



1st Kesgrave Scout Group

Twelve Acre Approach, Kesgrave, Suffolk IP5 1JF

Name of activity, section, event, and location	1 st Kesgrave Scout Group - Knife, Axe and Saw	Date of risk assessment	1 Mar 2025	Name of person who undertook this risk assessment	Alan Comber (working with others)
		Date of next review	1 Apr 2026		

This document covers the use of knife, axe and saw. It should be read in conjunction with the section meeting and events risk assessment which covers generic items.

Hazard identified? Risks from it?	Who is at risk?	How are the risks already controlled? What extra controls are needed?	What has changed that needs to be thought about and controlled?
A hazard is something that may cause harm or damage. The risk is the harm may occur from the hazard.	For example: young people, adult volunteers, visitors	Controls are ways of making the activity safer by removing or reducing the risk from it. For example, you may use a different piece of equipment, or you might change the way you do the activity.	Keep checking throughout the activity in case you need to change what you are doing or even stop the activity. This is a great place to add comments which will be used as part of the review.
Protrusions, slips, trips, falls, collisions – injuries to people moving around	All present	Ensure all wood is stored / stacked safely.	
Storage Area - injuries to people collecting and returning kit / equipment, theft etc	All present	Ensure there are designated areas set aside for the storage of knives, axes, saws and associated kit (eg saw horses, wood splitters etc). Ensure axes, saws and associated kit are not left unattended and are stored/stacked safely when not in use and out of the way. Ideally in a locked area. Guards and covers should be in place on blades. Brief scouts to keep out of these areas.	
Kit / Equipment – injuries to people during the activity.		Inspect knives, axes, and saws before use for faults, damage and sharpness. Never use knives, axes and saws if the parts are not aligned and held together securely or if the head is loose. Don't use a blunt knife, axe, or saw which is likely to slip or bounce on impact or be difficult to control easily. It is also inefficient in cutting wood.	

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		Never use the axe as a mallet or hammer. Never bury the head of an axe or knife blade in the ground. It will blunt the blade and potentially be a trip hazard. Never allow members to bring or use personal knives, axes and saws without authorising and inspecting them. If members bring their own, ensure they are suitably store when not in use. Consider having a permit scheme for use of knife, axe and saw to show competence.	
Activity Area – injuries during the activity.	All present	Ensure that knife, axe and saw work is carried out on a surface that is as level as possible. Ensure the location is away from people and structures (tents etc) that can be damaged by flying wood or the sharp implements being used. The area should be organised to minimise risks ie keep any tables, food preparation areas, wood piles, fires etc away from the cutting area to allow free movement and any chances of people getting hurt by cutting tools or wood springing up etc. The area immediately around the cutting area should not be walked through; only individuals participating in the activity should be in close proximity. For chopping/sawing areas create a clearly marked, designated area, and cordon/rope off. Cordon off any areas that need to be for safety reasons and to make inaccessible to others and the public.	
Cutting Activity – injuries to people caused by equipment used during knife, saw and axe.	All present	<u>General Safety</u> Ensure wood is cut in a controlled area. If young people participate, they are supervised by leaders. Ensure the appropriate tool for the type of material being cut is used. Knives should only be used for whittling or cutting small pieces of wood. Axes should be used for medium sized branches/logs and saws for larger branches/logs. Count out knives, axes and saws and be clear on how many are being used. Count them back in to make sure they are all returned. Ensure knives, axes and saws are not left unattended at any point when being used for an activity. Don't use knives, axes and saws in poor light. Don't use knives, axes and saws on a living tree and never fell a tree without the permission of the landowner. Some wood can be harder than others. Please take account of this when cutting. Participants should be briefed on using knives, saws and axes and cover: • clothing and footwear to be worn. • behaviour including stressing the importance of being responsible when using sharp tools. • distancing and being mindful of those around you when using these tools.	

