NATURAL TINDER & FIRECRAFT

Scouts Bushcraft – Activity Risk Assessment

Activity Natural tinder identification, preparation and supervised firecraft	**Duration** 60 minutes	**Location** To be completed
Group / age range To be completed	**Assessment date / review** To be completed	**Assessor / activity leader** To be completed

Activity description: Scouts identify examples of natural tinder, compare dry and damp materials, prepare a loose tinder bundle and observe a leader-led ignition demonstration. A small controlled fire may be used only where permitted, suitable and specifically authorised by the site rules and this assessment. A cold demonstration must be used if live fire is unsuitable.

Important decision: The activity leader must stop, adapt or cancel any live-fire element if permission, supervision, equipment, weather, ground conditions or local restrictions are not satisfactory.

Risk rating guide

Likelihood (L) 1 Rare · 2 Unlikely · 3 Possible · 4 Likely · 5 Almost certain	**Severity (S)** 1 Minor · 2 First aid · 3 Medical treatment · 4 Serious injury · 5 Life-threatening	**Score** L × S. 1–4 Low · 5–9 Moderate · 10–15 High · 16–25 Very high

Hazards and control measures

HAZARD	POTENTIAL HARM	CONTROL MEASURES	INITIAL	RESIDUAL
Open flame, hot embers and hot equipment	Burns to hands, skin or clothing; fire spread.	Use only an approved fire area with permission. Keep fire small and contained; establish a clearly marked exclusion zone suited to the site. Leader controls ignition and fuel. Keep water and suitable fire-control equipment immediately available. Tie back long hair; secure loose clothing. No running or horseplay. Never leave fire unattended.	4×4=16 **Very high**	1×4=4 **Low**
Ignition tools, matches and sparks	Burns, eye injury, accidental ignition of clothing or vegetation.	Leader inspects and demonstrates one tool at a time. Keep sparks directed into the prepared tinder and away from people, dry vegetation and equipment. Participants remain behind the activity line until invited. Tools are issued and collected under direct supervision; store safely when not in use.	3×4=12 **High**	1×4=4 **Low**
Smoke and fumes	Coughing, breathing irritation or aggravation of respiratory conditions.	Position participants upwind or crosswind where practicable. Use only clean, untreated natural wood and tinder; never burn plastics, treated timber or unknown materials. Keep the fire small. Stop the activity if smoke affects anyone or wind changes direction.	3×3=9 **Moderate**	1×3=3 **Low**
Fire spread, dry vegetation or unsuitable weather	Uncontrolled fire, burns, damage to property or habitat.	Check forecast, wind, drought conditions, fire warnings and local restrictions before and during the session. Clear the approved fire area as required by site procedure. Do not light during bans or unsafe conditions. Have an immediate extinguishing plan. Use a cold demonstration if in doubt.	3×5=15 **High**	1×5=5 **Moderate**
Collecting natural tinder	Cuts, scratches, contact with irritant plants, ticks or disturbed wildlife/habitats.	Prefer leader-provided samples or photographs. Collect only with permission and in small quantities from permitted dead/fallen material. Avoid live trees, protected plants, fungi, nests, animal homes and unknown plants. Wear suitable clothing and wash hands after handling. Do not taste materials.	3×2=6 **Moderate**	1×2=2 **Low**
Handling dry grass, fibres and wood shavings	Splinters, minor cuts, eye irritation or loose fibres catching fire.	Use clean, dry samples. Handle carefully and keep tinder away from the ignition point until instructed. Avoid blowing fibres towards faces. Do not use knives for this session unless separately assessed and authorised. Keep unused tinder in a safe location away from flame.	3×2=6 **Moderate**	1×2=2 **Low**
Uneven ground, roots and equipment	Trips, falls or collisions near the fire area.	Inspect the area and remove or mark trip hazards where safe. Keep bags and unused equipment outside walkways and the fire exclusion zone. Set clear movement routes and supervise transitions.	3×2=6 **Moderate**	1×2=2 **Low**
Hot ash and extinguishing	Contact burns or hidden embers causing reignition.	Only the leader or nominated competent adult manages extinguishing. Follow site procedure; add water carefully where appropriate, stir and re-check until fully cold. Do not bury embers. Keep participants outside the zone until the leader confirms it is safe.	3×4=12 **High**	1×4=4 **Low**

HAZARD	POTENTIAL HARM	CONTROL MEASURES	INITIAL	RESIDUAL
Weather, cold, heat or dehydration	Discomfort, reduced concentration, heat illness or cold stress.	Check conditions and provide suitable clothing, shelter, drinking water and breaks. Stop or shorten the activity if weather deteriorates. Avoid prolonged standing close to heat or smoke.	3×3=9 **Moderate**	1×3=3 **Low**
Allergies, sensitivities or individual needs	Unexpected reaction, distress or inability to take part safely.	Check relevant needs with parents/carers and leaders in advance through appropriate channels. Offer alternative roles, photos or a cold demonstration. Keep first aid available and follow the participant's care arrangements.	2×3=6 **Moderate**	1×3=3 **Low**

Emergency arrangements and leader checks

Before participants arrive

■ Confirm written/site permission, current Scout rules and any local fire restrictions.

■ Check weather, wind direction, ground conditions and nearby combustible materials.

■ Inspect the fire site, define the exclusion zone and identify safe access/egress routes.

■ Confirm competent supervision, group numbers, first-aid cover and emergency communication.

■ Place water and suitable fire-control equipment within immediate reach; check it is usable.

■ Brief all helpers on roles, stop signal, headcount and emergency response.

■ Check participant needs and provide a non-fire alternative where appropriate.

During the activity

■ Maintain active supervision and headcounts; keep participants outside the fire zone unless specifically directed.

■ Stop immediately if anyone enters the exclusion zone, supervision is lost, equipment fails, smoke becomes problematic or conditions change.

■ Do not use accelerants, unknown fuels, treated timber or materials that produce toxic fumes.

■ Keep the fire attended by the responsible adult at all times.

Emergency response

Burn or scald	Stop the activity. Cool the burn under cool running water for 20 minutes where possible. Remove jewellery or loose clothing near the area if not stuck. Do not apply creams or ice. Seek appropriate medical help; call 999 for serious burns or urgent concerns.
Clothing catches fire	Stop, drop and roll; use a fire blanket if available and safe to do so. Call 999 and provide first aid within competence.
Uncontrolled fire	Raise the alarm, move everyone to a safe location, account for the group and call 999. Do not attempt to tackle a fire beyond the leader's training or available equipment.
Smoke-related illness or allergic reaction	Move the person to fresh air, seek first aid and follow their care plan. Call 999 for severe breathing difficulty or signs of a serious reaction.

Emergency details – complete for the actual venue

Site address / grid reference	**Nearest access point for emergency services**
What3words / location details (if used)	**First aider and contact method**
Emergency assembly point	**Nearest phone / signal arrangements**

Sign-off and review

Assessor name	**Signature**	**Date**
Approving leader / manager	**Signature**	**Review date**

Use note: This generic assessment must be checked and amended for the actual location, group, equipment, supervision and current organisational rules before use. The activity leader retains responsibility for deciding whether the activity can proceed.