

How to Encourage and Boost Participation During Virtual Scout Meetings

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It's hard to get people to pay attention in meetings when everyone's in the same room — let alone if they're all calling in from home. The Spirit of Adventure Council will be rolling out virtual merit badge classes and quick ways for your child to also work on rank requirements virtually. How can you get people to actually participate in a virtual meeting? Glad you asked!

The key is to create structured opportunities for attendees to engage. Do something in the first 60 seconds to help participants experience the problem you want them to solve. Hands on quick activities right at the beginning will engage the participants right from the start. Some ideas might be:

- You might share a quick fun fact or riveting tale that dramatize the topic. A simple example would be the difference between a red and white pine tree. Red pines have two needles in a cluster, where white would have five. The word WHITE has five letters in it. This is a quick and simple way for kids to remember!
- You can also start off with a quick knot tying lesson. Teach the knot, demonstrate it slowly, then have the participants try.

If possible, in a large online meeting through **Zoom, GoTo Meeting, Google Hangouts or Meet**, or another online meeting platform, assign people to groups of two or three and give them a very limited time frame to take on a highly structured and brief task. Be sure to give them a medium with which to communicate, like a **Slack** channel. If you're on a virtual meeting platform that allows for breakout groups, use them liberally. Then ask the teams to report back. Never go longer than 5-10 minutes without giving the group another problem to solve. The key is to set and sustain an expectation of meaningful involvement. Otherwise, your participants will retreat into an observer role, and you'll have to work extra hard to bring them back.