Scouting During a Pandemic and Beyond

- *Applying Technology to the Scouting Model*

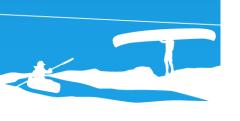# Goals for this session:

Explore available resources and discuss how they can be applied for success:

1) Digital Communication (Zoom & More!)
   A. Virtual Meetings
   B. Resources for Planning Meetings
   C. Means of Direct Communication
2) Integration and adaption of new-found tools to increase effectiveness as leaders
   A. Meeting in person, again.
3) Policies and practices (Rules - bleh!)

Disclaimer:
Before we begin, please remember that *I am not an expert*. What I'm presenting is what I've encountered. There are sure to be countless, and even better, alternatives available.

Like you, I am a volunteer who wants to do right by the scouts in my units and by their parents and our community. I work hard to find new ways to be adaptive to the constantly changing landscape of scouting and - most importantly – to keep the scouts engaged and learning.

Special thanks:
Being here today, taking this course, you've shown that you believe - much like I do - that we have to be flexible and willing to keep learning new things.

Thank you for being that leader who cares enough to dedicate your time to our scouts and to the scouting program!

1) Digital Communication

In this section, we'll take a look at some examples of tools and resources available to help you with communicating and holding meetings.

A) Virtual meetings!

ZOOM!

- Host or join meetings at the touch of a button

- Free trial vs. paid subscription for added features.

- Break out rooms (for smaller groups to meet)
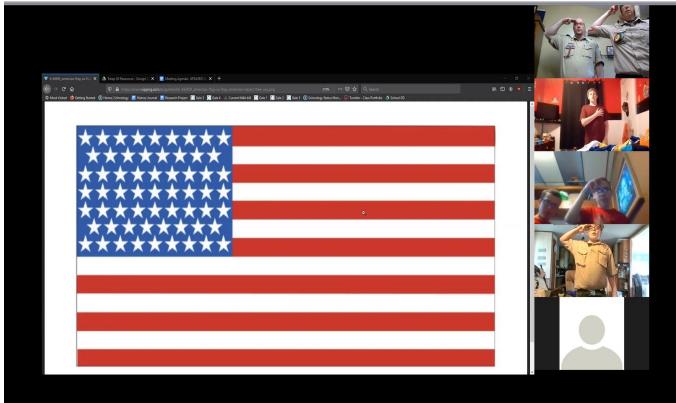
- Polling (for surveys/elections)

Other services for online meeting include WebEx, Google Meet, Cisco AnyConnect

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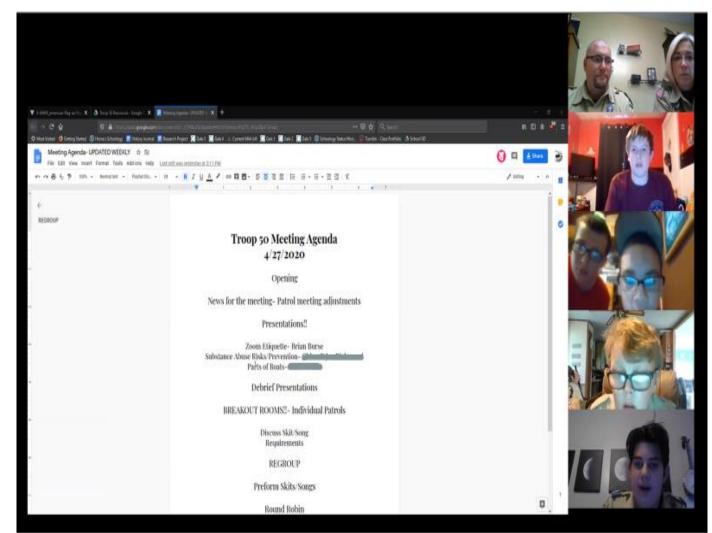# Some good examples of the capabilities of Zoom :

