BUSHCRAFT TOOLS AND WOODCRAFT

A practical 60-minute Scouts session | Tool selection, safe use, woodcraft and care

SESSION LENGTH	GROUP	SETTING	FORMAT
60 minutes	Scouts / youth group	Outdoor site or covered work area	Demonstration + supervised practice

Learning outcomes

- Identify common bushcraft tools and choose a suitable tool for a simple task.
- Explain and demonstrate the agreed safe-working rules for a tool station.
- Select suitable, approved wood and make a simple craft item from a prepared blank.
- Describe how to clean, dry, check and store tools after use.

60-minute session schedule

TIME	ACTIVITY	LEADER ACTION / LEARNING POINT
0-5 min	Welcome and boundaries	Introduce the aims, work area, stop signal and behaviour expectations. Confirm permissions, supervision and that no tool is handled until invited.
5-13 min	Tool selection	Show a bushcraft knife, folding saw, hatchet/axe, hook knife and sharpening stone. Learners match tools to tasks and identify visible damage or loose handles.
13-23 min	Safety briefing and demonstration	Demonstrate safe carrying, passing, storage, stable work position, clear working space and controlled cuts. Show saw and axe/hatchet use as leader demonstrations only unless separately authorised.
23-28 min	Wood selection	Compare supplied samples of oak, birch, hazel, ash or willow. Discuss grain, condition, intended use and why live trees must not be damaged.
28-48 min	Supervised woodcraft	Learners shape a simple tent peg from a pre-cut blank at a controlled carving station, using a suitable knife only where supervision and approval allow. Alternative: sand and finish a pre-cut item.
48-54 min	Tool care	Demonstrate removing dirt, drying tools, checking edges and handles, and sheathing/storing tools. Sharpening is a leader demonstration, not a participant task in this short session.
54-58 min	Review and knowledge check	Ask learners to name the right tool for a task, give two safety rules and explain how to care for a tool. Invite a quick show-and-tell of finished work.
58-60 min	Close and clear away	Leader accounts for every tool, checks the work area, collects offcuts and confirms equipment is safely stored.

SESSION SAFETY GATE

Practical use of knives or other edged tools only proceeds when the activity is approved, the leader is competent, supervision is adequate, and the site-specific risk assessment and current Scout rules permit it. If any condition is not met, use the no-blade alternative.

DELIVERY NOTES AND EQUIPMENT

Preparation before the session

- Choose a level, well-lit work area with a clearly marked tool-use boundary and a separate waiting area.
- Check local site rules, activity approval, current Scout POR and any required leader qualifications or permits before planning edged-tool use.
- Complete a site-specific risk assessment; check weather, ground conditions, first-aid arrangements and emergency access.
- Inspect all tools before the group arrives. Remove damaged, loose, blunt or unsuitable equipment from use.
- Prepare pre-cut, clean timber blanks and demonstrate the project first. Use only wood supplied or collected with landowner/site permission.

Equipment checklist

Teaching: tool display (knife, folding saw, hatchet/axe, hook knife, sharpening stone); wood samples; task-matching cards.

Practical: pre-cut softwood blanks; suitable carving knives if authorised; sanding blocks/paper; bench hook or secure work support; clamps where appropriate.

Safety: first-aid kit; handwashing/wipes; eye protection where task assessment requires it; boundary markers; clear stop signal.

Care and tidy-up: cloths, brush, approved protective oil, sheaths/cases, tool inventory and waste bag.

Essential controls during practical work

- Leader control: only the designated competent leader issues, supervises and collects tools. No unsupervised access or tool sharing.
- Working space: one active user per marked station; waiting learners remain outside the boundary. Keep bystanders clear of the cutting line and working area.
- Knife use: work from a stable position, keep the free hand behind the cutting edge, make small controlled cuts away from the body, and stop when tired or distracted.
- Saw use: secure the workpiece before cutting; keep hands clear of the blade path; do not hold small pieces in the cutting line.
- Axes and hatchets: leader demonstration only in this session unless a separately planned, authorised activity has its own approved method, zone, supervision and risk assessment.
- Sharpening and hook knives: leader demonstration only. Keep edges covered when not in use and never leave a tool unattended.
- Stop rule: use the agreed stop signal immediately if anyone enters the boundary, equipment moves, a tool is damaged, or a participant is unsure.

Assessment / evidence of learning
Observe whether each learner can:
- match a tool to a task;
- state two safe-use rules;
- identify suitable, approved wood;
- explain clean, dry, check and store.

Evidence: completed craft item, verbal answers and participation in the tool-care check.

Adaptations and alternatives
Lower-risk option: decorate, sand or finish a pre-cut wooden blank; use tool photographs/cards rather than live tools.
More challenge: compare wood grain and explain which timber suits a project, without adding tools or steps beyond the approved plan.
Inclusion: offer seated work, larger blanks, visual demonstrations and partner discussion as needed.

Leader reminder
This is a session plan, not a risk assessment or approval to run an edged-tool activity. Adapt it to the age, ability and needs of the group, local site conditions, current Scout POR, the activity approval process and the leader team's competence. Record any changes in the session-specific risk assessment.