

GSME Pocket Knife Safety



Introduction

Pocket knives are a useful tool when camping and being in the outdoors. Learning knife safety and usage is an important skill to help instill confidence in the girls and help them take ownership in tasks that require the use of knives as well as ensure proper technique and safety for all involved.

Girls must not use sharp tools until they have been instructed in the safe use of the tool by a trained/knowledgeable adult. Never assume girls know good safety practices even if they use a knife at home. Establish expected safety rules, and expect each girl to follow them at all times. Allow the girls to practice their skills in a developmentally appropriate manner (starting with a paper knife and moving up to a pocket knife once a girl has individually demonstrated the skills with pocket knife progression), and set aside our adult fears. The only way for girls to master their knife skills and become confident in their abilities is to practice with a real knife.

There are 4 levels to earning a knife safety certificate and the privilege to carry a pocket knife to Girl Scout functions. Please take the time to work through each step, ensuring the girls have mastered the skill before moving on. In order to receive her certificate, each girl must demonstrate her knowledge and skills.

After earning her Pocket Knife Safety Certification, a girl must keep her certification card with her at all times when using a pocketknife at Girl Scout functions. At any point, if a girl is being unsafe with her pocketknife, any adult witness may cut off one corner of her certification card. Once all four corners are gone, she no longer is able to carry and use her pocket knife, and must retake the safety certification in order to regain this privilege.

Pocket Knife Safety and Etiquette

Here are some general safety guidelines to follow whenever using a pocket knife.

- ◆ A knife is a tool, not a toy.
- ◆ Treat a knife with respect and the right to use the knife as an honor and privilege.
- ◆ Always use a sharp knife, never a dull knife.
- ◆ Keep the knife clean and dry.
- ◆ Never pass or carry an open pocket knife.
- ◆ When you are not using your pocket knife, close it and put it away.

Pocket Knife Recommendations

Follow these recommendations when selecting a pocket knife for girls learning how to use this valuable tool.

- ◆ The blade should be no more than 3 1/2 inches.
- ◆ The knife can have a locking blade or not, but look for a locking blade that would be easy for little hands to close safely.
- ◆ Girls should always use a sharp knife to prevent injury.
- ◆ Fixed blade knives are NOT recommended since the blade is always exposed.
- ◆ It is also recommended that the troop has at least one small sharpening stone/whet stone to ensure all the knives are well maintained.