- **Troop meetings can be run as if you were in person, complete with opening and closing ceremonies:**

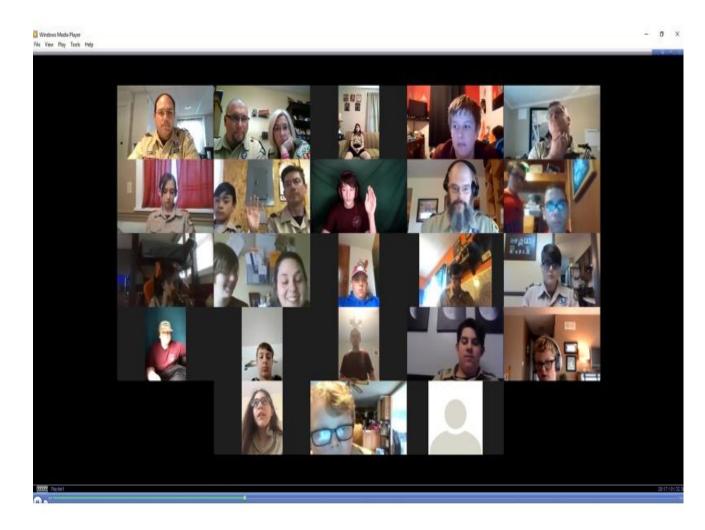# Share the screen to keep everyone informed and on track:

Record your meetings for review and note keeping:

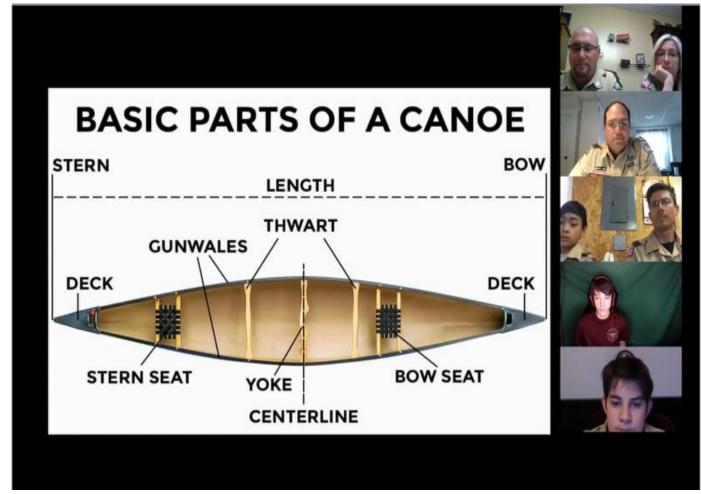# Challenge your scouts to present for rank requirements:

Another example of a scout's presentation to the troop for rank requirements:
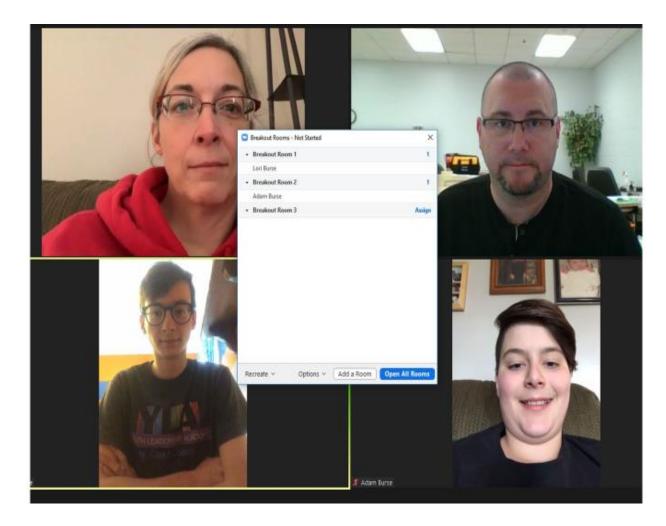
Breakout Rooms

