

WELCOME TO SCOUTING ONLINE

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Welcome to Scouting Online

We have all recently been thrown into the world of distance communication to maintain our Scouting programs. If you're not sure how to keep your Scouting program alive, there are some simple tools and methods to help. This guide primarily uses Google Classroom, Google Hangouts, Google Drive, and Zoom as options for online communication, meetings, and learning solutions. However, the concepts are the same if you choose other technologies.

What Can I Use These Technologies For?

In Scouts, we have several activities that easily transfer to distance learning platforms.

- Troop, PLC, and patrol meetings
- Merit badge classes
- SM conferences and Boards of Review
- Committee Meetings
- Even District meetings and Roundtables

Virtual Conferencing Tools

Video conferencing provides the transmission of full-motion video images and high-quality audio between multiple locations. It allows virtual meetings and communication to occur, regardless of distance or our current situation. There are additional options in the ***Video Conferencing Tool Comparison*** are the end of this document.

The components of a video conferencing system include:

- A network for data transfer, usually a high-speed broadband Internet connection.
- Two or more video cameras or webcams with microphones.
- A computer or mobile device with installed video conferencing software.

Video conferencing leads to more efficient meetings with the exchange of non-verbal communications and a stronger sense of community among the participants. On a personal level, the face-to-face connection adds non-verbal communication to the exchange and allows participants to develop a stronger sense of familiarity with individuals they may never actually meet in person.

Zoom

The original video conferencing system and still the most used by businesses. Zoom provides these features:

- Host up to 100 participants
- 40 mins limit on group meetings
- Chat feature
- Unlimited number of meetings
- Schedulable in advance

Learn how to connect to a Zoom session here

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-How-Do-I-Join-A-Meeting->

Google Hangout

Google Hangouts is a video communication service developed by Google. It is one of two apps that constitute of Google Hangouts, the other being Google Chat. Hangout provides these features:

- Host up to 10 participants
- No time limit on group meetings
- Chat feature
- Unlimited number of meetings
- Not schedulable in advance

Learn how to use Google Hangouts here

<https://support.google.com/hangoutschat>

Google Classroom

Google Classroom is a virtual classroom where Scouts log on to take a Merit Badge class or share information. Google Classroom is a platform for people to interact by posting assignments, engaging in discussions, and accessing materials to learn.

Create a Google Account

The process for setting up a Scout's account is simple. Your first step in using Google Classroom and Hangouts is to create a Google Account. Refer to the Google tutorial on creating an account:

<https://support.google.com/accounts/answer/27441?hl=en>

Their instructor does most of the work ^(YPT). They will set up the classroom and provide a join code that is unique to each class. Once access has been granted, the Scout can get into their classroom anytime by going to <https://classroom.google.com>.

How Does a Scout Access Their Classroom?

When Scouts log on, they see upcoming assignments, announcements, questions, and other important class information. Scouts can submit their work directly through Google Classroom, and instructors can provide feedback and even grade and return work to the Scout. All the Scout's work stays organized and stored on Google Drive. Assignments are automatically added to the Google Calendar based on their due dates. Essentially, the Google Classroom is where information is created, exchanged, and stored.

For Scouts who have different instructors for different subjects, multiple classrooms will appear. From their dashboard, they can choose the class they want to view. Once they enter a classroom, Scouts find three tabs at the top of the page.

- The **Stream** tab can be compared to an interactive workbook. It's an outline of the course and an announcement page with a full overview of assignments and any posts the instructor adds.
- The **Classwork** tab stores all the Scout's assignments. When they click on a task, they'll get the due date, details, resources needed, and status of the assignment. Scouts also can turn in their work here once it's completed. They can add files or create slideshows and images to be submitted.
- The **People** tab shows all the instructors and Scouts in the classroom. It's also a place where Scouts can communicate directly with one another or their instructor ^(YPT).

Mobile Device or Tablet Access

Like all the other Google apps, your Scout can access the full functionality of Google Classroom from virtually any device. Just be sure to add the other essential Google apps needed for success to their devices, like Google Calendar, Google Docs, and Google Drive.

Youth Protection Guidelines

There are several places where you need to be aware of Scouting's Youth Protection rules. Let's look at those now.

