Scouts Bushcraft

Bushcraft Tools and Woodcraft Book

Learn about tool selection, maintenance, safe handling and responsible woodcraft.



SKILLS • SAFETY • CRAFT • CONSERVATION

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Skills | Safety | Craft | Conservation | Responsible Woodcraft

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Introduction to Bushcraft Tools

Bushcraft tools help us work safely and effectively in the outdoors, from preparing wood and building shelters to simple camp crafts.

What are Bushcraft Tools?

Reliable hand tools that help us work with natural materials, especially wood, for campcraft, shelter, fire and practical woodcraft skills.



Why Use Them?

- **Practical** – help us build, prepare and create.
- **Skill building** – develop confidence and new skills.
- **Outdoor learning** – connect with nature and the environment.
- **Teamwork** – great for Scout activities and projects.

Key Tool Types



Knives

For cutting, carving and general camp use.



Axes & Hatchets

For splitting and shaping wood.



Saws

For cutting larger wood safely and efficiently.



Responsible Use

Bushcraft tools must always be used safely, with care and under the guidance of a trained adult. We respect the environment, work responsibly and leave no lasting damage in the outdoors.

Key Points to Remember

- Use the right tool for the job.
- Follow safety rules and adult supervision.
- Keep tools in good condition.
- Work responsibly and care for the outdoor environment.

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Choosing the Right Tools

Select the right tool for the job, your skill level and the activity. The right tool is safer, easier to use and gives better results.

Key Considerations

- **Safety** – Choose tools you can use safely and confidently with adult supervision.
- **Purpose** – Match the tool to the task, such as cutting, shaping or splitting wood.
- **Skill Level** – Use tools that suit your experience and training.
- **Environment** – Choose robust, reliable tools for outdoor use.



Common Bushcraft Tools



Bushcraft Knife

A versatile tool for cutting, carving and general woodcraft.



Axe / Hatchet

For splitting, shaping and larger woodcraft jobs.



Saw

For cutting larger wood safely and efficiently.



Carving Tools

For shaping wood and making useful items such as spoons.



Sharpening Stone

For keeping your cutting tools sharp, safe and effective.

Using the Right Tool for the Job



Cut and carve with a knife.



Cut larger wood with a saw.



Split wood with an axe or hatchet.

Quick Selection Guide

Carving and detail work	✓ Knife
Preparing firewood	✓ Saw or Axe
Shaping wood (pegs, stakes)	✓ Knife
Larger woodworking tasks	✓ Axe / Hatchet
Keeping edges sharp	✓ Sharpening Stone

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Knife Safety and Handling

Learn how to use a knife safely, handle it correctly and work responsibly when carving and preparing wood in the outdoors.

Knife Safety Rules

- Use a knife only with adult supervision.
- Stay in a safe working area, with enough space.
- Keep the blade sharp and in good condition.
- Always cut away from your body and others.
- Keep the knife closed or sheathed when not in use.
- Be calm, focused and follow instructions.



The Safe Grip



Hold the handle firmly with a natural grip. Keep your thumb and fingers behind the guard, with good control of the blade.

The Basic Cutting Position



Sit in a stable position with good balance.



Keep both hands behind the cutting edge.



Cut away from your body and work on a stable surface.

Knife Do's and Don'ts

Do:

- Use a sharp, suitable knife.
- Keep a safe distance from others.
- Work on a stable surface.
- Use controlled, smooth cuts.
- Keep your knife clean and dry.

Don't:

- Run with a knife.
- Point a knife at anyone.
- Use a damaged or loose knife.
- Try to cut materials that are too hard.
- Leave a knife unattended.

Carrying and Storage





- Carry your knife in a proper sheath or in the closed position (folding knife).
- Store knives safely and out of reach when not in use.

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Knife Sharpening and Maintenance

Keep your knife safe, sharp and in good condition for outdoor use.

Why Keep a Knife Sharp?

- Safer to use.
- Gives cleaner, controlled cuts.
- Works more efficiently with less effort.
- Helps your knife last longer.

Sharpening Equipment



How to Sharpen a Knife – Simple Steps

1 Prepare



Wet the stone with water (or follow the manufacturer's guide).