- assign participants to patrols or groups by task
- give time limits and control movement
- great tool for your patrol leaders
- remember YPT

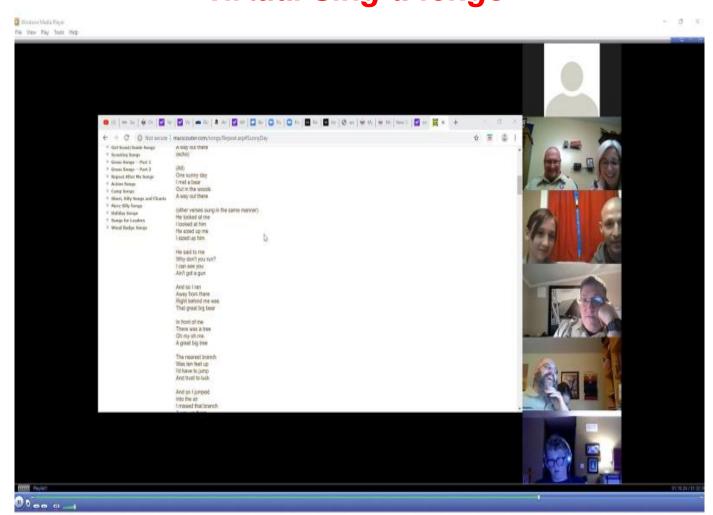# Here are our adult leaders discussing our plans during the patrol break out rooms:

Other ways to keep your scouts engaged during virtual meetings include:
Virtual Sing-a-longs

Virtual "skits and demos."

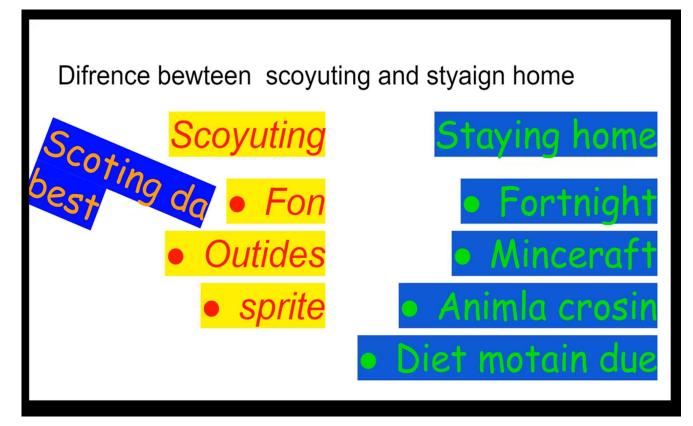In this example, one of our patrols created a skit and presentation about the differences between scouting in person and scouting from home and had each member discuss one of these fine points.
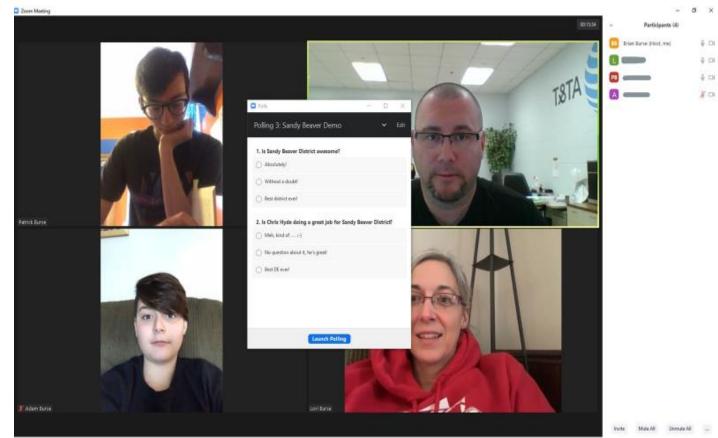
Polling and Elections

Without the ability to meet in person, we were still able to hold Troop elections for leadership positions, OA elections, and take opinion polls using the polling feature in Zoom.

Before we move on . . .