Scout sign-up. Instructors can invite Scouts to Google Classroom by email however this is NOT recommended. Share the class code via other means such as Scoutbook's messaging system.

Scout emails are available in Google Classroom. Yes, there is no way to disable this. As adults, we should never use their emails or conduct 1 on 1 digital communication, just as we observe in face to face situations.

Parent/Guardian access. Unless you have a paid G Suite account, you will not be able to invite a parent/guardian through the interface. You can add them as students or teachers, however.

Parent/Guardian involvement. Ask parents to monitor their Scout's activities while online. This provides the necessary 2-Deep Leadership and may bring them in as instructors themselves.

Distance Communication and Learning Strategies

Modalities

There are several ways to use these tools for your Scouting unit.

Self-paced – in this case, you provide an online location and post the materials for the user to view or download. They choose when and how to consume the material. There is no interaction with the instructor or facilitator of the event. Our BSA Training is good examples of this type of modality.

Live Sessions – Using the video conferencing tools, this is very similar to a traditional facilitator-led event. These events are often accompanied by slides, images, or videos to enhance the experience for the participants. Webcasts are good examples of this modality.

Blended Learning – This format uses both Self-paced and Live Session techniques. These events use the best of both methods; the foundational material is presented through a Self-Paced format for the participant to consume at their own pace. Then the group meets in a Live session to discuss, review and even engage in group activities. Most universities and companies use Blended Learning today.

Managing an Online Conversation

The most difficult part of running an online event is the running of the event itself. Unlike a face to face event, you can't see every person. The subtle queues you are used to, a face twitch, eyes of the participants, shuffling, are mostly hidden from you. You need to pace yourself when talking to be under 1 minute. Then you take a break, let people ask questions, or just take a breath. You do a lot of checking for comprehension in an online event. Here are some other things to consider when managing an online event:

- Plan everything first! You can't just "wing it" online. Have a detailed plan and timeline for the event.
- Share the stage. Have multiple people present part of the event. Keep things moving between topics and presenters to keep your audience engaged.
- Be sure you know your material beforehand. You have limited time, less than you may be used to and there is no after-chat opportunity like at a normal in-person meeting.
- Remember that your audience has a very short attention span. Use the slides or other props at key times and to shift from talk to visual. Consider the way TV shows work, no more than 15 seconds before they change cameras or speakers.
- Don't try to do everything yourself. Have an assistant who can monitor chat questions, handle side conversations, mute noisy microphones, etc.

Designing an Online Event

So, remembering those tips about managing the online event. Let's look at how you can convert some of your unit events to an online format.

The Big Meeting - Here is a sample schedule you might use to plan your meeting. In this case, we'll use a Pack meeting as an example. The same principles can be used for Troop or Roundtable meetings.

Monthly Pack Meeting

Theme – Safety First

Time	Activity	Presenter	Duration
6:30 PM	Opening Ceremony	Cubmaster	2 min
6:32 PM	Announcements	Cubmaster With slide	3 min
6:35 PM	Cub demonstration We learned about 911 (slides)	Den 7 Leader Den slide show	5 min
6:40 PM	Stranger Danger	Guest Speaker Existing Video to share	10 min
6:50 PM	Award Recognition	Asst Cubmaster Slide with awards and names	5 min
6:55 PM	Webelos demonstration Making a stretcher	Webelos 1 Leader Video of the Webelos	5 min
7:00 PM	Announcements Cubmaster Minute	Cubmaster with slide	3 min
7:03 PM	Closing	Den 2 Leader	2 min
7:05 PM	End event		

You can see we kept a standard set of activities, but the times are shortened. We also had multiple people presenting. Our assistant Event coordinator was texting the person to prepare them to take over on time. We used Zoom conferencing for some but also slides and videos. A guest speaker also added a change in pace. Don't forget event flyers should all be digitized and sent out through email or posted on the Pack's website.

Training Sessions

A training session could be a Merit Badge class, basic scout skills, how to bake cookies or even existing training like Hazardous Weather and Den Chief courses. We want to try something different when teaching online. Don't just turn a merit badge class into a Zoom session with a talking head. Think about the attention span of the audience. How to present examples: as a lecture on how to scramble an egg or a live stream of you actually cooking? Don't forget that we want to break things up and remember our tips!

