

Knife Safety

& Other Tools

SAFETY

- When instructing girls, have an approximate ratio of one adult to every four girls.
- Be sure to tell the girls that they cannot handle the knives until they are instructed to do so.
- Girls cannot handle knives until an “Outdoor 2” trained adult is present to teach them how to use it.
- When instructing girls, have them establish their “safety circle” with enough room to walk between girls. A “safety circle” is a ring about an arm’s length in all directions around an individual.
- Girls should always double check their “safety circle” before opening a knife.



Knowing how to handle and use knives is an important skill for girls to learn so they can have a sense of independence, they can take ownership in tasks that require the use of knives, and they will have the necessary knowledge and skills in case of an emergency. Girls may not use sharp tools until they have been instructed in the safe use of the tool by a trained adult. The girls must always be supervised when using a sharp tool. Teaching knife safety skills is extremely important. **Never** assume girls know good safety practices just because they’ve used a knife at home. Instead, establish some expected safety rules under all conditions, and expect each girl to follow them at all times. Allow the girls to do the work even though you are concerned about safety. The only way they can learn to work with knives and learn to handle them safely and confidently is to get their hands on a knife and practice. Practicing in different conditions will help them gain ability and learn safety precautions. Girls who gain respect for tools at a young age generally treat all tools with consideration and respect. This knowledge will pay off in other ways as they grow older.

Opening & Closing Knives

- Always use both hands to open a folding knife.
- Keep fingers on the sides of the knife.
- When closing, keep fingers to the side and refrain from wrapping fingers around the handle into which the blade will be inserted.
- Always open and close a knife slowly and intentionally.
- Keep the knife closed when not in use or when being carried.
- Close the knife before passing it to someone.

Caring for Knives

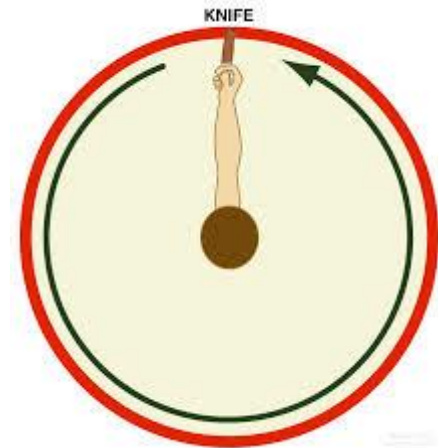
- Keep knives dry and off the ground
- Keep knives away from dirt and sand
- Keep knives away from open flames and extreme heat
- Do not use your knife to pry things open, to hammer, or to “chop” on wood
- Use your knife appropriately to cut, scrape, or whittle wood, food, or rope and not on rocks or metal.
- Carefully clean your knife when you’re done using it.

Knife Etiquette

- Knives should not be used to deface or disfigure any property, plant, or animals.
- Knives are not toys and should not be shown, waved, or thrown in jest or in a threatening manner.

Knife Use

- Maintain a “safety circle”.
- Hold knife by its handle. Do not place your thumb or finger on the blade.
- Use only a sharp knife. Dull knives are dangerous.
- Keep a firm grip on the handle.
- When scraping or whittling, use “pushing” strokes away from your body rather than toward.
- Do not throw your knife.
- Before walking or running, put your knife down or close it and put it away.
- Close a knife before passing it to someone. If the knife does not close, hold the dull edge of the blade with the sharp edge facing the ground. Offer the handle to the intended receiver. The receiver should acknowledge that she or he has received it and has a grip on it by saying “Thank you.”



First Aid for Knife Cuts

- If you have a severe, deep cut with lots of bleeding, apply direct pressure, elevate the wound above the heart, and get help immediately. If you are assisting someone who is cut, use latex gloves and sterile gauze when possible. If you do not have gloves, have the injured person apply pressure themselves.
- If the cut is not bleeding severely, use lots of water to rinse the cut. Then, using gloves, apply antibiotic wash and ointment. Blot the cut dry before applying a sterile dressing or bandage.

