

Whittling Chip Course

This Whittling Chip course is designed to be taught over two classes, lasting approximately 1 hour each. The length of the course may vary depending on how many Scouts are in the Den.

The first class of the course introduces Scouts to knives, knife safety and some basic principles. They will also have an opportunity to whittle a shape out of soap using a butter knife. Between the first and second class the Scouts will work with their parents at home to make a carving. The second course reviews what was learned in the first part of the course and allows Scouts to work with each other. At the end of the second class Scouts (with written permission) will be presented with their Whittling Chip cards. The Whittling Chip patch will be presented at a Pack meeting.

Class I

What is a Knife?

First, a knife is a tool not a toy. It is not something to use during playtime. It is not something to use to threaten other people with. Knives are to help you complete a task.

Knives come in many shapes and sizes. Some have only one blade. Others may many blades and tools. Some are small; some are big. Generally, a good Scouting knife will have blade, a punch, a can opener and a screwdriver blade in a foldable design. The blade is usually a little over 2" long. Such a knife is usually all that a resourceful Cub Scout will need.

Hands On Demonstration:

Display a variety of knives. Explain knife uses and which a Cub Scout can carry. Cub Scouts are only allowed to carry pocketknives on Scout activities. If other knives are needed, kitchen knives for example, they will be brought and used by adults. Display a fixed blade (sheath or hunting) knife. Explain that a pocketknife will do almost anything these knives do. Show how a sheath knife attached to the belt could injure someone by bending over with the sheath pointed against the leg and/or the sheath pointed up toward the stomach. Demonstrate that if someone was to grab the knife from its sheath, the natural reaction is to grab the knife, which could result in severe cuts. Cub Scouts should not need to carry a fixed blade (sheath) knife.

Display a variety of pocketknives. Display straight edge and serrated blades. Show that some have only a few blades and some have many. Explain that many of the extra blades are seldom used or don't work well. Example: Having fork and spoon blades on the knife would mainly be useful when backpacking, at other times you usually have better silverware available. They should learn the proper way to use each blade on their knife. Display a pair of scissors. Show how these are two knife blades that cut against each other. Explain that they should be treated with the same respect and safety rules as any other knife.

Display various kitchen knives like a table knife, paring knife, bread knife, and a butcher knife. Explain what they are used for. Explain that since they will probably use these in a kitchen in the future, they should be treated with the same respect and safety rules. Display a lock blade knife. Explain that the lock is a safety feature that keeps the blade from accidentally closing on the fingers. These may be better for the boys if they can release the lock easily enough. Some locks are hard to release and could result in an injury if the knife slips while trying to release the lock.

Getting started using a knife

If an accident happens

- Always tell an adult --especially if someone was injured and is bleeding.
- If the cut is minor, clean and treat it according to First Aid rules. If the cut is serious, get help quick. If you get "stabbed" by more than about ¼" of the knife blade, do not pull it out unless you have too. The knife blade will help keep pressure on the wound and prevent heavy bleeding.

Safe Zone

Before you open or use your knife, you need to be sure that the area around you is safe and secure. Establish a "safe zone" or "blood circle" around you to protect yourself and other people and animals.

Do this:

- Choose a spot with fairly level ground
- Make sure that there are no small children or pets close by, even if they are outside of your safe zone
- Stand up with one arm out by your side, holding your CLOSED knife
- Slowly rotate yourself around
- If you hit something or someone, move until you can do this without interference
- Make sure that nothing or no one is in the imaginary circle that creates
- If you are going to sit, make sure that you have something steady and secure --the ground works really good for this
- If you are going to stand, make sure that your feet are secure and that the area is not slippery or contains items that may trip you if you move

Once you can do this, you have established your safe zone. At any time after you begin using your knife, the safe zone becomes unsafe, immediately stop and close your knife until it is safe again.

Hands on Demonstration:

Explain to the boys that anytime they are using a knife they should have a "safety zone" around them. Demonstrate holding your arm out as far as possible holding an object like a ruler and turning around. The boys should learn that whenever they are using a knife, they should be the only person in their safety zone. If someone else enters their circle for any reason they should close their knife and lay it down.

Explain to them that they are also responsible for anyone entering the circle, even from behind, so unless they have eyes in the back of their head, suggest that they always work with a wall behind them. Show them how someone could surprise them from behind and if they turn quickly holding a knife, they could hurt someone.

How to safely open a knife

Be sure that you establish your "safe zone" before you open your knife. Hold the knife in one hand, with the blade side facing away from you, and open the blade with your other hand. Most blades have a small semi-circle

cut into the blade near the top to give you better hold on the blade while opening it. You can use your fingernail or grab that edge with your fingers to pull the blade open. Be sure to hold the sides of the knife firmly as you open the blade. It is often easier to open if you pull both the blade and the knife apart at the same time --use a motion similar to those of bird wings flapping up.

