



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF AMERICA**

8 Things to Do to Start Your Club's Virtual Programming

So you've decided to start delivering virtual programming to your members. Congratulations! You are joining Boys & Girls Clubs all over the country doing the same thing. While every Club's virtual experiences will look a little different (just like our "normal" programming does), here are eight things you will need to do to get started on the right foot.

1. Decide what your initial programming will be.

When you are starting out, keep in mind that LESS is MORE. It will take time for staff and members to adjust to virtual programming, and that's ok! Play to your staff strengths. For example, if you have a staff member that loves to lead STEM activities or knows how to lead aerobics, start there! Choose a couple of activities that work across all age groups. Need ideas? Join the [BGCA Youth Development Community on Facebook](#) to connect with staff across the country or download weekly schedules created by BGCA at [MyFuture.net/HowItWorks](#).

Another good idea is to conduct a Needs Assessment, which is a survey to better understand what your members and families need or want from your virtual programming. You can find a [sample template](#) on [BGCA.net/virtualprogramming](#).

2. Just like always- Safety First!

During virtual programming, just like "normal," safety is our number one priority. Make sure that however you are communicating with youth, whether live or in chat or on the phone, there is never one to one contact between a staff member and a young person. This will have an impact on how you create staff schedules, so keep it in mind as you plan.

3. Make sure all youth 9 and older have MyFuture accounts, and that you have a staff person at each site designated to be the approver.

MyFuture is a web platform that enables Club members and staff to engage with program content, learn new skills, earn recognition, and share media with peers. MyFuture is great for virtual programming. From media making to Healthy Habits, you can easily track individual completion of over 185 activities. For detailed instructions on how to set up accounts, visit [MyFuture.net/HowItWorks](#). Once all youth have an account, you can easily pair activities on it with your other programming options.

(Note: MyFuture member accounts can be created for members 6 and older but consider that members 6-8 are less likely to remember their username & password, and may need more help to complete activities.)

4. Going to do live interactive programming? Get parent /guardian permission first.

You will need parent or guardian permission for youth to engage in any interactive virtual programming. Traditional Club internet policies do not cover the same permissions that are required for this kind of interaction. To download editable templates, visit [BGCA.net/virtualprogramming](#).

5. Choose your platforms and gather what you'll need to make them work.

You'll need to pick a technology platform to deliver your programming. Platforms like Google Hangouts, Facebook Live, or Zoom are options for live interactive programs, while YouTube, Vimeo, and social media like Facebook or Instagram are super easy ways to provide prerecorded video or links. Gather whatever tools you will need and be sure to test them. If you are unsure where to start, we've got more in-depth guidance under "Core Resources" on [BGCA.net/virtualprogramming](https://www.bgca.net/virtualprogramming).

6. Create your first schedule.

Again, it's a good idea to start small. Try planning one week of virtual programming that includes a variety of content. Depending on what works for your staff and Club community, maybe try a couple of things, like a recorded video that you post to social media, a Facebook Live session, or run an interactive program. If you are doing live sessions, remember to coordinate your schedule with local school schedules. After your first week is done, you can look back and see what was most successful.

7. Let your community know about Virtual Club.

Virtual Club is a new thing, so you'll want to communicate your plans to both your Club families and to the community. While social media is the easiest, consider fliers at places like grocery stores or community centers to draw in new youth. Create announcements that your community partners and board members can easily share with their networks. When it comes to your members, reach out to them individually where you can, through phone calls or texts, remembering to have two staff involved at all times.

8. Get started and HAVE FUN!

All of the [Five Key Elements for Positive Youth Development](#), especially **FUN**, are more important than ever. Remember, Virtual Club is not school, so keep your programs and activities light and in line with what your youth enjoy. Your enthusiasm will be infectious, and your comforting presence will create emotional safety even through the screen.

Once you are up and running, here are some next steps to consider:

- Connect with local schools and other community partners to see how you can align your communication and efforts. Can a link to your programming go out in school emails? Can you promote a local food bank on your social media?
- Once you are comfortable, try some new things and see what sticks with your youth. After a few recorded videos, maybe try a couple of live sessions. After stand-alone high-yield activities, try running sequential programs like the all-new [Money Matters](#).

For the latest in programming and training resources from Boys & Girls Clubs of America, visit [BGCA.net/virtualprogramming](https://www.bgca.net/virtualprogramming). For information on managing stress and anxiety for you and your Club families, check out the [ClubX Blog's special coronavirus series](#).