SCOUTS BUSHCRAFT

FIRE SKILLS & FIRE LIGHTING

Activity Risk Assessment – matching the 60-minute lesson plan

IMPORTANT
This is a template for planning and discussion, not an approval to light a fire. It must be checked and adapted for the actual venue, group, weather, equipment and activity. Follow current The Scouts policies, local rules, landowner instructions and any site-specific fire restrictions. If any required control cannot be put in place, do not proceed with the live-fire element.

1. ACTIVITY DETAILS

Activity	Fire Skills & Fire Lighting – 60-minute Scouts Bushcraft session	**Group**	Scouts / young people (age range to be confirmed)
Venue / site	_____	**Date / time**	_____
Lead activity leader	_____	**Other adults**	_____
Number attending	_____	**First aider**	_____
Emergency contact / access point	_____	**Review date**	_____

2. ACTIVITY SCOPE & METHOD

Planned learning: fire triangle; tinder, kindling and fuel; safe fire-site preparation; teepee, log cabin, star and lean-to fire lays; introduction to selected ignition methods; extinguishing and review.

Possible demonstrations: matches, ferrocerium rod, flint and steel, focusing lens, bow drill, pump drill, hand drill and fire roll. The leader should select only methods they are competent and equipped to demonstrate.

Practical option: group identification and sorting of tinder/fuel, choosing a fire lay and explaining a safe set-up. Live ignition is optional and requires a separate check that all controls, permissions and supervision are in place.

People potentially affected: participants, leaders, helpers, visitors, site staff and anyone nearby.

3. RISK RATING GUIDE

Likelihood (L)	1 – Unlikely	2 – Possible	3 – Likely
Severity (S)	1 – Minor injury	2 – Injury needing treatment	3 – Serious injury / major harm
Risk score	L × S = 1–2 Low	3–4 Medium	6–9 High

Use the score as a prompt for judgement, not as a substitute for considering the actual consequences. A high or uncontrolled risk means stop, change the activity or remove the hazard.

4. HAZARDS, CONTROLS & RESIDUAL RISK

Initial and residual scores below are indicative examples. The responsible leader must reassess them for the actual site and group.

HAZARD	POSSIBLE HARM	CONTROL MEASURES	INITIAL	RESIDUAL
Flames, hot surfaces and embers	Burns; clothing or equipment catching fire.	Use only an approved fire area and keep a clearly marked exclusion boundary. Leader controls access and gives a clear stop instruction. Keep the fire small and attended. Have water and suitable extinguishing equipment immediately ready. Treat equipment and embers as hot until confirmed cool.	3×3 High	1×3 Medium
Sparks and flying embers	Eye injury, burns or ignition of nearby material.	Check wind direction and strength. Keep spectators back and clear loose combustible material. Do not use ignition methods in unsuitable wind or dry conditions. Stop if sparks travel beyond the controlled area.	2×3 Medium	1×2 Low
Smoke and fumes	Coughing, breathing irritation or aggravation of existing sensitivities.	Position the group upwind where possible. Keep people out of smoke. Use only clean, suitable untreated fuel; never burn plastics, treated wood or rubbish. Stop if smoke affects participants or visibility.	2×2 Medium	1×2 Low
Fire spreading to vegetation / property	Burns, damage, wider incident or loss of control.	Confirm permission and restrictions. Check weather, drought and ground conditions. Use a designated fire base, keep fuel controlled, maintain a clear area and have an immediate extinguishing plan. Do not proceed if conditions are unsuitable.	2×3 Medium	1×3 Medium
Ignition tools and hot sparks	Burns, eye injury or accidental ignition.	Leader inspects equipment and demonstrates safe use. Keep tools controlled and pointed away from people. Only the leader or a specifically authorised participant handles ignition tools under close supervision. Store safely when not in use.	2×3 Medium	1×2 Low
Friction-drill equipment / moving parts	Pinched fingers, friction burns, splinters or impact injuries.	Check bow, cord, spindle, pump drill and boards for damage. Demonstrate safe hand positions. Keep fingers clear of moving parts and stop equipment before adjustment. Leader supervises closely.	2×2 Medium	1×2 Low
Sharp tools used to prepare tinder	Cuts or puncture wounds.	Avoid knives unless essential to the planned session. If used, follow the relevant tool-specific risk assessment and current Scout rules. Use a safe working position, controlled cutting direction, suitable supervision and secure storage.	2×2 Medium	1×2 Low
Hot equipment after demonstration	Contact burns from tools, boards, stones or fire base.	Set a designated cooling area away from participants. Mark items as hot and do not allow handling until the leader has checked they are cool.	2×2 Medium	1×1 Low
Slips, trips and falls	Sprains, cuts or impact injuries around the activity area.	Inspect the site. Keep paths and exits clear, manage trailing cords and bags, and keep the fire boundary free of clutter. Adapt for uneven, wet or slippery ground.	2×2 Medium	1×1 Low
Weather, drought and changing conditions	Fire spread, falling branches, cold / heat stress or loss of control.	Check forecast and conditions immediately before and during the session. Stop for unsuitable wind, drought, heat, storms or other hazards. Have a clear cancellation or indoor alternative.	2×3 Medium	1×2 Low
Crowding, distraction or unsafe behaviour	Accidental contact with fire or equipment; injury to participants or others.	Explain boundaries and behaviour expectations before starting. Maintain suitable supervision and headcounts. Position adults so the activity and group are visible. Stop activity if instructions are not followed.	2×3 Medium	1×2 Low
Manual handling / carrying fuel	Strains, splinters or dropped loads.	Use small manageable loads, safe lifting and carrying, gloves where suitable, and keep routes clear. Do not allow carrying burning or hot materials.	2×2 Medium	1×1 Low