Never sling the knife to "pop open" the blade. Be sure that the blade opens all the way; some will "click" when the blade is fully opened. If necessary, immediately turn the knife so that the point and blade edge face away from you.

Before you use it

Before you use your knife, do a quick inspection. If the knife handle or blade is loose, do not use it until it can be repaired. If the knife blade is cracked, broken or chipped, do not use the knife.

If the knife is too small for your hands or too heavy to easily control, do not use the knife.

How to safely handle a knife

It is important that you learn how to correctly and properly handle a knife.

Do's •Remember to keep the knife closed when not being used •Remember to keep the knife in your pocket •Always hold the knife in the same hand that you would hold a pencil in •Always keep the blade point and edge away from you --and anyone else who may be near •Hold the knife tightly, but not so tight that you knuckles turn white •If you have to carry an open knife (or scissors), always walk carefully with the blade pointed away from you and to the side •Always cut or carve by moving the knife blade away from you

Don'ts •When a knife blade is opened, never hold the knife by the blade, but always by the handle •Never run or jump with the knife blade open •Never use a knife to dig in the dirt •Never cut the bark from a live tree •Never carve on anything that does not belong to you •Never throw your knife •Never pry with your knife •Never use the blade as a screwdriver •Never leave your knife lying where a younger child could get it

If you drop a knife

If you accidentally drop an open knife, never try to catch it. Quickly step back and wait until it falls to pick it up. Before you use it again, always inspect the knife and blade for any damage.

Passing a knife

Whenever you need to pass the knife to another person, always close the knife first. Never throw the knife. While holding one end of the knife, allow the person to get hold of the other end of the knife. Do not release your hold on the knife until the person taking it from you says "Thank You". This indicates that the other person realizes that they are receiving the knife and are ready to accept responsibility for it. After hearing the "Thank You", say "You're Welcome" as you release the knife. This indicates that you have released the responsibility for the knife to the other person.

If you must pass a "fixed" or non-closing knife, firmly hold the dull side of the knife blade while extending the knife handle to the other person. Never throw the knife. Allow that person to grasp the knife blade and say "Thank You" before releasing the blade. The other person should hold the knife steady until you have released your hold on the knife.

Hands on Exercise:

Use a plastic silverware knife. Apply a small amount of bright red lipstick along the cutting edge. Show the boys how to hold the knife by the back (dull) side of the blade and pass it to another person, handle first using the same “thank you – you’re welcome”. After passing the knife around to everyone, including parents, check for lipstick on everyone’s hands. Any lipstick marks indicate that the person could have been cut by a sharp blade.

How to safely close a knife

Wipe the blade clean. Hold the knife handle so that the point and edge of the blade are facing away from you and your fingers are not under the blade. If the blade has a lock, disengage the lock with your other hand. Slowly close the blade with the palm of your hand against the back of the blade. Once closed, place the knife back into your pocket for added safety.

How to cut

Hold the knife in the hand that you use to write with. This is your dominate hand and you will be able to better control the knife with this hand. Grasp the handle with your whole hand. Position the blade at a slant, pointing away from you. To cut, begin the cut then move the blade away from your body. If this is not possible, position yourself to the side of the object you are cutting. If you are cutting completely thru something, be aware of what is under the object you are cutting. Cutting on rock, dirt, metal, some plastics, etc. can dull the knife blade as the cut is made. Always use something that ‘gives’ under the object (such as cardboard or a cutting board).

If you are carving or whittling, always hold the object you are cutting securely in front of you, place the blade against the object and apply slight pressure while moving the blade away from your body. It is better to make several cuts using light pressure than one cut by forcing the blade.

Hands on Exercise:

Let the boys practice carving on soft bar of soap with wooden craft stick knives or plastic tableware knives. This will allow them to start getting the feel of using a knife. Show the boys how to cut long thin shavings by cutting at the proper angle. Also show them how to carve out chips by making the first cut down into the soap and making a second angled cut until it reaches the first cut. Watch to see that they are cutting off the thin shavings and small chips like they should. This will also let you catch some possible safety problems early and with less chance of a serious cut.

Homework

After the Scout has demonstrated good aptitude with the soap carving project, you can let them try their hands at carving and whittling wood. A good choice is balsa as it is lightweight and not too “tough”. It is a good idea to have some simple shapes (such as ice cream cones, cowboy hats or boots, etc) that can be traced onto the wood for a pattern. If you choose to do smaller patterns, you can mount the finished carvings onto a small piece of PVC and make neckerchief slides.

Please work with your Scout at home in making a carving with his pocketknife and bring the carving to Class II to share with his fellow Scouts.