Scouting Heritage MB

Let's examine one way of taking a merit badge class and putting it online. We start with the course outline:

- Course duration is 3 weeks
- Two 30-minute sessions each week
- Requirement work performed outside of meeting time

Next, configure your Google Classroom and Zoom sessions. An example of the requirements is shown.



Create any slides, docs, or videos needed. Find games, videos, and other things online that are better at teaching the concept than a lecture and add those. In each assignment or material link, add the proper assets. This pre-work can take an hour or two if you have taught the badge before. Things become easier and quicker as you get used to the Classroom and online tools. There are plenty of online help videos and pages for each tool, so don't despair!

An example of a single session might be:

Time	Activity	Presenter	Duration
7:00 PM	Welcome Set the goals of this meeting	Instructor	2 min
7:02 PM	Review requirement 1	Instructor	5 min
7:07 PM	Requirement 1 discussion Check off completed requirement	All	15
7:22 PM	Introduce requirements 2a & 2b The assignment is due at the next session Google Slides for you to post your findings to, be sure to include your name on the slide	Instructor	5 min
7:27 PM	Meeting wrap up and final questions	Instructor	3 min
7:30 PM	End call		

Event and Classroom Facilitation

Managing an event or training session online can be a challenge. You have many things to see, click and listen to at once. You also have to juggle windows and documents all while still facilitating. For large events, consider having another person or two manage the video conference itself, bringing people in, answering chat questions, and maintaining order.

Try these tips to create a better connection with your Scouts in an online world:

- Make everyone feel welcome and heard; create a comfortable environment
 - Use a relaxed, engaging, and informative tone.
 - Encourage Scouts to ask questions, share experiences and collaborate.
 - Use humor where appropriate. The internet is a more informal place.
- Don't lecture...rather, question.
 - Turn lectures into interactive discussions.
 - Engage Scouts through questions that encourage them to think.
- Use group collaboration
 - Scouts can become facilitators. Ask them to share experiences with others to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.
 - Try dividing the class into smaller groups to tackle problems presented through real-world scenarios.
- Make the information you're providing "bite-sized"
 - Gradually introduce information to Scouts through smaller, more digestible chunks of data.
 - Use polls, quizzes, and games to ensure Scouts have absorbed the information.
- Make it real
 - Tie the topic into real-life examples or experiences.
 - Provide Scouts with opportunities to assess how the information applies directly to their own lives or experiences.
- Set clear ground rules and expectations
 - Set rules and goals at the beginning.
 - Set expectations with Scouts to keep everyone on track.

- Stay on topic
 - Bring the discussion, questions, and answers back to the subject at hand.
- Talk less and listen more
 - Good facilitators talk less and listen more. You are there not only to offer your wisdom and experience but to also help Scouts become fully engaged.
 - Use questioning to guide discussions.
 - Encourage debate.
- Be a guide, not an instructor
 - Show how the topic applies within their own lives.
- Ask for feedback and make changes accordingly
 - Be open to constructive feedback from Scouts.
 - Use feedback to improve your facilitation.

Online Classroom setup

Although in this example I am referring to Google Classroom, the principles are the same for whichever tool you use to manage online event and learning. Depending on your needs there are two strategies to consider.

First, as intended you can create a classroom for each class or event. A PLC Classroom for troop leaders to share information and meet. A First Aid Merit Badge class for Scouts looking to add skills. You can create as many Classrooms as you need to separate the Scouts into groups focused on one task or activity at a time. For larger units or multiple events, this can make for a more focused online experience.

The downside to this is there is more administrative work to be done. This adds work and if you are new to these technologies, it can cause stress and hurt the experience for everyone. Another consideration is the confusion for a Scout with multiple Classrooms at a time. What might a Troop leader encounter with 3 merit badge classes, a PLC class, and a campout planning classroom?

The second option is a single classroom for everyone and everything. In this case, you can use Topics in the Classroom page to separate your classes and other events. This makes for a more streamlined view for the Scouts and is easier to manage. This is a good option for a smaller unit or for your first attempt at building a distance learning platform.

