

## How to meet virtually...safely!

Nowadays, there are many digital platforms that allow units to meet in real time so we can keep on Guiding! Guiders need to make their online environments safe as they would do for their regular in-person spaces.

Virtual platforms have a variety of security settings to help maintain privacy and ensure only those invited gain access to your meeting. Follow these best practices and take some time to learn how to activate your platform's security settings. (Note: Not every feature will be available on every platform.)

### **Gain consent from parents/guardians**

Share the meeting invitation with parents/guardians and obtain consent for participants under the age of sixteen. Parents/guardians can reply to your email with "I give consent for my daughter/ward to participate in a virtual Girl Guide meeting," along with any questions or concerns they may have. Adult supervision for young girls is recommended and sometimes required depending on meeting activities.

### **Avoid one-on-one virtual communications**

One-on-one virtual communication (texting, email etc.) should be avoided with any girl. Parents/guardians should be copied in any communication with girls Guide age and younger; and made aware of communication with girls Pathfinder age and older. Avoid individual communication using instant messaging, Facebook or other online social networks. Similar to in-person situations, a Guider should never be alone in a virtual setting with a girl.

### **Make your meeting private and invite-only**

Keep your meeting private by sending the link via email or text. Don't post it publicly, such as on a social media page.

### **Require a meeting password**

When scheduling your meeting, if possible, require a password. Share the password only with people you know in a separate message from the meeting link.

*Available in Zoom and Google Meets.*

### **Create a waiting room**

A waiting room is a virtual place where people gather before a meeting, allowing the host to vet each participant before granting them permission to join the live meeting. Make sure to disable the "Join before host" function too.

*Available in Zoom.*

### **Lock your meeting**

A meeting lock stops newcomers from joining once every girl you were expecting has arrived. Ask parents to let you know if they intend to join late and lock your meeting after those participants.

Alternatively, you can also unlock it when they arrive.

*Available in Zoom and Messenger Rooms.*

### **Choose who can share content**

Virtual meeting platforms have various settings that allow you to manage content sharing. You can disable the private chat and file transfer features. Furthermore, for large groups especially, you can enable host-only screen sharing for extra security. Consider activities where girls do not need to broadcast themselves while participating.

*Available in Zoom, Google Meets, Microsoft Teams and Skype.*

## What to do in the case of unexpected guests...aka if your meeting was “Zoom-bombed”

If you have an unexpected guest, document their username and other information, remove them from the meeting and try to find out how they joined the meeting. If the disturbance is serious, end the meeting immediately and follow up to reassure girls and parents. Report the incident immediately to GGC using the [Incident Report form](#).

## General guidelines for online interaction

- **Position your camera:** When using video to live-host your meeting, be sure to have a wall behind you. An open background where other people may suddenly be visible could pose a risk to girls.
- **Disclose who may be in the room and/or request that girls turn off video:** Ideally, when live-hosting a unit meeting, you’re doing it alone, in a private space. If you happen to be hosting in a space where other people are present, you must disclose this information so both girls and their parents/guardians are aware. Then be sure that girls turn their video off.
- **Respect GGC’s Code of Conduct:** Make sure your unit understands how to be considerate of others and what the Code of Conduct means in an online setting, like on social media and chat platforms.
- **Get consent before sharing images:** Pictures should only be shared with consent from girls AND their parents/guardians. Don’t record online meetings for later use or distribution. Names and contact information of any member **MUST** be blurred out in screen captures of your virtual session before sharing them on social media.

Please review GGC’s [Digital Communications guidelines](#) on Member Zone to learn more about specific best practices for social media, image sharing and email communications.

## Choosing a virtual platform

GGC does not endorse or recommend any specific virtual meeting platform. Choose the platform that works best for your unit. Consider the age of your girls, how they will use the platform and how comfortable you are using the platform. Always test out a platform and make sure it works for you before hosting your meeting.

You can learn more about popular meeting platforms and how they can work for your unit by taking the [Leading Virtual Meetings e-course](#).