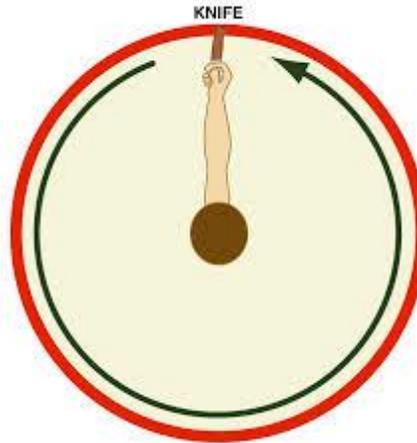
Resources

Girl Scout knife safety video: <https://vimeo.com/36998822>

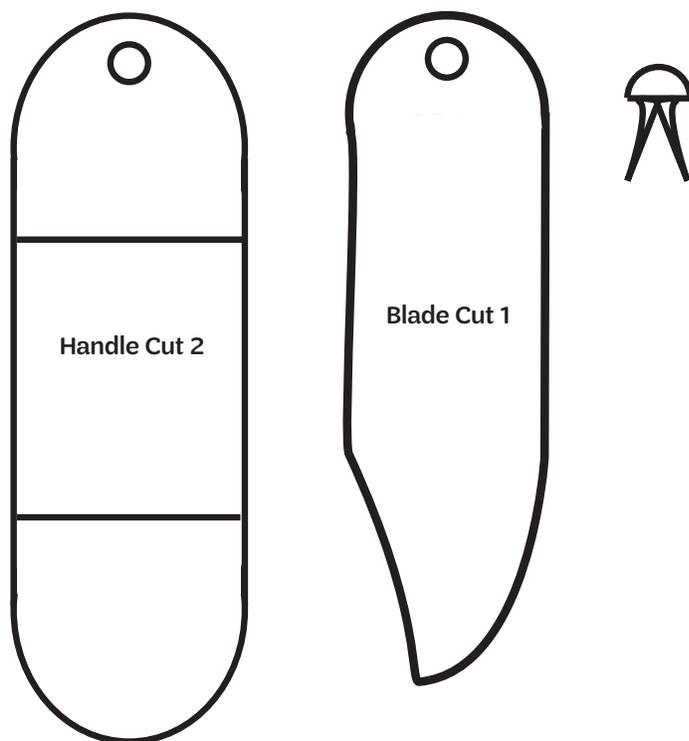
Level 1: Introduction to Knife Safety

Girls will use a cardboard/cardstock knife for Level 1. Use the paper knife pattern on the next page. We recommend using red lipstick on the cutting edge of the paper knife to help see if the girls open, close, and pass a knife safely.

- ◆ Learn what is meant by a “circle of safety”, practice using one, and demonstrate your skills.
 - A circle of safety is a ring about an arm’s length in all directions around an individual where she is unable to touch anyone or anything. This circle is important for everyone’s safety.



- To establish your circle of safety, hold a closed pocket knife (paper) in your hand. Extend your arm with the closed knife straight in front of you. Rotate your body to either side. No one or thing should be in this imaginary circle around you.
- ◆ Learn how to open, close, and pass a paper folding knife. Practice your skills while maintaining your circle of safety (opening and closing), and then demonstrate your skills.
 - To open a pocket knife, hold it in your left hand (if right handed) using your thumb and your pointer finger on opposite sides of the blade, swing the blade out. Always use two hands to open a folding knife and keep your fingers on the side of the knife and blade.
 - To close your pocket knife, hold the handle with one hand with your fingers on the sides. Hold the blade of the knife with your other hand, making sure you do not wrap your fingers around the blade. Push the blade up and around to meet the handle so that the blade is securely in the slot in the handle.
 - When passing a knife, you always close the knife first. If the knife does not close (like a kitchen knife), hold the dull edge of the blade with the sharp edge facing the ground. Offer the handle to the person receiving the knife. Before you let go of any knife, the person receiving the knife must acknowledge and indicate that they are ready by saying “thank you”.



Copy and cut pattern from paper and trace on poster board or cardboard. While cardboard is harder to cut, it is easier for little hands to work with when practicing their skills. Poster board/ cardboard is difficult to cut, so it is best done by an adult. Punch holes through all parts at once so they match. Put a brass paper fastener in the end where the blade joins the case to form a joint.

Level 2: Knife Safety Real Life Practice

Now that the girls feel comfortable and know the basic safety around handling a pocket knife, they are ready to practice and show their skills with a real pocket knife.

- ◆ Learn and demonstrate how to open, close, and pass a real pocket knife using the steps from Level 1. If your knife has a locking mechanism, first learn how to properly close the knife with your specific locking mechanism.
- ◆ Working with your safety circle, practice whittling or carving something such as a soap sculpture (Ivory soap works well) or fuzz stick. When using a knife, always use “pushing” strokes away from your body. Never cut towards you. Cut at a slant. Do not “saw” with a knife.
 - Soap carving: <http://scouts.sa.scouts.com.au/pages/733335>
 - Whittling: make a fuzz stick- a great fire starter.

