

Knife Safety Course

BASIC OUTDOOR SKILL NUMBER 4

Preparation: Each girl will need a cardboard "training" knife, a real pocket knife, a sharpening stone and an 18 inch long 3/4 inch diameter stick. Go over the course outline with adults who will be helping with the course prior to the girls arriving. There should be approximately 1 adult for every 4 girls.

When the girls arrive spread them out in a large open area free from obstacles. They should be told what a safety circle is. It is a circle formed by the length of their arms extended to all sides and front and rear. Add 4 feet between each girl to allow for walking room for the adults. Give each girl a cardboard knife and tell them to put it in their pocket or belt pack. Explain to them:

SAFETY RULE NUMBER 1! They may not take the knife out until told to by an adult.

Have the girls take out the cardboard knife, call it a training knife. Explain:

SAFETY RULE NUMBER 2! They may not open the knife until told to by a leader! Unless their parent is a trained leader, they may not tell the girl to open the knife at a Girl Scout function! **ONLY** the trained leader may tell them to open the knife.

Explain and demonstrate how to open a knife safely. Open with both hands, keeping the fingers behind the blade. Put your thumb nail in the slot on the blade. Keeping the fingers away from the cutting edge, pull the blade out all the way. Explain and demonstrate how to safely close a knife. Hold the handle firmly from the closed side, the one without the blade slot. Make sure no fingers are over the blade slot. With the other hand push upward from the back side of the blade, the dull side. Continue pushing until the blade snaps into its slot. Always close a knife when you are finished and before walking away.

SAFETY RULE NUMBER 3! Always open and close a knife with your fingers away from the blade slot.

Explain and demonstrate how to safely pass a knife. The knife must be closed to safely pass it to another person. Hand the knife to another person, holding firmly onto one end. The receiving person should firmly grasp the knife and when it is firmly gripped, say "Thank You". This tells the person passing the knife that they can then let go of it. The passer should not let go of the knife until the receiving person has a firm grip on it.

SAFETY RULE NUMBER 4! Never pass an open knife, make sure the person receiving the knife has a firm grip before letting go.

How to cut with a knife. Pass out sticks. Double check your safety circle to be sure no one is near you. Hold the stick in your off hand, usually left hand. Grip the stick firmly by the near end. Make sure the stick is pointed down and away from you. Hold the knife very firmly in the on (right) hand. Your fingers should be wrapped around the handle and no fingers should be on the blade. Place the sharp knife edge against the stick a few inches from the end with the blade slanting toward the end to be pointed. Press the knife against the stick and push toward the stick end. Make sure the stick is pointed

toward the ground and away from your body. After this stroke turn the stick slightly and repeat. Keep doing this until the stick has a pointed end. This technique can be used to make cooking sticks, tent pegs and other useful things.

SAFETY RULE NUMBER 5! Always double check your safety circle and then cut down and away from you.

How to sharpen a knife. Pass out sharpening stones A dull knife is more dangerous than a sharp knife. To safely sharpen your knife, hold the sharpening stone in your left hand being careful to keep all your fingers below the top of the stone. Hold your knife in the other hand and tilt the blade as in preparing to cut. With a gentle circular motion move the blade back and forth on the sharpening stone. Do this slowly and try to have the entire blade be in contact with the stone at some point in the circle.

SAFETY RULE NUMBER 6! Always keep your knife sharp and clean. Dull knives are dangerous.

Now repeat the above steps with the girls using real knives. If a girl doesn't want to or feel comfortable using a real knife or if a parent doesn't want a girl to use a real knife, do not push her. She is not ready for the real thing. The girls are awarded their "permit to carry" cards only if they have completed the entire course and if their parents agree. The girls are told they will lose their cards for any one violation of the safety rules. They must then take the course again to earn another card. We offer the course either during the summer or the first campout of the year in September.

Our "training knives" are made out of poster board, two pieces shaped like a knife and a third piece being the blade with "folds" into the handle. The ends are held together with a brass paper fastener for the blade hinge and a staple for the other end.

References:

Palm Glades Troop Camp Manual, Brownie Handbook, Junior Handbook.

Mike Baird, SwampFoX, Leader of Junior 21 and Brownie 941
Council Trainer, Order of the Green Knight, WAGGGS-L Support Team
West Palm Beach, Florida, USA (Southeast corner of the USA)
"Hurricane Alley USA" Mailto: <GSDad@Juno.com>

Knife Safety Course
Junior Troop 21
copywrite 1999, M. Baird
file:5/99 knifsaf