

KNIFE SAFETY AND MAINTENANCE

Your first knife can give you many years of service. But like all tools it must be maintained by cleaning, oiling and sharpening from time to time.

SAFETY

It should go without saying that a knife can be a dangerous tool. But it doesn't have to be.

It may sound strange but a dull knife is much more dangerous than a sharp one. Little "slips" can create big gashes. The more pressure behind a slip, the bigger the chance of getting a cut. A knife's blade is designed for slicing. If it's sharp it will do its cutting job efficiently. Sharp knives allow the user to work with more relaxed and effortless movements of the hand, wrist and arm. Dull knives make the muscles more tense and open the door for accidents. It doesn't matter if you're cleaning a fish, cutting a string, carving a form into a piece of soap or just whittling a stick, a sharp knife will do the job best - and safest.

Another rule to remember at all times is never to pull the blade toward you. If the blade slips off a rope that's being cut or a piece of wood you're carving, it may not stop until it strikes your hand or body.

Here are some other tips to make your knife handling safe:

- *Never throw your knife.** The blade is strong but it's not made for absorbing the impact and may break. More importantly, it may glance off your target and hit someone--or bounce back toward the person who threw it.
- *Don't carry your knife with the blade open.** Whenever the knife is not being used it should be folded inside the handle. An open knife in a pocket can cause serious injury.
- *Running or climbing trees with your knife open can be extremely dangerous.** Make a promise to yourself to never do either.
- *The cutting blades of some knives do not lock in the open position.** Never put pressure on the blade in a direction that might cause it to close on your fingers.
- *Never hammer or pound on your knife.**
- *Never "chop" or strike objects to cut them.** Besides the strong possibility that the knife will deflect off the object, it may also chip off pieces of whatever is being cut and damage an eye.
- *Always ask yourself:** "If the knife accidentally slips, where will it go?" If the answer is "into my hand or part of my (or someone else's) body," then change your position.
- ** Remember, common sense is the best way to prevent nearly all accidents that can occur when using a knife. ****

MAINTENANCE

Like your bicycle or sports equipment, you'll get the best service from your knife if it is kept in good shape.

Remove all water and dry thoroughly if the knife gets wet. Use a light oil to cover the blades and hinged parts. Wipe off all excess oil.

Whenever the knife is not going to be used for a long period of time, make sure that the blades and working parts have a light covering of protective oil. This will keep it from rusting.

SHARPENING

It's a simple task to keep your knife's blade sharp. You will need a sharpening stone to do the job properly.

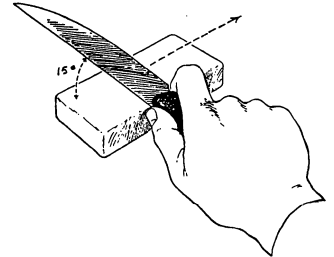
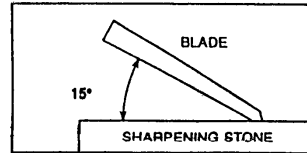
To sharpen the blade after the knife has become dull, some of the steel on the edge must be removed. The trick is to remove an even amount of steel from the entire edge of the blade.

As the knife is stroked over the stone at a sharp (about 15 degree) angle, the stone slowly removes the metal. The metal is actually scraped from the blade (making it sharper with each strokes as you "push" it across the stone, as if you're attempting to remove a thin slice from it.

As said, sharpening is not a difficult process. If you attend to it regularly, only a few strokes will be needed to "stay sharp."

Always sharpen you knife away from your body.

Maintain a 15 - 20 degree angle, and cut **into** the stone. Use plenty of cutting oil and clean the stone and blade frequently.



PRACTICE KNIFE

It is advisable for younger girls to practice with paper knives before progressing to the "real thing." Use the pattern below to make your practice knives. Each girl will need one knife jacket and one knife blade copied on heavy paper, scissors, glue, a hole punch, and one small brad. Cut out the patterns. Fold the jacket in half and glue or staple the ends closed. Punch a hole at one end of the jacket and at the rounded end of the blade. Insert the blade into the knife jacket and place the brad through the pre-punched holes. Have girls practice opening, closing, and cutting skills with their paper knife.