- **Let's take some time to discuss some important things to consider when meeting virtually.**

  – *CONNECTION QUALITY IS KEY!*

    - A weak signal (wifi or otherwise) can cause lag in video and audio. It can be very helpful to use the dial-in feature directly from a phone so that your video and audio are using separate connections. This can greatly improve meeting quality. A high-quality speakerphone or similar device is highly recommended for hosting.

    - Most of our scouts are accustomed to virtual meetings, but may still need to be reminded that movement and noise can disrupt the meeting.

Fun things to do in a Virtual Meeting

- **Virtual Jeopardy:** we created a series of categories based upon scouting skills and used a template that was available online to have the patrols compete for points

- **Scavenger Hunt:** we gave clues to normal household and scouting related items and gave the scouts time to find them and present them to the group for points.

- **Skills Races**

- **Patrol Feud**

- **Talent Show**

- **Kahoot!** An online resource for interactive and creative games that many scouts are familiar with through school.

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- Christmas Song Name That Tune:

Christmas Song Name That Tune!

For our purposes and to make it possible to use Zoom, our patrols will compete against each other in the style of "Family Feud," having had the order of play determined by each patrol leader selecting a number (pick a number between one and 20 . . .).

In round 1, we'll play the first 5 to 10 seconds of a song. Your patrol will then have 10 seconds to confer with your patrol members.

You can guess the artist, song title, album, or writer of the song, and get one point for each correct answer.

For two extra points, they can sing some lyrics (not just the title or well-known refrain) from the song.

If you're not able to come up with any of these answers, your patrol will lose their turn and the music will be played again giving the other two patrols the opportunity to steal by buzzing in (raising their hand) before the other remaining patrol. The first to buzz in will have 10 seconds to confer with their members.

Here's where it gets wild. If you buzz in on a steal and fail to provide the correct info, you will have 2 points deducted from your score – so you'll want to be sure of your answer before you raise your hand.

If neither of the remaining patrols raise their hand, we will consider this a "pass" and no points will be deducted.

Each patrol would then take their turn, in order, until we've reached a time limit of the Scoutmasters' choosing.

In round 2, the clips will be shortened to less than 5 seconds. All other rules still apply.

After round two, should there be a desire to continue or need for a tie breaker, the sound clip will be shortened to a mere blip of sound (1 to 2 seconds or LESS) and patrols will only have 5 seconds to confer.

The winning patrol will be named the *"Champions of Christmas Song That Tune"* until next year, when we hope to be able to meet in person, again!

B) Resources for Planning Meetings

- **Some examples of where you can find tools at your disposal:**
  - **"Bryan on Scouting"** – a Scouting magazine blog designed for BSA's Adult Leaders. Bryan answers questions that are very current and applicable and offers immediate advice and current policy information. You can subscribe to the mailing list to receive regular updates and resources. One recent message was about organizing a videogame tournament for your Scouts.
  - **FaceBook Forums/Discussion Groups:** There is valuable information to be gleaned from our peers around the country and the world and FB can provide the ability to speak with them. Search for "*Scoutmaster Corner*" and "*Boy Scout Volunteers*" or "*Cub Scout Volunteers*" to request access or follow their pages. There are supportive leaders with plenty of know-how who are willing to share their advice and experiences, including ways to keep virtual meetings exciting. Just be ready to filter out the negative.
  - **Virtual Museum Tours / Guest Speakers:** a quick Google search will reveal a number of available tours at well known institutions, some of which are even offering tours that are specific to rank or Merit Badge Requirements.
  - **ScoutSmarts:** a website hosted and run by an Eagle Scout, this is a wonderful resource for virtual meetings and all things Eagle. You can join Cole's mailing list for regular updates.
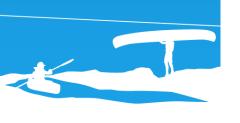
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Digital Communication (part C)

C) Means of Direct Communication

- It's very important to be able to communicate with all of the members of your unit and to be able to distinguish between groups of members for simplicity.

