



Scout Safely Online: 10 Ways to Keep Young People Safe When Scouting at Home

Doing things safely is fundamental to everything we do in Scouting, and this extends to all environments, whether they be physical meetings and events, or online via the phone, Virtual Scout Hall or another platform.

Although we've had to stop our face-to-face Scouting activities for the time being, that doesn't mean Scouting itself stops. Over the past few weeks we've seen Groups transition to alternative methods of bringing the fun, friendship, exploration and learning of Scouting to our youth members from home, using new tools to keep connected with Scouts.

While this change in delivery will take a bit of time getting used to, our commitment to safety and maintaining a child safe environment (where everyone not only feels safe, but is safe) still stands.

Here are ten ways you can keep our young people safe when they're Scouting at home.

1. Observe Two Deep Leadership

There must be at least two adults present at all times during any online activity or meeting i.e the leader plus a second leader or registered adult helper. Parents are also encouraged to sit in as they might normally do during a regular meeting. Leaders who struggle to accommodate two-deep leadership are encouraged to discuss the issue with their respective leader.

All communications between adults and youth members should be within a public forum, such as your Group's Virtual Scout Hall on Teams. This allows everyone to join the conversation once at least two adults have joined. Once finished, it is important for Leaders to signify the end of the Scouting meeting and remain on the video call until all youth members have logged off. Do not allow youth members to remain on the call after the leaders have hung up.

Remember – youth members **MUST NEVER** be left in a one-to-one situation with an adult

If a circumstance does arise where an adult Member needs to communicate with a Youth Member electronically, the communication should always include at least one other adult Member or parent. This protects us all and also ensures that our youth and their families understand that even in these unprecedented times, we take their safety seriously.

2. Have a Safe, Clear Work Space for Scouting

Speak with your members and their parents and explain the importance of setting up an appropriate workspace for them to safely conduct their Scouting activities at home. The workspace and camera should be located where parents can supervise their child adequately without compromising the privacy of the family.

Facilitate healthy and safe Scouting at Home firstly through thoughtful selection of activities that are appropriate to the general home environment.

Prior to each activity, communicate to the youth and their family, the general workspace needed for the activity e.g. indoors or outdoors and how much space is needed. Outline the safety aspects and coach youth members to look around their immediate workspace for hazards using the principles of Plan, Do, Review.

Plan to conduct the activity away from household items that could get damaged or cause injury.

Do the activity once the youth members feel safe.

Review the outcome to consider if any changes are needed to improve the experience for next time.

The area must be clear of safety hazards and away from household items that could get damaged or cause injury. Trip hazards such as power cords, pets, toys on the floor and other hazards such as unprotected elevated edges and hot cooking appliances in the kitchen should be managed preferably under parental supervision. Computers and other electrical devices must be away from water sources. The location, height, space and other physical characteristics of the work space should be suited to your meeting and activities.

In an ideal scenario – youth members will also be undertaking Scouting from home in a safe and open area of the home where their parents are nearby – and can observe all Scouting from home activities. Encourage all families to make it a family friendly environment and to enjoy Scouting from home with you.

3. Keep Parents in the Loop

It's important to foster open communication with parents from the get-go. Share your ideas for Scouting at home and clearly set out your expectations, using email and/or your Group's Virtual Scout Hall. This ensures transparency and parental engagement from the beginning.

Make sure parents are aware of all activities, what platform they will be presented on, and when. Give them adequate time to set up any necessary accounts and adequate indoors or outdoors work spaces.

Parents should be made to feel welcome at all times – in fact, actively encourage them to sit in on meetings so they can observe how you're delivering Scouting at home!

4. Send online meeting invitations and activities to Parents, and never just Youth Members

Rather than contacting Youth Members directly, send all online meeting invitations, activity sheets and reminders to their parents' email addresses. When youth members' email addresses are used (such as for communicating Venturers) continue to include the parents' emails on all communications. Communications – including emails about the next online meeting, or phone calls to parents – should be sent in normal Scouting hours, not late at night or too early.

5. Set boundaries

Establish boundaries with youth members. Remind them of their Scout Promise to keep the Scout Laws to be respectful, friendly and considerate when they are online, take time to be nice to each other and to listen and take turns.

Remember - It may not be immediately apparent who else is watching (e.g. younger siblings) and so all youth members should be setting a good example at all times. Youth members should also be encouraged to share their emails, photos and videos of their work with their parents before sending them to the Leaders so that parents feel involved and are across the activities taking place.

Always end the meeting- signify the end of the meeting by remaining on the video call until all youth members have logged off. Do not allow youth members to remain on the call after the leaders have left.

If there is a repeat of inappropriate language or behaviour after a warning has been given, the leader, as the convenor of the meeting, should be able to mute the offender. As a youth led organisation, it would then be appropriate to refer the behaviour for a unit council discussion and ruling on what should be done about the conduct.

6. Disable Private Chats

Nothing is secret in Scouting. This means one-on-one communications and private chats are *NEVER okay*. At no point should any youth member message or communicate with an adult directly on a one-to-one basis. If this does happen, do not respond to the one-to-one message, rather contact their parents and ask them to speak to their child to explain why it's not appropriate.

To prevent this from happening in the first instance, discourage the use of Private Chat or disable private chat functionality on your chosen online meeting platform.

7. Establish privacy settings

Regardless of your chosen platform, ensure that the privacy settings are activated to allow you to follow these guidelines. Read up on the platform's features and make the most of any features that restrict access to only those you invite (i.e. including passwords or locking the online room). Make it a habit to regularly check the list of participants who are active in the meetings to limit participation to only those who should be in your group.

When run under the guidelines, there should be no reason to record meetings. Recording on-line meetings could have unintended legal implications under some circumstances so in general, it is NOT recommended.

8. Follow the same protocols online as you would in a Scout Hall

Just because we're Scouting at home doesn't mean all rules go out the window. The Scout Law and Promise still apply in a virtual world, and the same goes for our Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics. Youth safety in an online meeting is similar to a regular meeting in the Scout Hall. We follow the same protocols and normal rules apply to behaviour between Scouts – no one should make another youth member feel unsafe or excluded. Encourage your youth members to be kind to one another and to let you know if anything is troubling them.

9. Supporting our youth

Staying home may limit our youth members from having access to the usual support they get from trusted adults like teachers, sport coaches, etc. It is possible that a young person may ask you for help or raise a concern with you. Just like regular Scouting at the Hall, please log any concerns re youth safety by contacting our Child Protection Team using the link on our [website](#).

10. E safety awareness

Encourage all parents and youth members to educate themselves about and be familiar with online e safety education and initiatives via the Office of the E Safety Commissioner website.

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