Level 3: Caring for Your Pocket Knife

- ◆ Learn why a sharp knife is safer than a dull one (a sharp knife requires less pressure, and therefore has less chance to slip). A Whetstone or other sharpening device is used to sharpen a pocketknife. Practice sharpening a knife using a stone.
 - Place the stone on a level surface.
 - If using a whetstone, wet the stone with a little water.
 - Place the blade of the knife flat on the stone, then raise the back edge about the width of the blade itself, keeping the cutting edge on the stone. Keep the knife at the same angle at all times.
 - Push the blade along the stone as through you were slicing a layer off the top. Repeat this pushing motion 3 or 4 times. Turn the blade over and place it at the far end of the stone. Repeat the process of the other side an equal number of times by pulling the knife towards you. Remember to keep the blade on the stone at all times.
 - Wipe the blade off on a rag or towel on a flat surface. Do not hold the towel in your hand and wipe the blade off in your palm.
- ◆ Learn how to clean your knife.
 - Open blade.
 - Use a Q-tip or toothpick with a small bit of cloth twirled onto the end moistened with light oil.
 - Wipe the inside of the knife.
 - To rid the knife of bacteria from food, wash the blade with hot soapy water, being careful when handling the blade.
 - As needed, slightly oil the hinges with a light oil.
 - Make sure to keep dirt off the knife - this can damage the knife.
 - Keep the knife out of fire. The heat can damage the steel and the edge of the blade may become soft over time.

Level 4: Demonstrate Your Skills and Take the Pocket Knife Pledge

- ◆ Demonstrate the following:
 - Opening and closing your knife
 - Passing your knife
 - Sharpening your knife
 - Making a fuzz stick
 - Cleaning your knife
- ◆ Take the Knife Safety Pledge
 - I promise to keep the safety of myself and others around me as my top priority.
 - I will treat my pocket knife, or any other knife I use, with respect.
 - I will always close my pocket knife when not in use.
 - I will use my pocketknife only during designated and appropriate times, and under the supervision of an adult.
 - I will use my pocketknife in a safe manner at all times.
 - I understand that if I do not abide by my pledge, I may lose my privilege to use a pocketknife.

Girl Scouts of Maine Knife Safety Certification

(Please keep this with you at all times when using a knife for Girl Scouts).

On this day, _____ (Certification Completion Date)
_____ (name) has completed and
demonstrated proper knowledge and skill in the use of a pocketknife. She has thus
earned the right to carry and use a pocketknife at Girl Scout functions.

Pocket Knife Pledge

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Signature: _____ Date: _____

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Pocket Knife Safety Basics

- ◆ Always use your circle of safety - a ring about an arm's length in all directions around an individual where she is unable to touch anyone or anything. This circle is important for everyone's safety.
- ◆ To open a pocket knife, hold it in your left hand (if right handed) using your thumb and your pointer finger on opposite sides of the blade, swing the blade out. Always use two hands to open a folding knife and keep your fingers on the side of the knife and blade.
- ◆ To close your pocket knife, hold the handle with one hand with your fingers on the sides. Hold the blade of the knife with your other hand, making sure you do not wrap your fingers around the blade. Push the blade up and around to meet the handle so that the blade is securely in the slot in the handle.
- ◆ When passing a knife, always close the knife first. If the knife does not close (like a kitchen knife), hold the dull edge of the blade with the sharp edge facing the ground. Offer the handle to the person receiving the knife. Before you let go of any knife, the person receiving the knife must acknowledge and indicate that they are ready by saying "thank you".

Caring for Your Pocket Knife

- ◆ A sharp knife is safer than a dull one. A Whetstone or other sharpening device is used to sharpen a pocketknife. How to sharpen your knife with a whetstone:
 - Place the stone on a level surface.
 - If using a whetstone, wet the stone with a little water.
 - Place the blade of the knife flat on the stone, then raise the back edge about the width of the blade itself, keeping the cutting edge on the stone. Keep the knife at the same angle at all times.
 - Push the blade along the stone as through you were slicing a layer off the top. Repeat this pushing motion 3 or 4 times. Turn the blade over and place it at the far end of the stone. Repeat the process of the other side an equal number of times by pulling the knife towards you. Remember to keep the blade on the stone at all times.
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