

Young Marines Knife Safety Policy

Always follow these rules for safe knife use:

DO:

- Keep the blades closed except when you are using them
- Cut away from yourself
- Keep your knife sharp and clean. A sharp blade is easier to control than a dull one; a clean blade will last longer
- Close the blade before you pass a knife to someone else. If the blade does not close - hand it to the person with blade pointing down handle side up.

Don't:

- Carry a knife with the blade open.
- Cut toward yourself. If the blade slips, you may be injured.
- Pound on a knife handle or blade with another tool. The knife may break.
- Throw a knife.
- Pry with the point of a cutting blade. It can snap off.
- Put a knife in a fire. New knife blades are hardened, or tempered, with just the right amount of heat. Reheating them may ruin the temper and weaken the knife.

Caring for your knife:

Most knives are made of a strong steel alloy that won't rust. However, dirt and lint can collect inside, and ordinary use will dull the blades.

Cleaning a knife:

Open all of the blades, taking care not to nick your fingers. Twirl a small bit of cloth or paper towel onto the end of a toothpick or use a cotton swab. Moisten it with oil and wipe the inside of the knife. Be sure to clean the joint at the base of each blade. Swab out excess oil with a clean cloth. If you have used your knife to cut food or spread peanut butter and jelly, wash it in hot soapy water along with your dishes.

Sharpening:

Sharpen your knife with a whetstone. Most whetstones are made from granite and other materials harder than the knife metal. Some are covered with a diamond dust. Stones are used dry or with a few drops of water or honing oil. Hold the blade against the stone at an angle of about 30 degrees. That means the back of the blade is tilted off the stone one-third of the way to vertical.

Push the blade along the stone as though you were slicing a layer off the top. The stone's gritty surface will sharpen, or hone, the blade much the same way as sandpaper smooths wood. To sharpen the other side, turn the blade over and pull it along the stone toward you. Clean tiny bits of metal off the stone by slapping it on your hand or pants leg.

Work the blade back and forth across the stone several more times. Wipe the knife with a clean cloth and look directly down at the edge of the blade in the sun or under a bright light. A dull cutting edge reflects light and looks shiny. A sharp edge is so thin that it has no shine at all.

Types of Knives Authorized:

Lockable blades

Lockable blades are good to bring on a campout assuming they are not too big. A 3" knife is recommended and a 4" knife is the largest knife of any kind a Young Marine may carry. Anything beyond 4" can be more of a hazard than serving a useful purpose. Many Young Marines prefer using blades that lock because there is no chance of the blade folding back during use.

Serrated edges

Serrated edges have the benefit of usually staying sharp longer than straight blades. Having a sharp blade is important because if someone does get cut it is a cleaner cut, which heals faster. The downside is serrated edges are harder to sharpen and need to be sharpened by someone who is experienced at sharpening knives. It is recommended that Young Marines do not carry serrated edge knives.

Maximum blade length

There is no official NHQ maximum blade length. A knife with a blade of not to exceed 4" will be able to handle most needs a Young Marine will have for a knife. In many states a knife with a blade over 4" can be considered a concealed weapon so many units set a blade length of 4" as the max a Young Marine should have. A 3" knife blade is recommended.

Double-edged blades - Prohibited

Spring-loaded blades - Prohibited

Sheath knives/ fixed blade knives

The official NHQ policy regarding sheath knives is 'Avoid large sheath knives'.

Pocketknife

Many Young Marines find a pocketknife that has scissors rather than a large blade is more useful since the scissors have many uses. Pocketknives shall not be used for preparing meals. That is what kitchen knives are for so there is no need for Young Marines to carry large blade knives.

Hatchet

A hatchet is a hand tool used as a striking tool. Hatchets are a combination tool, part hammer and part axe. These versatile tools have many uses other than for camping such as the flooring hatchets, lath hatchets and shingling hatchets are used for special tasks like working with hardwood floors or installing drywall or gypsum board. Our intent is to discuss how the hatchet is a very popular camping tool.

Hatchets have a head and handle. The head of the hatchet is metal with a sharp blade on one side resembling an axe and a flat side on the opposite end resembling the surface head of a hammer. The handle of hatchet can be one of many types such as wood, solid steel or fiberglass and sometimes may be covered with a rubber grip.

Hatchets are commonly used for chopping, trimming, splitting and driving small nails or stakes such as those used when setting up a tent or canopy type of shelter. This tool should be used and handled carefully because it can be a very dangerous instrument if used improperly or carelessly.

The hatchet is one of the first tools you use as you start setting up camp. It can be used as a hammer to drive in tent stakes while setting up your tent. Be sure to exercise caution when used in this manner as it can easily cut through your tent material.

Another common use of hatchets when camping is that of chopping or splitting firewood and kindling. While the chopping may be better done with an axe or a saw there is nothing better for splitting the small logs for firewood. Be careful especially when splitting small logs for firewood. The natural tendency will be to lay the log down and swing the hatchet at it. This can be extremely dangerous and should not be done. Do not hold a piece of wood and swing the hatchet as it can easily cut a deep gash or cut a finger or thumb off.

First, a hatchet must be kept sharp to do its job well. A dull tool will often bounce and that could cause a severe injury to the user. So, keep your hatchet or ax sharp! To sharpen a hatchet or ax, prop it up against a log with the cutting surface of the blade up. Then, place a wooden peg against the head, where it rests on the ground, to secure it against the log.

Take a file, and remember, files work best when pushed and not pulled, and remove any burrs along the cutting surface. Start pushing the file from the cutting edge toward the body of the hatchet head. Wear heavy-duty gloves if you have them and always use a file with a handle. Try to keep the angle consistent as you move the file over the cutting edge. Once the burrs have been removed, use the rough surface of a wet stone, lightly oiled if possible, and repeat the process the same way.

When the burrs have been removed and the cutting surface of the blade is smooth, use a wet stone to put an edge on the blade. The stone should be moved in a circular motion and the stone should be kept firmly against the blade. Then, turn the

hatchet over and repeat the process on the opposite edge, but this time circling in the opposite direction on the blade.

The Outdoor Code

- **Be clean in my outdoor manners**
 - I will treat the outdoors as a heritage
 - I will take care of it for myself and others.
 - I will keep my trash and garbage out of lakes, streams, fields, woods, and roadways.
- **Be careful with fire.**
 - I will prevent wildfire.
 - I will build my fires only where they are appropriate
 - When I have finished using a fire, I will make sure it is completely extinguished.
 - I will leave a clean fire ring, or remove evidence of my fire.
- **Be considerate in the outdoors.**
 - I will treat public and private property with respect.
 - I will use low-impact methods of hiking and camping.
- **Be conservation minded.**
 - I will learn how to practice good conservation of soil, waters, forests, minerals, grasslands, wildlife, and energy.
 - I will urge others to do the same.

NHQ's policy states that if a Young Marine is using a knife improperly they are first shown the correct way to use it and if they continue using the knife in an unsafe way the knife is taken away for a certain period of time. Most importantly, a Young Marine needs to understand that a knife is a tool that can seriously hurt them or someone else so they should treat the knife in an appropriate manner or they can lose the privilege of being able to use one.

I have read and understand the Knife Safety Policy.

Young Marines Signature:

_____ **Date:** _____

Parent's/Guardian's Signature:

_____ **Date:** _____

This form is to be signed annually by the Young Marine and parent/guardian and returned to the Unit Commander by September 30 of each calendar year, otherwise, the Young Marine will not be eligible to participate in activities or events with field tools listed above.