2 Set the Angle



Hold the blade at about 15–20° to the stone.

3 Sharpen



Use steady, even strokes along the blade (from heel to tip), then repeat on the other side.

4 Finish



Use a leather strop to remove any burrs and give a smooth, sharp edge.

Ongoing Maintenance

- **Clean:** Remove dirt and sap after use.
- **Dry:** Always dry the blade to prevent rust.
- **Protect:** Add a light coat of oil (e.g. food-safe or mineral oil).
- **Check:** Look for damage, a loose handle or a chipped edge.

Storage and Care



- ✓ Store in a sheath or protective case.
- ✓ Keep in a dry place.
- ✓ Keep it clean and oiled.
- ✓ Check regularly, especially after use outdoors.

Key Safety Reminders

- Always follow your leader's instructions.
- Use sharpening equipment on a stable surface.
- Keep fingers clear of the edge.
- Work slowly and carefully.

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Axes, Hatchets and Saws

Choosing, using and looking after woodland tools safely.

The Right Tool for the Job

Different tools have different uses.
Choose the right one for the task.



Axe

Heavier and for bigger woodwork (e.g. felling or splitting).



Hatchet

Lighter and more versatile (e.g. camp work, kindling and shaping).



Saw

Cuts wood safely and efficiently (e.g. poles, branches and logs).

Tool Safety Rules



- Use only under the supervision of a trained leader.
- Keep a clear working area (about 2–3 m).
- Check the tool is in good condition and the handle is secure.
- Use a stable surface (e.g. a chopping block).
- Keep others to the side and at a safe distance.
- Carry tools safely, with the blade covered.

Basic Skills and Technique

Chopping



Use a chopping block, stand with a stable stance and swing with control.

Splitting



Split wood along the grain to make kindling or smaller pieces.

Sawing



Use smooth, steady strokes, let the saw do the work, and keep the cut straight.

Looking After Your Tools

- **Clean:** Remove dirt, sap and moisture after use.
- **Dry:** Always dry tools thoroughly to prevent rust.
- **Protect:** Add a light coat of oil to metal parts.
- **Check:** Look for damage, loose handles or worn teeth.
- **Maintain:** Keep axes and hatchets sharp and saw teeth clean.

Safe Storage



- Store tools in a dry, secure place.
- Use blade covers (sheaths) when not in use.
- Keep out of reach of younger Scouts.
- Check tools regularly before each activity.

Key Safety Reminders

- Always follow your leader's instructions.
- Use the correct tool for the job.
- Keep a safe working distance and clear area.
- Work with control, not speed.

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Wood Processing and Preparation

Safe and practical skills for preparing wood in the outdoors.

Why Prepare Wood?

- For fire lighting and cooking.
- For shelters and camp projects.
- To make useful camp items (e.g. pegs, stakes, utensils).
- To use natural resources responsibly.

Essential Tools



Knife (whittling and shaping)

Hatchet (splitting and shaping)

Saw (cutting wood to length)

Key Techniques

Cutting to Length



Cut wood to a manageable size using a saw and a stable support.

Splitting



Split larger pieces along the grain to make smaller sections.

Shaping



Use controlled cuts to shape wood (e.g. stakes, pegs or tent markers).

Kindling



Create dry, thin pieces of wood for easy fire lighting.

Safe Working Practices

- Wear eye protection when cutting or splitting.
- Use stable, non-slip surfaces (e.g. a chopping block).
- Keep a safe working area (about 2–3 m) from others.
- Use sharp, well-maintained tools.
- Know your limits and work at a steady, controlled pace.

Preparing Firewood



- ✓ Use dry, dead wood where possible.
- ✓ Cut into manageable lengths.
- ✓ Split into smaller pieces to help it dry.
- ✓ Keep wood off the ground and under cover to stay dry.

Key Safety Reminders

- Always follow your leader's instructions.
- Use the correct tool for the job.
- Keep the working area clear and organised.
- Be aware of others around you at all times.

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Wood Identification and Selection

Recognising common woods and choosing the right wood for your needs.

Why Identify Wood?

- Choose the best wood for fire lighting and cooking.
- Select suitable wood for shelters and camp projects.
- Use natural resources wisely and responsibly.
- Support woodland care and sustainability.

