

Axemanship

An axe is an essential tool for activities where a fire is used; but unmaintained, used incorrectly or for the wrong purpose an axe can prove to be a very dangerous piece of equipment.

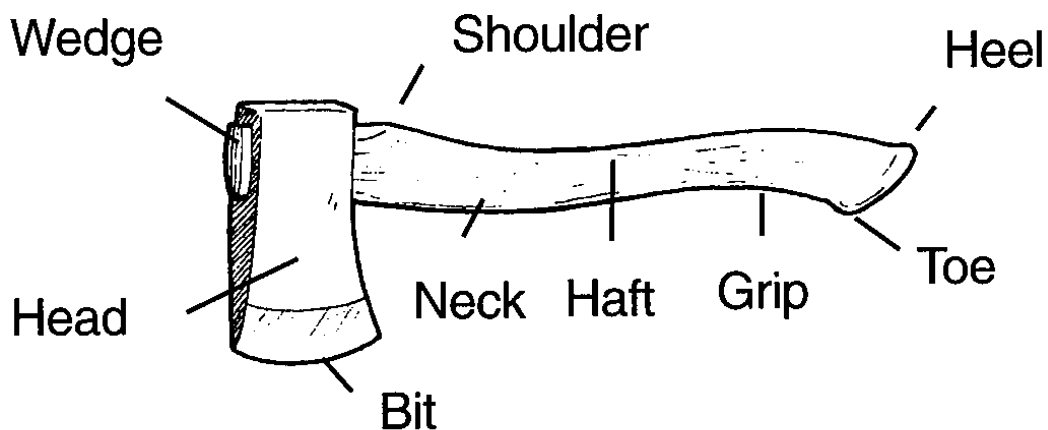
When to use the Handaxe:

- To cut and trim small firewood, thin branches and twigs.
- To slit logs.

When not to use the Handaxe:

- On live wood.
- Any wood larger than 7.5cms should be cut using a bow saw.

The main parts of the hand-axe



All axes should have a 'mask' or cover however these are not readily available and some of ours do not have a proper fitting cover. A mask should cover the blade and fit securely around the back of the head. It should always be fitted when the axe is not being used.



171st Rivervalley Explorer Scouts

Scope of Document: *Support document for training of Explorer Scouts in Axemanship.*

For use in conjunction with practical demonstration and practise.

This document pertains to Hand-Axe only (it is perceived that an Explorer Scout does not have the physical strength to manage a Felling-Axe safely)

Adventures Skills Awards: *Camping Level 2, Backwoods Level 2*

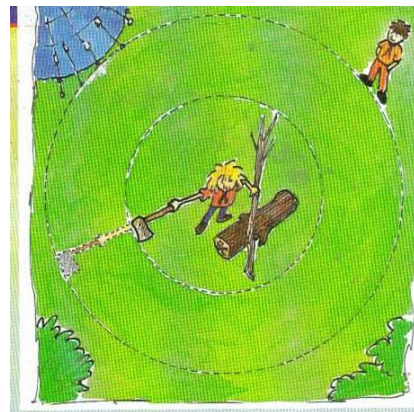
Care of the Axe

- Mask the axe when not in use. An axe may be masked temporarily by driving it into the chopping block, but the blade must follow the grain of the wood, it must be secure and the head must not overhang the edge of the block where there is a risk that someone passing could knock off the haft and dislodge the axe.
- Keep axes dry
- Do not leave them out at night. However put them away carefully in the stores tent, never just inside the door where someone might kneel or step on it going into the tent.
- Keep the axe sharp as a blunt axe is more dangerous than a sharp one
- Keep the axe head greased to prevent it from rusting
- Oil the haft with linseed oil to prevent it rotting
- Replace a damaged haft with a new one – never ever try to repair it.



Safety Guidelines

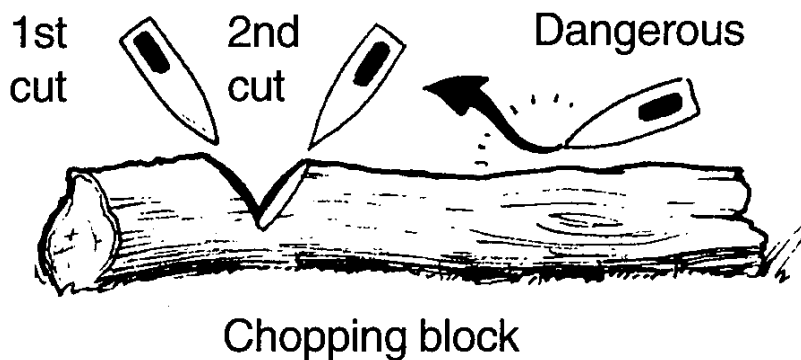
1. Remove any loose clothing – neckerchiefs, lanyards, scarves
2. Tie back long hair
3. Wear strong boots rather than runners or soft plimsolls.
4. Inspect the axe before use; do not use if
 - i. The haft and head do not line up
 - ii. If the haft is split, chipped, damaged or broken
 - iii. If the head is loose
 - iv. If the axe is blunt. If you strike a log with a sharp axe the bit will cut into the wood, a blunt axe can slip or bounce off the wood and hit you or someone else.
5. Check that there are no nearby obstructions especially overhead within two axe lengths of you. An axe length is the distance from your shoulder to the head of the axe when your arm is outstretched. The 'chopping area' should be fenced off and marked clearly as being a chopping area. The ground should be covered by plastic or material to collect the chippings (its one hell of a job to pick them up otherwise).
6. Check there is nobody else in the chopping area or directly in front or behind you.
7. Always use a chopping block and never chop directly onto the ground. The chopping block makes each blow more effective.



8. Rest the part to be cut over the chopping block. Chop directly over the chopping block, if you chop to one side the pieces may fly up and hit you or someone else.
9. Stop when you are tired – if you keep going you are more likely to miss the log and injure yourself.

How to use the axe:

- Dress appropriately, remove loose clothing, tie hair back (see Safety Guidelines)
- Remove the mask
- Firmly grip the 'haft' at the 'grip' using your dominant hand only
- Hold the wood to be chopped over the chopping block with the other hand
- Chop the wood by keeping the axe and forearm straight and bending your arm at the elbow rather than the wrist or shoulder. Chop at 44 degree angles to the length of the wood making alternate left and right cuts to create a small 'V'.
- Do not try and hit the wood at right angles to the length of the wood as this will make the axe bounce.



- Always watch the point which you are aiming.
- Clear the chippings away regularly.
- Mask the axe when finished working.

Carrying an Axe:



There are three or four ways in which Scouts are instructed to carry an axe – none are wrong as they all promote the idea that the axe should be carried with care and respect and held by the head in order to prevent it from swinging freely.

You will be trained to hold the axe cradled upside down in your hand with your arm down by your side; making sure that the axe bit is facing forward so that if you fall the axe would go into the ground rather than into your body. Look at the picture on the right,



Passing the Axe to Someone:

Again there are two ways scouts are trained to do this and neither is wrong; as long as you do one or other.

You will be trained to face the person you are passing the axe too. Hold the axe by the head with the half parallel to the ground and the bit facing outwards. The person receiving the axe holds out their hands palms up. Place the axe into their hands rotating the bit to face you. Ask 'Have you got it?' the receiver confirms they have grip by answering 'Yes I have'; then and only then do you release your hold of the axe.

This prevents the risks of the axe falling to the ground onto someone's toes.