- Remember YPT, always keeping adults and parents included in your messages.

- There are many free programs/apps available that can be very useful tools:

  - Remind 101 – free app/service that allows for creation of multiple groups (Troop, PLC, Committee Members)
    - Attach documents and links to your messages

  - Band / Group Text

  - Email Distribution
    - Great for large messages with attachments and links
    - Keep the important stuff at the top of the message. It's easy to lose your readers with too much information.
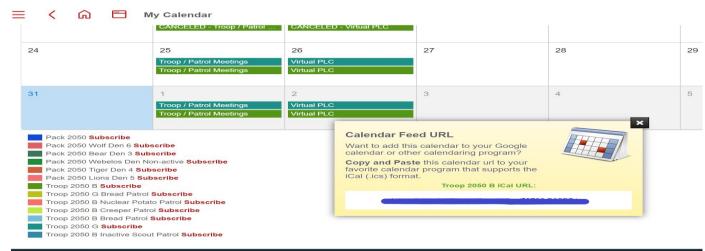
Means of Direct Communication (cont.)

- ## Scoutbook!
  - If you're able to link your members to their Scoutbook accounts, it can be a very useful tool.
    - Messaging by group (email)
    - Information sharing and advancement tracking
    - Permission slips, etc.
  - **Calendar:** your unit's Scoutbook Calendar can be exported for easy distribution. It can also be added as an RSS feed to Outlook or Google calendars and imported to many devices as an iCal feed. ***Changes to the calendar update on your devices automatically!***

More Means of Direct Communication:

- **Social Media & Internet:**

  - *FaceBook / Instagram / Twitter*, etc. These can be great tools for sharing information and achievements with your troop and others. Please remember that social media can also be dangerous and your unit's sites are best if run by or intensely monitored by adult leadership. For FaceBook, BSA policy prohibits closed groups, but encourages open pages. Our Council and District operate pages and share great information.

  - A Unit website can be an extremely useful tool for communicating and housing information. They do require knowledge of managing/creating a site require regular maintenance and upkeep.

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Still More Means of Direct Communication:

- ## GOOGLE!!!
  - The Google platform is one that is not only easy to use, but that most of our scouts are very familiar with as they're using many of the available tools in school.
  - A Google Classroom for your unit can be a simple way to communicate and share with your scouts, leaders, and parents.
    - You can share links, chat about meeting plans, share documents, and have a place for your PLC and patrols to talk to one another in a secure location.
    - Closed to those who have your classroom code.
    - Caution: some scouts have had trouble logging in to the troop classroom due to limitations on their school provided email account and have needed to use a different email account to log in.
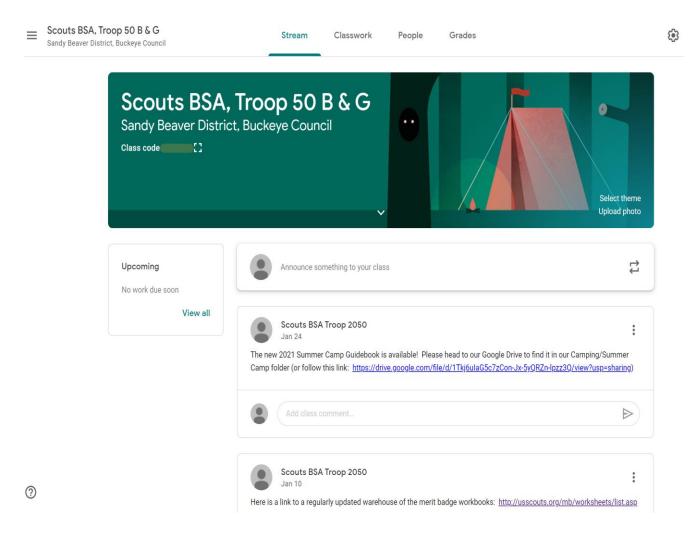 - A Google Drive account
    - A shared Google Drive account can serve your unit as a warehouse for documentation and important unit resources.
  - Google Forms
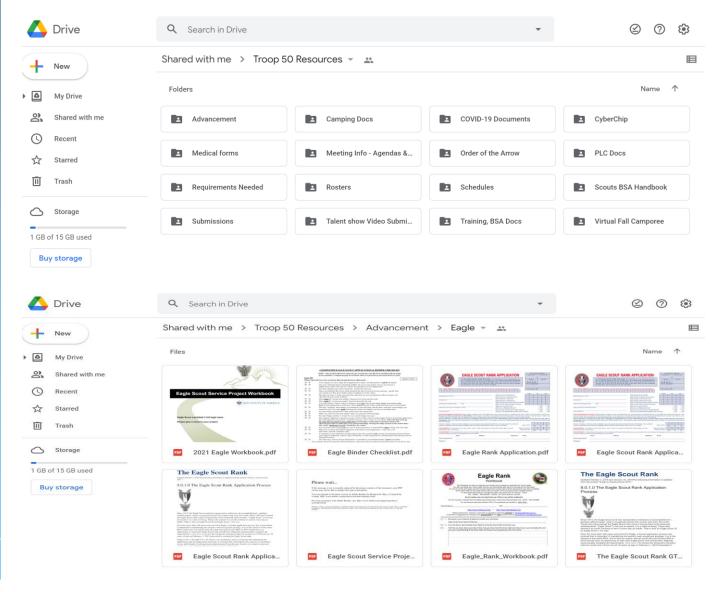   - A very useful way to have forms filled electronically or take surveys.