The downsides here include that more than a few classes can make the Classroom tab very large with a lot of scrolling for users. It also makes Google Drive more difficult to use unless you create folders for the classes. There is a lot of crosstalk with a single Classroom.

Case Study

In this example, we'll look at how my troop is using Google Classroom for both Troop meetings and advancement. In this example, we are viewing the Classroom from the Scout perspective. The administrator and teachers have additional options and functions available to them.

You log into the Troop Classroom. This becomes a bulletin board for an important way to spread information quickly. It is also secure as only those you invite have access to this space. Scouts can post their questions and comments here.

Some moderation is required and having defined standards of behavior in place with the Scouts helps.

Using the Classroom tab, you have a resource library. You can place documents, slides, videos and all sorts of other information here for the troop to see and use.

In this case, we used Topics to break the information apart into categories.

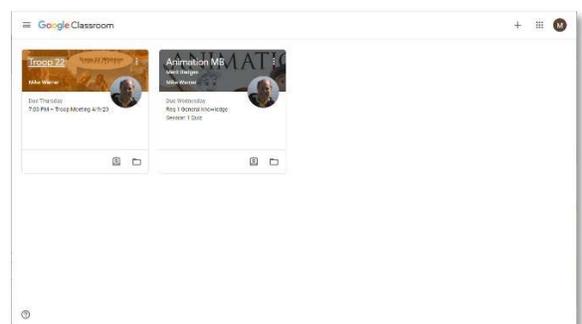
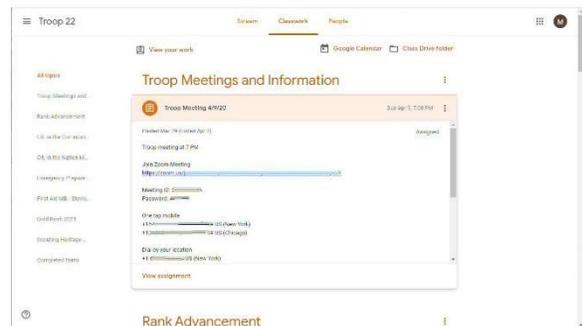
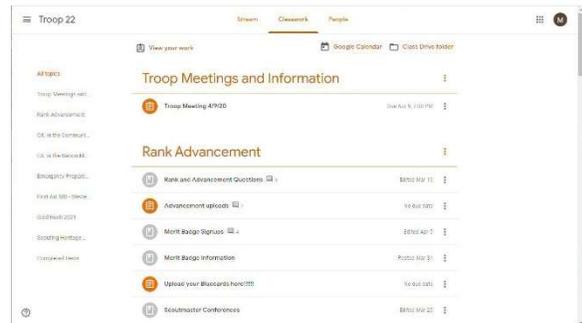
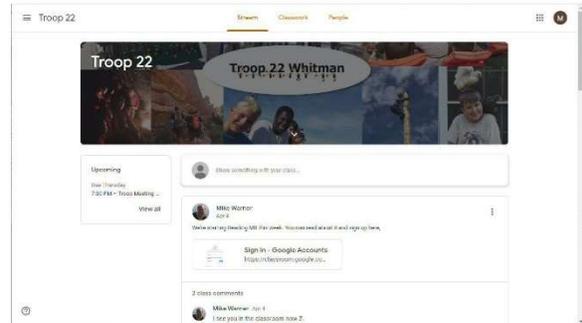
In the Troop Meeting Topic, we can set up Troop, PLC, Committee meetings among others. You can invite everyone, individuals or leave them open.

In this example, we used Zoom to configure a recurring weekly event for our Troop meetings. The links and connection information are now available for all members of the Troop.

Let's return to the Classroom homepage (by using the hamburger icon in the top left corner).

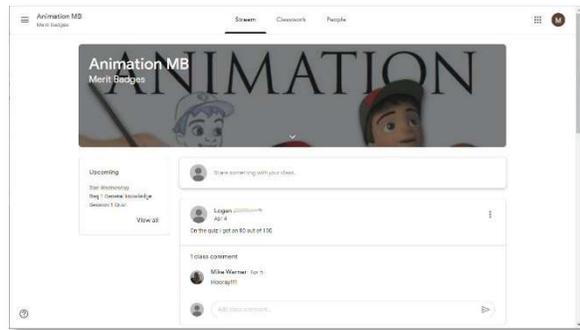


We see the Troop Classroom and also a Merit Badge Classroom for Animation. The tiles give you a quick way to see if you have any assignments or meetings coming up.