		• taking care when cutting or snapping wood. • being careful with wood to avoid splinters including the wearing of gloves if necessary. • knife law, safety, safe cutting and handling techniques etc. • What to do in an emergency. If required provide training/demonstrations on using the equipment and carrying out the activity. At the end of each session, collect, make safe and stack / safely store any tools used. <u>Personal Safety</u> Ensure appropriate footwear and clothing is worn. • Wear strong boots or shoes (ideally leather) for axe and saw work rather than trainers/sports shoes. Do Not wear sandals, crocks etc. • Don't wear scarves, ties, lanyards or any loose clothing or jewellery and tie back long hair to prevent knives, axes and saws from getting snared. Cover sensitive skin areas. Ensure personal possessions are kept away from the cutting area (trip hazard or getting damaged). Stop using knives, axes and saws if tired. This is when accidents occur. Always endeavour to keep your fingers as far away from the blade as possible when cutting. Start with a small knife (such as a Swiss Army Knife), axe and saw and complete small tasks. Build up to a larger blade as people become more confident and dexterous. Use a tool of a size and weight that is suited to the job and the persons level of ability. <u>Transporting / Handing Over</u> Minimise walking with knives, axes and saws. Carry properly. • For axes and saws they should be in your hand with your arm by your side, with the cutting edge facing forward, and your fingers should be out of the way. Mask cutting edge before you carry it. • For clasp knives close them. • For fixed blade knives put them in their sheath. Always pass knives and axes to another person by offering them the head. For saws allow them to hold the opposite end of the frame. <u>Knives.</u> Participants should sit apart as far as possible to reduce the chances of contact (typically at least 2 arm's lengths plus knife lengths between participants.	
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		Explain how to take a knife out of its sheath safely while keeping your fingers away from the blade and/or how to open and close a clasp knife safely. Always cut away from yourself. Never pull the blade towards your body. When knives are not being used they should be sheathed, or clasp knives closed. <u>Axes</u> The chopping area must be at least three axe lengths in radius. (ie an outstretched arm and the length of three axes). Place the chopping block in the centre or make the area large enough if there is more than one block, or someone undertaking sawing activities in the same area. Use a chopping block or equivalent provision below wood being cut before you cut it and chop the wood over the block. Never chop wood on a surface that absorbs the impact (ie directly on the ground, or bouncy surface) or would damage the head if it hit it eg concrete/tarmacked surface etc. Use a kneeling position so if you miss the axe won't follow through to your leg. When splitting wood, use another stick to hold it up so you can keep your fingers away from the area being cut. When not using the axe, put the blade into a chopping block or put its cover on. If in a chopping block make sure that the blade is securely wedged in the grain of the wood and that the shaft does not pose a trip hazard. <u>Saws</u> Gloves should be considered when sawing. Makes sure hands are as far away as possible from the blade as blades tend to bounce especially when starting the cut. Ensure the wood being cut is firmly held in place whilst being cut. Use a sawhorse where available. Do not allow the saw to cut into the ground. This will blunt it. Consider using two handed saws if the wood is thick. When not being used guards should be in place to mask the cutting edge and stored safely. Saws are usually supplied with plastic clip-on masks that fit over the blade.	
Manual Handling – back injuries, strains, cuts, bruises etc	All present	Participants instructed to: - only pick up small sticks and logs. - never carry timber above shoulder height and take care when turning with the wood in order to prevent contact with other people.	
General Behaviour – Inexperience / Lack of competence, over energetic young people leading to loss of control and causing an injury or damage to kit.	All taking part	Participants will only be able to use knives, axes and saws if leaders are sure their behaviour is safe. Participants should be briefed as appropriate to their abilities/knowledge on: - Not playing with knives, axes or saws. - Not throwing knives or axes.	

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		The area immediately around a cutting area should not be walked through; only individuals participating in the activity should be in close proximity. If necessary, consider physically marking out a 'restricted' area. Behaviour will be monitored for horseplay, dangerous activities etc and the activity will be stopped or a cooling off period introduced if the activity gets out of hand or injuries are likely to happen. A clear communication method will be used to stop the activity if necessary.	
Leadership – Inappropriate / Inadequate Leadership	Leaders and Helpers	Numbers should be restricted in the sawing/chopping area. Make sure the activity leader(s) are competent and familiar with using knives, axes and saws. Ideally have a 'floating' leader to keep an eye on the activity when others are engaged with participants	
Peer Led Activities – inadequate training	All present	- Ensure participants are adequately trained and capable of using knives, axes and saws safely. - Ensure a supervision plan is in place.	
First Aid / Injuries that need treatment	All present	Ensure first aid kits have sufficient provision for the types of injury that could occur. Tweezers should be considered to help with removal of splinters. Ensure you have a torch easily and quickly available if the activity takes place at night. Ensure participants can easily move away from the cutting area in the event of an emergency.	