Key Identification Features



Bark
Texture, colour and pattern can be a good clue.



Leaves
Shape, size and edge (e.g. lobed, serrated, smooth).



Buds
Size, shape and how they grow on the twig.



Flowers/ Fruits
Catkins, cones or seeds help confirm the tree.

Common British Woods



Oak

- Hard and strong.
- Burns well, long lasting.
- Good for structures and camp projects.



Birch

- Lights easily, even when damp.
- Burns with a good flame.
- Useful for kindling and fire lighting.



Hazel

- Flexible and easy to work.
- Good for frames, weaving and campcraft.
- Burns well.



Ash

- Strong, tough and flexible.
- Ideal for tool handles and structures.
- Burns evenly and hot.



Willow

- Flexible and light.
- Great for weaving and simple shelters.
- Burns quickly, so best for kindling or short fires.

Choosing Wood for the Task



For Firelighting
Dry, dead wood with a low moisture content (e.g. birch, hazel, pine).



For Campcraft
Strong and flexible wood (e.g. hazel, willow, ash).



For Shelters
Sturdy, straight wood (e.g. ash, oak, or fallen deadwood).

Sustainable Woodland Use

- Only use dead, fallen wood from the ground.
- Avoid damaging living trees or removing large amounts.
- Check local rules and gain permission if needed.
- Respect wildlife habitaits and leave the woodland as you found it.

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Basic Woodcraft and Carving

Simple and safe techniques for working with wood in the outdoors.

Why Learn Woodcraft?

- Builds practical outdoor skills for camp and bushcraft.
- Make useful items (e.g. pegs, stakes, utensils).
- Develops control, focus and hand–eye coordination.
- Supports creativity, problem solving and independence.

Essential Tools



Bushcraft Knife (general use)

Carving Knife (fine work)

Folding Saw (cutting wood to size)

Simple Carving Projects



Tent Peg

A strong, pointed peg for shelters and tarps.



Camp Spoon

A useful item to make with simple carving skills.



Walking Stick

Shape and smooth a strong, comfortable stick for hiking.



Whistle

A fun beginner project to practise safe carving techniques.

Key Carving Techniques



Whittling

Remove small amounts of wood in a controlled way.



Hollowing

Use a hook knife to safely scoop out wood and create the bowl of a spoon.



Smoothing

Use light, even cuts to create a smooth, comfortable finish.

Safe Working Practices

- Wear eye protection when needed.
- Use a sharp, well-maintained knife.
- Keep a safe working space (about 2–3 m) from others.
- Always cut away from your body and hands.
- Work at a steady, controlled pace.

Key Safety Reminders

- Only use wood that you have permission to collect.
- Use the right tool for the job.
- Keep tools sheathed or folded when not in use.
- Follow your leader's instructions at all times.

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Making Useful Wooden Items

Practical woodcraft projects that build skills, creativity and campsite kit.

Why Make Wooden Items?

- Develops practical bushcraft and tool skills.
- Creates useful kit for camp and hiking.
- Builds confidence, focus and patience.
- Uses natural, sustainable materials from the woodland.

Essential Tools & Equipment



- **Bushcraft Knife** (shaping and carving)
- **Hook Knife** (hollowing and bowls)
- **Folding Saw** (cutting wood to size)
- **Sandpaper** (smoothing the finish)

Project Ideas for the Campsite



Camp Spoon

A classic project to practise shaping, hollowing and smoothing.



Tent Pegs

Strong, simple pegs for securing tarps and shelters.



Camp Mallet

A useful tool for driving pegs and camp tasks.



Walking Stick

Make and personalise a strong, comfortable stick for hiking.

Project: Carving a Camp Spoon



Mark Out

Draw the spoon shape on a suitable piece of wood.

Shape

Use a knife to carve the outside profile and handle.

Hollow

Use a hook knife to scoop out the bowl evenly.

Finish

Smooth with a knife and sandpaper for a safe, comfortable finish.

Safe Working Practices

- Wear eye protection when needed.
- Use sharp, well-maintained tools.
- Keep a safe working space (about 2–3 m) from others.
- Always cut away from your body and hands.
- Work at a steady, controlled pace and follow your leader's instructions.

