

How to Encourage and Boost Participation During Virtual Scout Meetings

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 participate in a virtual meeting?

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. For example, 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. **White would have five needles found in a cluster- there are five letters in the word WHITE- easy 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, 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 five to 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.

