

Axes

The axe is the oldest traditional tool used in Scouts. It can be an essential piece of equipment when open fires are being used. However, they should also be used correctly and only for the job they are intended for. This article is intended to give you some information on the types of axe available, the use of them, maintenance and safety.

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Axe Types

There are many types of axe and they all require respect and proper maintenance.

The hand-axe is the most common form of axe. It should only ever be used with one hand. It is designed for trimming and cut small firewood, thin branches and twigs. It should not be used on live or green wood.

Hand-axes have either wooden, metal or fibreglass handles or hafts as they are called. Some will also have rubber grips. They should have a sheath over the bit or cutting edge to protect it from damage or damaging people and other things.

The felling-axe is similar in design but a lot larger. It is used to provide a lot more force than a hand axe and hence is much more dangerous. It should be used with 2 hands at all times.

It is often used for felling upright living trees. They come in various weights and sizes. Only the correct one should be used. The size depends on the size and strength of the person using it. An incorrect size can be very dangerous.

Axe Care & Maintenance

- When not in use they should be masked and not left on the ground or stuck into the ground.
- It may be appropriate to temporarily mask the axe in a chopping block.
- Care should be taken to ensure that if it is in a chopping block, it is not over hanging in a way it can be caught upon and goes along the grain.
- Axes should be kept dry and not left outside after dark.
- They should be securely kept out of reach, and not sheathed.

- They should never be used in dark or poor light conditions.
- Axes should be kept sharp with an oiled carborundum stone.
- Keep the head oiled to prevent rusting, and oil by hand with linseed oil to prevent drying and cracking.
- If the haft is damaged it should be replaced before use and never repaired.

Axe Safety

- When using axes you should avoid any loose clothing and jewellery.
- Strong leather boots should be worn. No trainers or soft shoes.
- The area around should be clear including above and the ground.
- Make sure no other people are around.
- Never ask someone to hold the wood for you.
- Check for any damage to the axe and don't use if any found.
- The axe should be sharp and used over a chopping block or against a fixed tree.
- If you begin to feel tired stop before you have an injury.
- Carry the axe as shown below.
- Pass an axe to someone else by standing side by side facing the same direction and by the head first.

