

## SCOUT SURVIVAL SKILLS RESOURCE PACK: KNIFE SAFETY

### Additional Leaders Notes

Leaders should print off and read the main Scout Survival Skills: Knife Safety resource pack, which can be found at <http://scouts.org.uk/victorinox>. This provides Scouts and leaders with information on knife law, knife safety and knife maintenance. It also outlines some of the main tools on a Swiss Army Knife, as well as lockable and fixed blade knives, what jobs they can be used for and how to use them. There are activities at the end of the pack for Scouts to complete which will help them achieve the part of the badge requirements based on knife or multi-tool skills.

The Survival Skills Badge Requirements asks Scouts to:

- *Show that you know basic knife or multi-tool skills, including safety and sharpening.*

Advice for running a knife skills session with your Scout section:

- Carry out a full risk assessment before starting any practical knife skills activity.
- Familiarise yourself with the current law and safety aspects of using and carrying a knife in case you are questioned on it. Do some extra research at <https://www.gov.uk/buying-carrying-knives>
- Spend time on knife law and safety aspects with your Scouts before beginning any practical aspects.
- Ensure Scouts are not carrying tools or knives on their person and make sure any tools used during a session are collected up at the end and stored safely.
- Contact parents in advance to let them know that you will be doing a session on knife safety and safe knife use for survival skills, they may have objections so have some other activities in mind for Scouts to do.
- Practice your own knife skills before beginning any practical sessions with your section. Only when you are confident that you can explain and demonstrate knife skills to your Scouts should you run a session.
- Work in small manageable groups of perhaps 3 or 4 scouts to one leader. With younger ages this may need to be as low as one to one and the activity dependant on their ability.
- Ensure there is adequate space around each person during a knife skills session and that loose clothing or hair is tied back.
- Start with a small knife such as a Swiss Army Knife and complete small tasks such as using the small blade. Build up to a larger blade as you become more confident and dexterous.
- Work on these activities over the course of a few weeks, you do not want to rush knife skills.
- Make sure there is a first aid kit and first aider on hand. Practice treatment and dressing of cuts before beginning a practical exercise.
- Plan another activity for those Scouts whose parents do not want them to take part in practical activities using knives or for Scouts who may not be ready for this type of activity. Perhaps work on other aspects of the survival skills badge.

Knife skill activities to try with your Scouts section.

To get your Scouts used to using a tool with a blade practice some simple tasks.

- Kindling: Create kindling by carefully carving thin strips off a piece of seasoned wood.
- Feathersticks: This is slightly harder than making wood shavings as the thin strips need to remain attached to the main piece of wood.
- Digging stick: Whittle a stick into a point by taking small pieces of wood off the end of a piece of wood. This can be used for digging or making holes to put shelter poles in the ground.
- Chopsticks: once Scouts have some experience of using a tool with a blade you could try this chopstick making activity in small groups  
[http://scouts.org.uk/media/533215/GA16\\_Victorinox.pdf](http://scouts.org.uk/media/533215/GA16_Victorinox.pdf)

The following notes are important if you are going to use a fixed blade knife as part of your survival skills activities.

### **How to withdraw a knife from its sheath safely.**

The hand holding the sheath must be completely clear of the blade when it is withdrawn. This image shows good positioning because the hand holding the sheath is well away from the blade.



This image shows poor technique. There is every chance that the fingers of the holding hand would be cut by the knife as it is withdrawn from the sheath.



### **Some additional tips for safe knife use.**

If you are new to knives, take small, measured pieces of wood off to start with.

Always be aware of where your fingers are and cut away from yourself and others in a clutter free area.

NEVER cut a piece of wood with your holding hand in the way of the blade's direction of travel.

If you are cutting wood in a seated position, select a clear area and keep the wood and knife well away from your body and other people.

This shows the correct way of sitting and carving. Elbows should be on knees with the work piece well away from the legs and the body. Cutting close to your body is not sensible because you run the risk of injuring yourself.

Holding the wood down the side of the leg on your cutting side allows for maximum strength to be applied to the cut, this can be helped by placing the bottom of the wood on the edge of a log or similar. Never rest the wood on a hard surface like a rock as you run the risk of damaging the blade.



## Passing a Knife Safely

While we would suggest the safest way of passing a knife to another person is to sheath it first then pass it over, these diagrams show you how an unsheathed knife can be safely passed from one person to another.

Passing a knife safely from one person to another should be done slowly and with care. Do not pass an unsheathed knife in a busy environment. If in doubt about passing a knife safely put it carefully back in its sheath before passing to another person.

Start with the standard punch grip.



Slowly loosen your middle, ring and little finger from the handle.



Use your thumb and index finger to slowly turn the knife to a vertical position (with the blade uppermost) whilst slowly moving the remaining fingers behind the handle.



Finish off the positioning by taking the knife backwards to approximately sixty degrees so that the spine of the blade finishes over your hand and fingers behind the blade are roughly lined up.



This positioning method allows you to prepare a knife to be passed without looking down so that you can see that the recipient is ready to receive it. Even if the knife is taken quickly, there is no risk of it cutting your hand.



If a knife isn't being used it needs carefully placing in its sheath. The only exception is fish or game prep when it stays in the same place after every use.

Thank you to Austin Lill and Terry Longhurst for contributing to this resource.  
Safety Photographs by Paul Kirtley.

#### Disclaimer

The Scout Association recognises that bladed and sharply pointed hand-tools are important for working on survival skills. We promote the safe use of knives used as a tool reiterating UK Law. Knives with a fixed non-folding blade, a folding knife with a blade over 3 inches in length or a folding knife which locks in place require the person carrying such a knife in public (whatever age) to have good reason for carrying the tool. It is illegal to sell such a tool to a person under 18.

The Scout Association holds no responsibility for injuries that have occurred as a result of using this resource. Whenever a knife is to be used in an activity a risk assessment must be made and suitable controls put in place.

The information supplied is correct as of March 2015. It is the responsibility of the person undertaking the task to check for up to date information on knife law. For latest information check <https://www.gov.uk/buying-carrying-knives>