Class II

How to care for a knife

Keep the knife clean and dry. Keeping the knife clean and dry will help prevent rust and keep the knife from getting “tight”. Rust will cause the knife to become dull and can make the blade weak. If a knife has become wet, be sure that it is completely dried. If possible, rub a thin coat of oil on the metal parts to help prevent rust and ensure that the knife opens smoothly. Never clean the knife in a dishwasher, always clean by hand. It is OK to use dish soap on the blade, but be sure that it gets completely rinsed and dried.

If you will be using the blade to cut food, be sure that the knife gets cleaned both before and after use. Knives can become dirty from being carried in your pocket. Also, be sure that the knife is properly cleaned to prevent cross contamination of food items. Keep the knife sharp

Be sure your knife is sharp. A sharp knife is safer to use than a dull knife because it does not require as much force to cut. Using too much force can cause the blade to slip, possibly resulting in an injury. The tip of the blade is often the part that dulls the quickest. This is because it is often in contact with other surface materials as you cut. When sharpening, be sure that you remember to sharpen the tip.

Sharpen the knife using stones usually called whetstones. These stones come in many sizes and “grits”, which describe the size of the stone’s particles. Rougher grits have smaller numbers and mean that their stones are made of large particles. These stones are used for grinding and repairing the edge of the blade, not for fine sharpening. Smoother grits have larger numbers, meaning that the stones are made of smaller particles. The larger the number, the finer the edge the stone will produce. These are the sharpening stones. Whetstones require some type of lubricant. Some use oil and some use water. Water stones are more practical because water is more easily obtained in most places.

Sharpening Steps 1. Place the stones on a level surface. 2. Wet the stone with a little water or oil. 3. Place the blade of the knife flat on the stone, then raise the back edge about the width of the blade itself, keeping the cutting edge on the stone. 4. Draw the knife straight back toward you, or move it straight back and forth putting pressure on it only when you pull it toward you. This is always better than moving it in a circular fashion. 5. Turn the blade over and repeat on the other side an equal number of times. 6. Repeat steps 1 thru 5 on a finer grit stone until the knife has a smooth, sharp edge. 7. If you have some leather available, you can use this to finish the edge by dragging the blade edge along the leather. Repeat the same number of strokes on each side of the blade.

Hands on Practice

Allow the Scouts to “practice” knife sharpening using a home-made stone and knife. Use a wood block with sandpaper glued to it and sharpen a craft stick into a knife shape. Show the boys how to angle the blade against the stone (or stick against the sanding block) to produce a sharp edge. Explain the importance of sharpening equally on both sides of the blade to prevent an uneven edge.

Cleaning your knife

Cleaning your knife is very important, if you let too much grime, grease, and grit build up, then it will be harder to clean your knife. Keep it as clean as you can while out in the field and do a more thorough job when you get home. Additionally, always keep the hinges of your knife lubricated either with light cooking oil, sewing oil or WD-40. Regularly check your knife for trouble spots. Inspect the blade for areas of rust. As soon as you see any

rust spots you should immediately clean them. Inspect the handle. You are looking for any build up of dust, dirt or grime. Especially inspect along the inside of the blade bed as well as around any pivot points.

To clean your knife, unfold all the blades. Using either a cotton swab, corner of a towel or a toothbrush, apply lubricant to the knife. The lubricant helps loosen any gunk or buildup on the knife. Use the toothbrush to scrub any hard-to-get places. Wipe off the excess (now dirty) oil with a towel and apply a drop of clean lubricant to the hinges. Apply a layer of oil to the blades and wipe of the excess oil.

Knife Safety Quiz

As a check to ensure that all Scouts understand the topics discussed as part of this course, have them complete a knife safety quiz. You can choose to have each Scout take the test individually or complete the quiz as a group. If you choose the group option, it may be good to have a completed copy of the quiz to send home with each Scout for later review.

Whittling Chip Pledge

Now that you have completed the knife safety course, you are eligible to be awarded the Whittling Chip. The final requirement in the course is that you agree to abide by the safe knife policy by signing the "Safe Knife Pledge".

After the course

Now that your Scout has earned his Whittling Chip, he can bring his pocket knife to Scouting functions when the leadership deems it appropriate.

Appropriate

- Campout

Not Appropriate

- It is never appropriate to bring the knife to school for a Pack or Den function.

If you will be buying your Scout a knife, here are a couple of suggestions. Please take the time to find a knife that you feel will be appropriate for your Scout.

- A single blade, lock back knife may be a good knife for your Scout. However, if they are not strong enough to release the lock it may make the knife dangerous.
- Stay away from the Swiss Army style knives, the simpler the better and these large knives might not properly fit the hand of younger Scouts.
- Serrated knives are harder to sharpen than non-serrated.
- No fixed blades.
- It is a good idea to purchase a sharpening stone to keep the knife sharp.