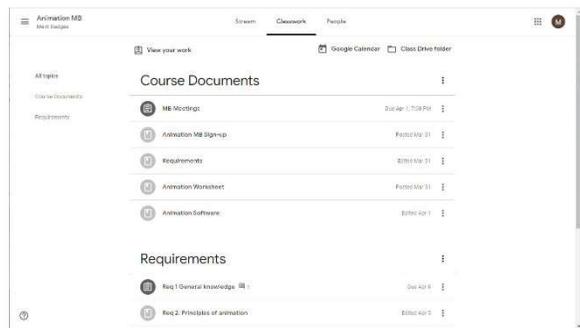
Let's enter the Animation Merit Badge classroom. We have the same basic layout as we had in our Troop room. This is good as its a consistent interface for Scouts and others to use.

Here we see messages from the instructor and other Scouts taking this badge. We also have the reminder tile on the left to show us an upcoming quiz that is due.



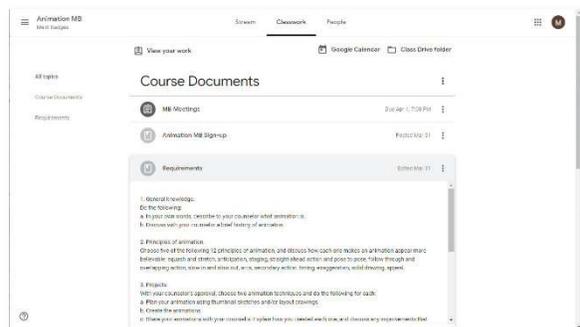
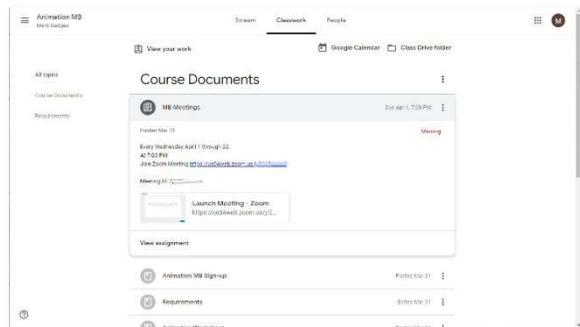
To remain consistent, we decided on a set of normal Topics in each Merit Badge Classroom. We divide the material between the documents to get us started and the requirements the Scouts must complete.

The first section is always the Course Documents topic.



There are always four documents in the Course Documents topic.

- Meetings: This has the links to the Zoom sessions for online badge sessions.
- Signup Sheet: this is how Scouts sign up for the badge. Later you can use this to track their progress.
- Requirements: The badge requirements. They are in text format and also as an attached PDF.
- Worksheet: A PDF worksheet Scouts can use for written requirements.

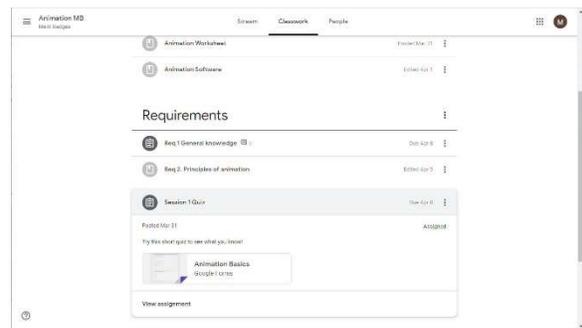
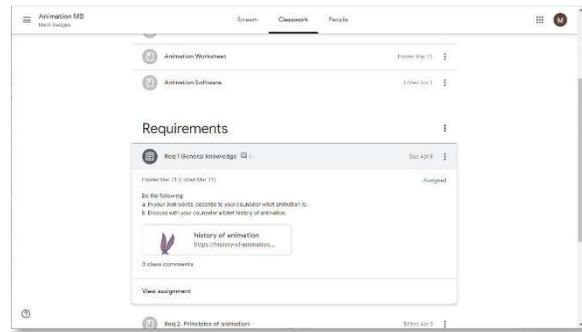


Remember that some Scouts may be using a mobile device so providing multiple means to read or view materials is always best.

