

# Knives, Axes and Saws



Knives, axes and saws are useful tools that we will often use during Scouting activities, especially when camping. If you are going to use any of these items you need to know how to use them safely and how to look after them.

This section will give an introduction to these tools but, as with any skill, we learn more by actually doing, so we will aim to do practical sessions on some of our Troop meeting nights and also on camp.

## Essential equipment



If you are going to use a knife, an axe or a saw you will need one of these on standby, and know how to use it! One of the best pieces of advice when using sharp tools is:

"Remember, the pink things are fingers!"

If you mess about or let your concentration lapse, even for a second, this could be the result.



When you first start to learn to use a knife you WILL eventually cut yourself. How often you cut yourself and how badly is entirely up to you.

So go and think about that very carefully for a while and come back in a few days when we will look in more detail at the tools we will be using.

# Saws



We will start off with saws.

Although they don't hold as much fascination for Scouts as axes and knives, saws are still an extremely useful tool on camp. In fact saws are probably more useful than axes in most situations.

Most firewood on Scout camps these days tends to be in the form of pallets. Axes do not work well when trying to break pallets up, it is much easier to cut them into pieces using a saw.

Similarly with branches, anything thicker than your wrist is better off being cut up with a saw. It is quicker, more efficient and safer.

On camp we use bow saws like those shown in the photo. They have an extremely sharp blade and can, like all sharp tools, cause a severe injury if used inappropriately. A cut from a saw will most likely be a torn, jagged rip in the skin, which will not heal quickly and will leave a very obvious scar.

When not in use the blade must be masked. The saw at the top is protected with a purpose built leather mask.

We don't sharpen saw blades. When they have started to lose their edge we just replace the blade with a new one. As with all sharp tools, if you use a saw with a blunt blade it is more likely to stick or jump around as you cut and so is much more likely to cause an injury.

As with all metal tools, they should be carefully dried after use to prevent rust and given a light coat of oil prior to storage.

# Axes



Axes are very useful on camp, especially when splitting thick logs to make smaller pieces for the fire.

However, as with all sharp tools they can be extremely dangerous.

Axes should be kept sharp as a blunt axe is more likely to stick or bounce with an increased risk of injury.

A mishap with an axe is highly likely to result in a very severe injury. For this reason axes must only be used by people trained in their use and must only be used in properly marked out chopping areas. The person using the axe must be wearing sturdy boots, not trainers, in order to offer some protection from the bit in case of an accident. Although not compulsory, it is also wise to wear safety goggles as chopping often cause splinters of wood to fly into the air. When not in use axes must be kept sheathed with a "mask"





The photo above shows a selection of axes with their bits protected by leather masks. Before using an axe you should make sure the bit has no nicks or dents and is sharp, the haft is in good condition (especially important with wooden hafts) and that the wedge, if that particular axe design has one, is secure. If the wedge is insecure or the head is otherwise loose the axe must not be used as there is a real danger it will fly off when swung, potentially injuring anyone nearby.