How to Run a Virtual Scout Meeting

Scouting Ireland Guidance for Scouters continuing to run meetings online

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With the measures to restrict the spread of COVID-19 all organisations are having to adapt their day-to-day activities for the safety of their members. Scouting Ireland is no different. We know many groups have already begun holding virtual meetings to stay connected, try new activities, learn new skills and work towards badges and awards. Below you will find some guidance for beginning or adapting your meetings in accordance with best practice.

In conducting virtual meetings consideration needs to be given to the possibility that some families may not have the technology to access online meetings and appropriate arrangements need to be taken to ensure children are not excluded, ensuring that you have done your best to include all.

Further, we must ensure that we maintain the highest safeguarding standards as possible. All the good practice we demonstrate at our weekly meetings and events should be maintained even if we are not physically meeting. The following is an overview of some platforms that you may use and some guidelines on how to use them safely.

Contents

Platforms which can host Virtual Meetings

There are many different platforms you can use to communicate with young people and families online. They're all slightly different with different features, and most importantly, different levels of security and privacy. Scouters must risk assess the use of the communications before attempting online meetings.

Here are some popular platforms you might want to look at when deciding how to continue with Scouts digitally. They have different benefits and features, so think about which might work best for you and your group.

Zoom
Go to the Zoom website

Good for: Can be used for interactive video calling for free for up to 100 participants for up to 40 minutes. Has a waiting room feature than can be enabled.
Not good for: Should not be used as a file store. The free version will access data.
Security: Complex passwords required, Encrypted site, as a US company alignment to GDPR is adequate
Minimum age: 18 years old (this is a US-based platform)

WhatsApp
Go to the WhatsApp website

Good for: Closed group text communications on mobile devices. Ability to share photos and video.
Not good for: Group video/voice calls, groups are limited to four people. Should not be used as a file store
Security: Encrypted, as a US company alignment to GDPR is adequate
Minimum age: 16 years old

Microsoft Teams
Go to the Microsoft Teams website

Good for: Interactive chat, live video calls, screensharing, file sharing. Has a waiting room feature that can be enabled
Not good for: Everyone needs to download the programme, which normally comes with a wider set of Microsoft tools. You may need to pay for a license.
Security: Complex passwords required, encrypted, as a US company alignment to GDPR is adequate
Minimum age: 13 years old

Facebook
Go to the Facebook website

Good for: Communicating within a closed group. Ability to share photos and video. Can stream video live.
Not good for: Should not be used as a file store
Security: The password should be set as complex and unique to any other platform account, encrypted, as a US company alignment to GDPR is adequate
Minimum age: 13 years old

Skype

Go to the Skype website
<u>Good for</u>: Up to 25 people can chat together with video or audio, screensharing, chat
<u>Not good for:</u> Should not be used as a file store
<u>Security:</u> The password should be set as complex and unique to any other platform account, encrypted, as a US company alignment to GDPR is adequate
<u>Minimum age:</u> 13 years old

Houseparty

Another popular video platform you may have heard about. It is not secure, and anyone can join a video call. For this reason, we **DO NOT** recommend using this for scouting.

Safety

Examples: WhatsApp, Skype, Zoom, FaceTime (Apple devices only)

There are many video conferencing platforms available and these are great tools to deliver Scouting digitally. These platforms allow leaders, parents and young people to all be online at once so they can see and talk to one another.

- Scouters must risk assess the use of each type of communication.
- Most of these platforms have a minimum age requirement. Check the terms and conditions of services to make sure they're suitable. If the young people in your group are under the age limit of the tool you want to use, then their parents must set up the required accounts and remain nearby throughout the meeting.
- When using live video calling, **two Scouters must be present at all times** and both must remain on the video call until all young people have logged off. This ensures no young person is left alone with an adult online. Zoom and Teams have a "waiting room" for participants while waiting for people to join the call, this means no one-to-one calls.
- If you're calling from home and there are other people around, make sure those people are dressed appropriately and know how to behave when you're talking to young people. It might be best to ask them to stay out of the room that you're making the call from. Make sure your background space is child-friendly, ensuring nothing inappropriate is on display. You shouldn't be drinking alcohol, smoking or have alcohol in the video.
- Scouters should outline the behaviour expected on the video call at the outset and Groups/Sections must develop a code of conduct for internet use (Parents/Guardians must consent also).
- For Beavers and Cub Scouts, a parent should be present in the room for each child joining the call.

Guidelines

- Ensure inclusion, some children may not have the technology to access online meetings, check abilities/access with all youth members and make provision to include everyone.
- Allow 5 mins at the start for all members to join and chat with each other. In Zoom and Teams (365) you can use the "waiting room" feature to ensure no one-to-one calls
- Use the "Mute All" button if you want to say something to the whole group.
- Just like normal meetings, have a recognised opening and closing.
- Use share screen or the chat function to pull in other resources like diagrams or videos.
- Use the same ID for all the meetings - makes connecting easier and means parents aren't searching for the link every time.
- Location boundaries should be considered; youth members should be in a room with other people, not bedrooms.
- Parental/Guardian consent must be given, and Parents/Guardians must be informed of the schedule and content.
- Prepare the programme item/agenda in advance and send it out to all before you start. The time goes really quickly and this will help everyone stay focused. Supplying the agenda in advance means parents know what you will be talking about with their children.
- Have a follow-on activity where the youth member can take a picture/video - it provides great continuity and a community spirit.
- The host of the call must be a scouter.
- There must be no one-to-one online meetings, involving children. Scouters can use the waiting room/ lobby function to avoid this.
- Show respect and dignity for others at all times.
- No recording of the meetings.
- All content and participation must be age-appropriate.
- All Facebook pages must be administered by a minimum of two administrators who are Scouters.
- All Facebook pages should be set to private settings. Only people who are members/parents /guardians of your Scout Group should be admitted.