

LESSON PLAN
KNIFE SELECTION, MAINTENANCE, AND USE
(30 Minutes)

MATERIALS REQUIRED

1 knife	1 whetstone
1 <i>Leatherman</i> -type multi-tool	1 sharpening steel
1 dry-erase board/chalk board	1 container 3-in-1 oil
Rags/paper towels	1 container neatsfoot oil
1 small paint brush	1 container of Q-Tips
1 can WD-40	

INTRODUCTION

There are three basic woods tools every Scout should be familiar with. These are the knife, the ax, and the bow or camp saw.

With these three tools a Scout can clear a campsite, build a comfortable shelter and camp furniture, and prepare a fire to keep himself warm and to cook with. In emergencies, the tools allow him to build signal fires, traps and snares to catch game, and defend himself if necessary. These tools also allow him to build other tools to help him survive.

In this period of instruction we will discuss how to select, maintain, and use a knife.

PURPOSE AND MAIN IDEAS

The purpose of this period of instruction is to teach you the proper care, handling, and use of the knife.

We will do this by covering:

- Selecting a knife,
- Maintaining a knife, and
- Using a knife.

Upon completion of this period of instruction you will be able to:

1. Discuss the general characteristics of knives suitable for camping and general survival requirements.
2. Discuss and demonstrate the proper care of knives including storage, cleaning, sharpening, and handling.
3. Discuss and demonstrate the proper use of knives.

BODY

1st Main Idea: Selecting a Knife

Many people mistakenly assume that the best knife is some kind of large sheath knife, often referred to as a “Bowie” knife or “hunting” knife. Actually, large knives such as these are not the best choice because they are heavy and awkward to carry, and they are not well suited for most camp chores.

The better choice is some type of folding pocketknife such as the Boy Scout Knife (a variant of the Victorinox “Swiss Army Knife”) or a *Leatherman*-type multi-purpose tool. A good choice will have these features:

- A wide, general purpose cutting blade about 3” long,
- An awl for punching holes,
- A can opener,
- A flat-tipped screw driver blade,
- A Phillips-tipped screw driver blade,
- A means for attaching a lanyard.

A knife with these features will enable you to cut rope, whittle points on stakes and skewers, cut vines for making rope, open canned food, tighten or loosen screws on other equipment, make wood shavings to start a fire, cut cloth for a bandage, and many other things.

Other features, such as a corkscrew or a pair of scissors add little to the utility of the knife, but usually add quite a lot to the cost. On the other hand, a saw-tooth blade is worth the extra money.

As previously mentioned, the Boy Scout Knife has these features as does the Victorinox “Camping” model knife. A *Leatherman*-type multi-purpose tool also has these features, with the additional advantages of having a pair of pliers for gripping objects and for handling hot objects, and a serviceable wire cutter for cutting light gauge wire. It also has a serrated blade for sawing tough materials.

Pouches for both types of knives are a good idea. They protect the knife from dirt, allow it to be easily attached to belts or packs for quick access and, since the knife doesn’t need to be carried in the pocket, keeps it from wearing a hole in your pocket.

One thing to bear in mind, all else being equal, the cheaper the price the less durable the knife. As a rule of thumb, you should expect to spend around \$20-\$30 on a good knife, although much more expensive knives are available.

2nd Main Idea: Maintaining a Knife

Cleaning: Open all the blades. Use a soft-bristle brush to whisk away any accumulations of dirt or lint within the housing of the knife. Moisten a Q-tip or patch of cloth twisted onto the end of a toothpick with light oil and wipe the inside surfaces of the knife. (If the knife has been used to prepare food, it should first be washed with hot, soapy water to get rid of food residue and kill bacteria.) Apply a drop of oil to the blade hinge-points to keep operation smooth.

Sharpening: Knives should always be sharpened on a whetstone or a steel. NEVER use mechanical knife sharpeners or the knife sharpening devices you might find in a kitchen drawer. These do not provide sharp edges that will last, and may actually damage the blade. Depending upon the type of stone used, you may need to apply a light oil or water. Also, some stones have a coarse side and a fine side. Others will have only one type of surface. (This instructor recommends two-sided stone about 1½ inches wide by about 6 inches long.)

Hold the blade against the stone at about a 30° angle with the back edge of the blade toward you. Push the blade away from you as though you were slicing a layer off the stone. Make two or three strokes, then turn the knife so the edge faces you and pull it toward you using the same slicing motion. Alternate the sides, using only two or three strokes at a time. Periodically, wipe the blade with a clean oily cloth to check your progress. If the knife is particularly dull, start with the roughest side of the stone, then switch to the finer side to complete the job. Check for a “wire” or wavy edge. This indicates that one side of the knife is being sharpened more than the other. Check sharpness by resting the blade on a pad of newspaper or paper towels and gently drawing the blade toward you about an inch or so without putting pressure on the blade. A sharp knife will make a clean cut through several layers.

If you have access to a steel, use it to polish the edge in the same way you used the stone to sharpen it.

3rd Main Idea: Using the Knife

A knife is a tool, not a toy. Although a dull knife is said to be more dangerous than a sharp one, a properly sharpened knife can inflict severe wounds in the blink of an eye if it is used carelessly or improperly. Always obey these DOs and DON'Ts when using your knife:

- DO:** Keep the blades closed except when the knife is being used or cleaned.
 - Cut away from yourself.
 - Close the blade before passing the knife to someone else.
 - Keep your knife sharp and clean.
 - Obey rules that prohibit carrying knives on school or other property.

- DON'T:** Carry a knife with the blade open.
 - Throw a knife.

Cut toward yourself.
Strike a knife with another tool or pry with the point of a cutting blade.

SUMMARY

A good knife possesses the following features:

- A wide, general purpose cutting blade about 3” long,
- An awl for punching holes,
- A can opener,
- A flat-tipped screw driver blade,
- A Phillips-tipped screw driver blade,
- A means for attaching a lanyard.

A saw-tooth blade is not essential, but is usually worth the extra cost.

The following knife DOs and DON'Ts should always be obeyed:

DO: Keep the blades closed except when the knife is being used or cleaned.
Cut away from yourself.
Close the blade before passing the knife to someone else.
Keep your knife sharp and clean.
Obey rules that prohibit carrying knives on school or other property.

DON'T: Carry a knife with the blade open.
Throw a knife.
Cut toward yourself.
Strike a knife with another tool or pry with the point of a cutting blade.

QUESTIONS FROM THE CLASS

QUESTIONS TO THE CLASS

THE OUTDOOR CODE

As an American, I will do my best to —

BE CLEAN in my outdoor manners,

BE CAREFUL with fire,

BE CONSIDERATE in the outdoors, and

BE CONSERVATION-MINDED.