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Google Classroom:

Google Drive:

Google Forms:

2) Integration and adaption of new-found tools to increase effectiveness as leaders

- **So far, we've learned about some of the many tools available to us as leaders.**

- **Now, let's talk about ways we can continue to use them.**

  - Our landscape and the restrictions we face seem to have changed daily over the last 12 months. As leaders, we have had to adapt and become flexible to continue to provide a quality program for our scouts. Here are some ways we found success and ways that success can translate into effective scouting moving forward.

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How our troop has adapted -

- Using virtual platforms, we've been able to hold regular troop, patrol, committee, and PLC meetings - rarely missing a scheduled event.

- Our PLC has become more involved in all aspects of planning and it's not unusual for our youth leaders to meet weekly or even more often, as needed – virtually – with or without adult direction.

- Our patrol leaders have been able to utilize the tools at hand (FaceTime, Zoom, etc.) to work with their members for planning, skills assessment and teaching, and recording of rank requirements.

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How we've continued to adapt:

- As restrictions were adjusted, we found ways to meet the needs of our scouts, first by allowing them to decide how best to proceed.

- Our PLC decided to hold a vote and planned to work on Merit Badges as groups. We held classes outside to facilitate proper social distancing.

- We were able to camp as a "troop" by reserving multiple camp sites in a council camp, maintaining safe distancing and following food handling practices, while continuing to work on merit badges and rank requirements..

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Continuing, still:

- We made numerous submissions to the council's Virtual Fall Camporee

- We held a drive-in Court of Honor, livestreaming our opening ceremony from our scout room to our Facebook page so spectators could still participate and maintain social distancing. In the parking lot, we broadcast the presentation of rank, Merit Badges, and other awards over FM radio to parents' cars and they honked their horns in celebration of each scout's achievements.

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Moving back to in person meetings:

- As we continue to adapt and apply what we've learned, it's apparent that some of our "virtual" tools won't be leaving us. We've absorbed the habits and tools we developed through quarantine and restriction and will be able to continue to streamline processes and be better communicators than before the pandemic.

- In order to get us back to our "normal" version of scouting, we must make certain concessions and be prepared to make concessions. Let's look at some of those possibilities.