Construct a Paper Jackknife

(When facilitating this training, have an example paper jackknife to show leaders)

When working with younger Girl Scouts and with girls who are completely new to knife safety, it is highly recommended that you use “fake” knives for safety purposes. Use the pattern to construct your own paper or cardboard jackknives. Older girls can also make paper jackknives to use when teaching younger Scouts for a troop project.

Materials:

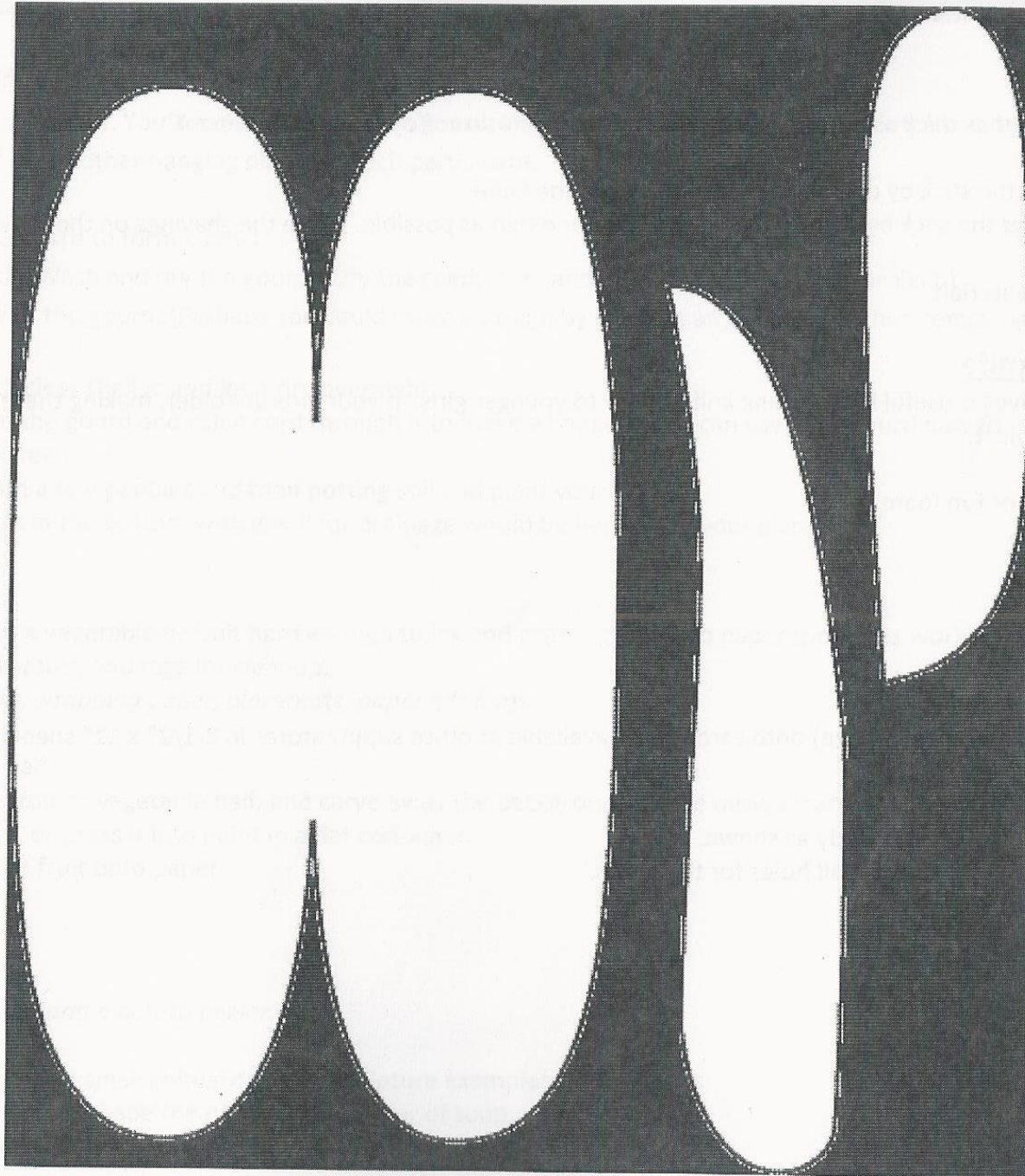
- Construction paper, card stock, cardboard, or fun foam
- Two $\frac{3}{4}$ " brads
- Knife Pattern (see appendix)
- Scissors
- Hole punch