5. ADDITIONAL CONTROLS & EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS

Site permission and restrictions: confirm landowner / site permission, local fire rules, seasonal restrictions and any relevant Scout activity requirements before the session.

Supervision: identify the lead leader, supporting adults, first aider and person responsible for the fire. Agree supervision positions and headcounts. Do not rely on a single adult to supervise both a live fire and a separate group activity.

Participant needs: consider age, experience, additional support needs, mobility, sensory needs, allergies / sensitivities and any individual plans. Brief helpers on relevant arrangements while respecting privacy.

Boundaries: establish a visible exclusion zone appropriate to the site, fire size and method. Keep access for leaders and emergency services clear. No running, pushing or horseplay.

Emergency response: stop activity, alert the lead leader, move the group to the agreed safe area, call 999 where required, provide first aid within competence and arrange access for emergency services. Do not put anyone at further risk attempting to tackle an uncontrolled fire.

Burns: cool a burn promptly with cool running water for 20 minutes where available; remove jewellery or loose clothing near the burn if not stuck; do not apply creams or ice. Seek urgent medical advice for serious burns, and call 999 for life-threatening injury. Follow current first-aid guidance.

Fire extinguishing: use the site-approved method. Douse and check the fire area, including ash and fuel, for residual heat or smouldering. Do not leave until the responsible leader is satisfied it is completely extinguished and safe.

Incident reporting: record and report accidents, near misses and unsafe conditions through the appropriate Scout and venue procedures.

6. PRE-START CHECKLIST

■ Permission confirmed; no fire ban or site restriction applies.

■ Current Scout guidance and relevant activity rules checked.

■ Site inspected; weather and ground conditions suitable.

■ Risk assessment reviewed with all adults and adapted for this group.

■ Leader competence and supervision arrangements confirmed.

■ Exclusion boundary, safe area and emergency access identified.

■ Water and suitable extinguishing equipment in place.

■ First aid kit and named first aider available.

■ Equipment checked; only required tools brought into the activity area.

■ Participants briefed on hazards, boundaries and stop instruction.

■ Alternative non-fire activity ready if conditions change.

7. STOP / DO NOT PROCEED IF…

- Permission is unclear or fires are prohibited.
- Wind, drought, heat or ground conditions make the activity unsafe.
- Water / extinguishing equipment or first aid arrangements are unavailable.
- Competent supervision cannot be maintained.
- The boundary cannot be kept clear, or participants cannot follow instructions.
- Equipment is damaged or the leader is not confident in the method.

8. SITE-SPECIFIC NOTES & SIGN-OFF

Record any additional hazards, controls, changes to the planned activity or reasons for cancelling live fire. Add a separate assessment for any additional activity such as knife use, tomahawk throwing, cooking, water activities or use of unfamiliar equipment.

Additional hazards / site notes:

Changes made to the planned session:

Emergency meeting point / site access details:

Prepared by	_____	**Date**	_____
Reviewed / approved by	_____	**Date**	_____
Leader in charge on the day	_____	**Review time**	_____

REMEMBER
A risk assessment is a live document. Review it if the venue, weather, group, equipment or activity changes, and stop the activity whenever safety controls are not effective.