



VIRTUAL SCOUTING

Real World Safety



Scouts Canada understands the importance of our programming in the lives of young people who are experiencing an unprecedented break in their normal routine. Virtual Scout meetings are a great way to facilitate Scouting using technology. We encourage the use of safe practices during these meetings and remind Scouters that the **Two-Scouter Rule** applies to all online interactions.

As we are finding new ways to communicate and explore the world of virtual Scouting, here are some important safety tips for conducting online meetings.



Setting up a meeting

Be sure to communicate and engage the youth's parents prior to any virtual meetings. Not only will they be helpful in setting up the technology, but you could discuss online safety in advance to help them understand cyber safety and its importance during the pandemic. Some useful links for internet safety are:

- [Cybertip.ca—Keeping kids safe online while out of school](#)
- [Scouts Canada—Internet Safety](#)
- [Scouts Canada—Phone Safety](#)
- [Scouts Canada—Cyber Safety](#)



Have a dress code. Holding a virtual 'formal' meeting in uniform sets a positive tone and ensures no accidental oversight when getting ready to video chat.



Know the safety policies and security settings for the video conferencing app you are using.



Send an agenda. Before a virtual meeting, it's good to have an agenda and timeframe for participants to follow. It's also good to inform parents ahead of the meeting of behaviour expectations and how the meeting will be conducted. Parents might appreciate a gentle reminder that the **Scouts Canada Code of Conduct** applies to them as well during virtual meetings!

Remember: The Two-Scouter Rule includes online activities.



During a virtual meeting

Model Scouting values at all times. Maintain a positive attitude and stick to the set agenda. Use creative ways to ensure everyone has their turn to talk, like holding up a flag when you have something to say.

Disable private chat to keep the meeting focused and safe. Consider limiting screen sharing to the 'host' of the meeting.

Set up a password for participants to verify their entry before entering the meeting.

Know who you are talking to and don't do anything you may regret later. Some apps allow for friends of friends to join. Keep your meeting secure.



For parents

- Set expectations early about monitoring usage and screen time.
- Know who your children are talking to.

- Know the guidelines of each app your children use.
- Encourage video chatting in a safe space, like at the kitchen table.
- Get involved and help out!



Understand that using online platforms comes with risk. Scouters are responsible for understanding the risks associated with the internet—like cyberbullying, scams and invasions of privacy.

Check out the **RCMP's Internet Safety page** for ways to mitigate these risks.

Virtual meetings might be the only connection for some youth to people outside of their family. It is important to recognize their emotions during these times and listen attentively to what they are saying. Here are some links to help with conversations about Covid-19 and anxiety:

- [Caring for Kids—Covid-19](#)
- [Children's Mental Health Ontario—Talking to Anxious Child](#)
- [Anxiety Canada](#)

Say something if you see something.

Report any activity that is unsafe or harmful for a child or youth. This could include a disclosure of abuse, a statement about their mental health, or something related to online exploitation or attack.

If a youth is in distress, ensure they have the Kids Help Phone website ([kidshelphone.ca](#)) and phone number: **1-800-668-6868**.

To report online sexual exploitation of children, go to [cybertip.ca](#).

Safe Scouting is still available. Please send us your experiences so we can share tips and advice with Scouters across Canada: email safety@scouts.ca. For immediate help, call 1-800-339-6643.