Directions:

1. Photocopy or trace the pattern onto the material
2. Cut out the three pieces
3. Fold the body of the knife in two
4. Place the two knife “blades” into the knife body
5. Use the hole punch or scissors to create small holes for the brads
6. Insert the brads and flatten the ends

Use these paper jackknives when teaching the following topics. First show them with the paper knife, and then have them practice the same technique with their own paper knives.

Paper Knife Pattern



Ax & Hatchet Safety

Because of its size and the way in which it is used, an ax can be more dangerous than other wood tools. Remove the sheath only when you are prepared to use your ax correctly. Give it your full attention.

When splitting wood, wear safety goggles or full-coverage sunglasses. Work gloves are also helpful to prevent splinters and blisters. Always wear sturdy boots when you are chopping with an ax. Leather won't stop a blade from hitting your foot, but good boots may limit the extent of an injury. Always stand up to use an ax or a hatchet.

Make sure you have plenty of room and use your "safety circle" when handling and using an ax. Your safety circle must be larger to reflect the larger size of an ax. Check your clearance by holding your ax by the head. Slowly rotate the handle at arm's length all around you and over your head. Make sure you are far away from branches and other overhanging objects that might get in the way. While you are cutting, be certain other people stay at least 10 feet away.

You will most often use an ax to chop kindling or make smaller pieces of firewood from rounds. For this, you will need a flat surface on which to chop. Cutting small sticks and splitting large chunks of wood known as rounds are best done on a chopping block, which is a piece of log that has been sawed and turned upright to provide a flat surface. It should be about 2 feet high so that you won't have to lean down much as you work. A chopping block is important for safety too. If you swing your ax badly, the bit will probably hit the block instead of flying on toward your feet. If you do not have a chopping block, a flat surface will have to suffice. To chop rounds with your ax, stand with your feet wide apart and firmly hold the ax handle. Extend your arms and the ax to meet the top of the round on the chopping block. Raise

To chop kindling, it is recommended that you use a smaller ax or hatchet. After splitting some rounds, find smaller pieces that can be easily chopped into slivers for kindling. Hold the smaller piece of wood with a "chicken stick" rather than with your hand. The "chicken stick" will protect your fingers. With the hatchet, tap the small piece of wood until it sticks. Once the hatchet is stuck in the wood, tap the wood on the chopping block or the ground as the hatchet works its way through the wood. Repeat until you have several small pieces of wood to use as kindling.

Safe Practice makes Safety Success

Please be advised that you should practice wood splitting techniques in a safe setting and, if possible, with a person who has experience splitting wood. You can also find valuable instructional videos on Youtube.

Safe carrying

Place a sheath over an ax blade whenever it is not in use. Carry an ax at your side with one hand, the blade turned out from your body. If you stumble, toss the ax away from you as you fall. Never carry an ax over your shoulder.

Safe storage

Sheathe your ax and store it under the dining fly or in a tent. On the trail, a sheathed ax can be tied or strapped to the outside of your pack.

Safe handling

To pass an ax to another person, hold the handle near the knob with the head down. Pass the ax with the bit facing out at right angles between you and the other person. When your partner has a grip on the handle, she should say, "Thank you." That's your signal to release your hold.