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Back to the Chartered Org:

- **We, as leaders, must maintain a solid relationship with our Chartered Organizations. It has been my experience, that this relationship has not only been built over years of trust and cooperation, but through good communication.**

- **It is imperative that we maintain an open channel with our COR and Executives and work together to solidify plans to return to scouting indoors.**

- **Many of you may have already had some success in this regard, but documentation is key to moving forward.**

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Documentation is Key!

- **In order to begin meeting at our Chartered Organization, we held virtual discussions and agreed to a set of rules and guidelines along with a waiver form that each scout's parent and each adult leader would need to agree upon and acknowledge with a signature.**

- **We also designed a form that is used for each meeting to record temperatures and attendance, as well as the location of each meeting within the building for the sake of contact tracing and proper cleaning.**

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3) Policies & Practices

Now that we've discussed many of the ways to apply available technology along with ways to get back to scouting, let's talk briefly about some of the important policies and practices we must observe to make scouting in a pandemic a success.

– _Talent Release_: When planning to post a scout's image on a website, social media post, or training slide, its important that you obtain permission to do so. A talent release form is available in Scoutbook, but it is specific to that platform. A form can easily be created for your unit and filled out physically or electronically using Google docs or fillable PDF.
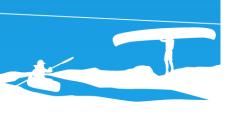
Sample Talent Release:

Troops and Pack 2050 Talent Release Form

I hereby assign and grant to the Boy Scouts of America the right and permission to use and publish the photographs/film/videotapes/electronic representations and/or sound recordings of me or persons for whom I am responsible made by the Boy Scouts of America, its agents, representatives or volunteers, and I hereby release the Boy Scouts of America from any and all liability from such use and publication.

I hereby authorize the reproduction, sale, copyright, exhibit, broadcast, electronic storage and/or distribution of said photographs/film/videotapes/electronic representations and/or sound recordings without limitation at the discretion of the Boy Scouts of America and its agents and I specifically waive any right to any compensation I may have for any of the foregoing.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Scout/Participant Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Guardian Telephone Number: _____

   Troop   Pack   Today's Date:_____

Signature of Participant: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (if participant is under 18): _____

Signature of Guardian: _____

Electronic Signature (in lieu of) – In the absence of the ability to submit your signature or image of your signature, you may choose to electronically endorse this document by entering your initials (as the participant or legal guardian for those under the age of 18) in the space below:

_____

Additional Policy Considerations:

- **Always confer with council website and officials in the event that you have questions about a policy or practice and be prepared to do what's asked of you. As leaders, we must set a good example for our scouts, always working to comply with expectations and restrictions that are designed to keep us all safe and healthy.**

- **The BSA, our local council, and its committees apply the recommendations of the CDC and state and local agencies when setting fourth guidelines and restrictions.**

- **Be responsive and ready to adapt – these rules can (and probably will) change!**

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In closing:

- **Never forget that the success of our scouts and our units relies on the support we receive from our volunteers and their families.**

- **I would be remiss if I didn't mention the wonderful resources made available to our scouts throughout the pandemic by the Buckeye Council. Be sure to browse all of the HomeScouting and Restart Guidelines found at www.BuckeyeCouncil.org**

- **A *special thanks* goes to our immensely talented team of staff members and volunteers who worked so hard to keep our program going and to give us opportunities like an online Baden Powell Institute!**

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Resource Links:

- **Zoom**
- **Webex**
- **Google Meet**
- **Cisco AnyConnect**
- **Kahoot!**
- **Bryan on Scouting**
- **ScoutSmarts - virtual-scout-zoom-meeting-ideas**
- **Remind**
- **Band**
- **Import or Subscribe to a Calendar - Outlook**
- **Subscribe to a Calendar – Google**
- **Import or Subscribe to a Calendar - iPhone or iPad**
- **Create a Google Classroom**
- **Share Folders in Google Drive**
- **Create a Google Form**

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