Talk and discuss. Create your own videos.

Remember: You can screen share, so anything that you can put on your screen can be shared – like videos, pictures, and more.

Closing: (5minutes) A modified Friendship Circle is possible! Instead of squeezing a hand, have each girl say the name of another person in your virtual circle after she makes her wish. OR if everyone has a camera, how about a wink and say a name? Encourage the girls to be creative!

Remember: Personal Zoom accounts have a 40-minute meeting limit.



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