Under Requirements, there are many options to share information more interestingly.

- Here we see a link to a website. This site has all of the information about animation history in a fun and engaging timeline. You can add PDF files, Google docs, weblinks, Videos, and many other things here.
- We can build surveys and quizzes using the Google Forms tool. This lets us check for understanding along the way. Avoid school-like tests and quizzes. Make them fun and keep them short. Use sparingly.

Assignments and Materials can have due dates which show in the calendar and classroom as a reminder. An assignment can also be graded.



Digital Behavior

Managing an online event can be more difficult than in-person. People are, in many ways, anonymous when online. Some tend to act out. Try these tips when running an online event:

- Use your real name on login or be removed from the event
- Remove visually distracting backgrounds
- Do not change your background or image during events
- Mute yourself unless talking with the event presenter
- Event Chat is only used to ask questions or respond to the presenter
- An event moderator will manage chat conversations and attendees
- TLDR, just remember to act like a Scout

Links and Resources

Google Educational Resources

<https://edu.google.com>

Getting Started as the Instructor

<https://teachercenter.withgoogle.com>

Google Classroom YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCt84aUC9OG6di8kSdKzEHTQ>

Scouting at Home ideas from BSA National Council

<https://www.scouting.org/scoutingathome/>

Scouting at Home ideas

<http://scoutshare.org/>

Troop 22 Whitman Virtual Scouting

<http://t22whitman.org/virtualinfo.asp>

Video Conferencing Tool Comparison

GoToMeeting

If you don't mind paying per month, consider [Go To Meeting](#), which allows you to host up to 150 attendees. Your attendees do not need a GoToMeeting account, all they need is your link or call-in information for the meeting. GoToMeeting also allows screen sharing, so you could have more than one leader in different locations running the meeting. You can record and share your video later, and even attach files for your attendees to view. The largest-selling point to GoToMeeting is that only the organizer needs to have one account. You can record and share your video later.

Skype

[Skype](#) is a very popular video conferencing tool used to connect families, classrooms, and businesses online. There is a free version that allows up to 10 guests on a video call, which includes interactive chat and you can record the video and share it later on social media. There are apps for both iOS and Android devices and can be used on your Windows OS desktop computer. As the leader of the meeting, you'll want to create a Skype Group meeting that you'll invite people to via email, social media link, or text. You can record your meeting and share it later, and even click the paperclip icon at the bottom of your screen to attach images, files, or more.

Facebook Live

Most units have a social media presence, and this is where Facebook Live could be the perfect option for your online meetings. Host a meeting live like you would in person... flag ceremony, Oath, Law, Outdoor Code, and activities. The perks of this free technology are that you can broadcast your meeting on your unit's Facebook group. You will want to have a group so that the meeting remains not open to the public. You can also see comments as they come in, allowing for a question and answer time. The best part is that the Live broadcast will save as a regular post that can be viewed and commented on later! The downside is that you can't share resources like files or presentations. If your unit has a Facebook page, you can and still should go live with maybe a special message from unit leaders or a merit badge counselor, but remember the privacy settings as you post publicly. Please reference the [BSA Social Media Guidelines](#) as well.

Other Options for Staying Connected

A Facebook Group is a great tool for keeping your Pack, Troop or Dens connected without sharing your meetings, photos, or posts publicly. Many units use this to keep families updated on changes to schedules and to share other options. We're trying to keep our Scouts engaged by offering up different challenges to keep them on the advancement trail. Remember, that Facebook Groups are only good for helping to communicate with current members, any new members need to be invited to be a member and don't forget some individuals do not use Facebook. Do not let this be the only way you communicate.

[Scoutbook](#) should be your go-to spot to not only record advancement but is a great way of communicating. In Scoutbook you can send emails and texts to any individual or groups of individuals including, parents, leaders and even Scouts. Scouts and their parents can even mark advancement they have completed while attaching their notes, images or videos as proof (these still require leader approval to be marked as complete). Scoutbook is a free service provided by the Boy Scouts of America and is our official unit management software. [A complete FAQ and how to get started is available online.](#)