Key Safety Reminders

- Use wood from a sustainable and legal source.
- Choose suitable, straight-grained wood (e.g. willow, hazel, ash).
- Keep tools sheathed or folded when not in use.
- Ensure projects are safe, strong and fit for purpose.

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Tool Care, Storage and Responsible Woodcraft

Look after your tools, work safely and care for the woodland.

Why Look After Tools?

- Keeps tools safe and reliable to use.
- Makes them last longer.
- Saves money and reduces waste.
- Shows respect for equipment and the outdoor envirommment.

Tool Care – Simple Steps



1. Clean

Remove dirt, sap and moisture after use.



2. Dry

Keep tools dry to prevent rust.



3. Protect

Apply a light coat of oil (e.g. camellia oil) for storage.

Sharpening and Maintenance



Sharpen

Keep a keen, safe edge using a sharpening stone.



Strop

Polish the edge on a leather strop for a cleaner, sharper finish.



Inspect

Regularly check the blade, handle and fixings for damage or wear.

Storage – Keep It Safe



Sheaths

Store knives in a proper sheath or protective cover.



Tool Roll

Keep tools organised, clean and dry in a tool roll or box.



Storage Box

Use a dry, secure box to protect tools when not in use.

Responsible Woodland Use



- ✔ Use dead, fallen wood from the ground.
- ✔ Only take what you need for your activity.
- ✔ Avoid damaging living trees and don't cut branches without permission.
- ✔ Follow local rules and the Countryside Code.

Leave No Trace



- ✔ Respect wildlife and other woodland users.
- ✔ Keep your work area tidy.
- ✔ Remove all scraps and litter, including cord and offcuts.
- ✔ Leave the area as you found it, or better.

Key Points to Remember

- Keep tools clean, dry, sharp and well stored.
- Use wood from a sustainable and legal source.
- Take care of woodland habitats and wildlife.
- Follow the Scout POR, your leader's instructions and local site rules at all times.

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Worksheets and Knowledge Test

Check your learning, identify woods and plan a simple project.

A. Identify the Trees

Look at the leaves, seeds and bark below.
Write the name of each tree in the box.











B. Wood Properties Match

Draw a line to match each wood with its main characteristics.

Oak	Flexible and light.
Birch	Hard, strong and long lasting.
Hazel	Burns well and lights easily.
Ash	Tough, strong and flexible.
Willow	Good for weaving and simple shelters.

C. Tool Identification

Write the name of each tool in the box.













D. Safety and Good Practice

Tick (✓) the correct statements.

- ☐ Always cut away from your body and hands.
- ☐ Use a sharp, well-maintained tool.
- ☐ it is safe to collect wood from any woodland.
- ☐ Wear eye protection when needed.
- ☐ Keep a clear and safe working space.
- ☐ Leave the woodland tidy and take your litter home.

E. Plan a Small Project

Choose one item to make (e.g. camp spoon, tent peg or whistle) and fill in the plan below.

Project: _____

Wood Type: _____

Tools Needed: _____

Main Steps:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My Design (sketch):

F. Knowledge Test (Quick Quiz)

Circle the correct answer.

1 Which wood is hard, strong and long lasting?
A) Birch B) Oak C) Willow

2 Which tool is used to hollow out a spoon bowl?
A) Hook knife B) Folding saw C) Carving knife

3 What is good practice when collecting wood?
A) Take only what you need B) Take as much as possible
C) Collect from anywhere

4 What should you always do with your tools after use?
A) Leave them outside B) Clean, dry and store them
C) Give them to a friend

Scouts Bushcraft

Bushcraft Skills, Resources and Practical Guides for Scouts

The **Scouts Bushcraft** book series provides practical, easy-to-follow guides to help Scouts, Explorer Scouts, Scout Leaders and other youth groups learn outdoor skills, develop confidence, work as a team and build a greater understanding and respect for the natural world.

In This Series

- Expert, practical guidance
- Step-by-step activities
- Useful tips and techniques
- Printable worksheets and resources
- Ideas for meetings, activity days and camps
- Supports safe, responsible and sustainable use of the outdoors



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