

## *Message to Parents*

Your children will encounter knives throughout their lives. We feel that they should be taught the safe use of these tools as early as possible. We encourage you to read this information and to help teach your son or daughter about knife safety and care.

It's important that your children understand that a knife can be dangerous if not properly treated or used carefully. Begin by showing your child safe knife use in the kitchen. Teach them how to sharpen a knife, cut properly, store the knives carefully, and respect knives as tools.

We believe it's important that each child know that:

- 1) Knives are tools, not toys.
- 2) Sharp knives are safe tools, dull knives are dangerous.
- 3) The sharp edge and point of the blade should always point away, never toward them or anyone else.
- 4) Knives have acceptable uses, but do not take knives where they are forbidden (schools).

The American Knife and Tool Institute

## *Introduction*

Congratulations on owning your first knife. With it comes a feeling of pride in being considered mature enough to own and carry a knife. That ownership also brings with it a responsibility to use it safely and properly.

Like a hammer or saw, your new knife is a tool with which to do work. It will require regular care, a knowledge of what it can do (and cannot do) and an understanding of its proper use.

Read this manual very carefully. It offers valuable advice and tips on how to get the most from your knife for many years to come.

## *Know Your Knife*

Your "first knife" is more than just a sharp blade with a handle to hold on to. Your new knife may include various other tools such as a screwdriver, file, or other specialized tools. You will use the cutting blade more often than the other tools, so let's talk about that first.

When not being used, the blade should always be secured safely inside the handle. This not only prevents accidents, it keeps the edge from becoming nicked and dulled.

The blade is made from a high quality alloy steel. This steel is formulated to be strong, to hold its edge well, and to retain its bright, shiny finish with proper maintenance.

Your knife may also include accessory tools in the handle. These tools can be very helpful while at home or in the field. Many scout knives include files, a screwdriver, scissors, tweezers, and other tools.

Your "first knife" can give many years of safe and trouble-free service. Like all tools, it must be maintained by cleaning, oiling, and sharpening from time to time.

## *Safety*

A knife can be a dangerous tool when not used properly.

As strange as it sounds, a dull knife is far more dangerous than one that is kept sharp. Little "slips" can cause big gashes. The more pressure behind a slip, the greater the chance of being hurt.

Remember that a knife blade is used for slicing. If it's sharp, it will cut more efficiently and cleanly. It doesn't matter whether you are cleaning a fish, cutting a string, or just whittling a stick—a sharp knife will do the job best and safest.

A sharp knife allows the user to work more relaxed and with effortless movements of the hands, wrists, and arms. Dull blades make the muscles more tense and opens the door for accidents.

Another important rule to remember at all times is never pull the blade towards you. If your blade slips while you're cutting a rope or carving a piece of wood it may not stop until it strikes your hand or body.

Here are some other tips that will make handling your knife safer

- Learn how to safely open and close your knife. Be sure your fingers are away from the edge and also the edge of the space the blade closes into. Practice opening and closing your knife so you feel comfortable knowing how it works and feels.
- Never throw your knife. The blade is strong, but is not made for this purpose. The impact may cause it to break, but more importantly, it may glance off the target and hit someone else or bounce back at you.
- Don't carry your knife with the blade open or out of the sheath. Whenever a pocket knife is not being used it should be folded into the handle. An open knife can cause serious injury.
- Never run or attempt to climb trees with an open knife.
- If the blade of your knife does 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 use your knife as a hammer, or to pound with it.
- Never "chop" or strike objects to cut them. Besides the possibility that the knife can 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 body," then change your position.

Remember, the best way to prevent nearly all accidents that occur when using knives is to use common sense.

## Maintenance

As with any good equipment, you'll get the best service from your "first knife" if it's kept in good shape.

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

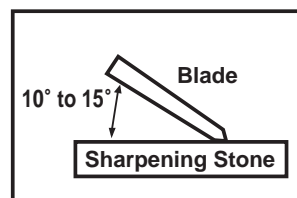
Whenever the knife is not going to be used for a long period of time, make sure that the blades and working parts have a protective covering of oil. This will keep it from rusting.

## Sharpening

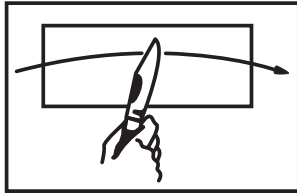
It is a simple task to keep the blade sharp. You may use a good sharpening stone or any one of the commercially available sharpening systems. For the best results and safety, follow the directions for whatever system you choose.

Sharpening is not a difficult process. If you attend to it regularly, only a few strokes will be needed to keep it sharp.

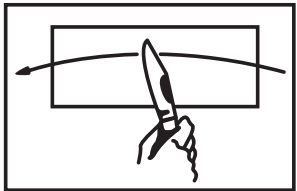
Always sharpen your knife away from your body.



- 1.) Hold the blade at a 10-15° angle. Maintain that angle while sharpening.



2.) Push the knife in the direction of the edge.



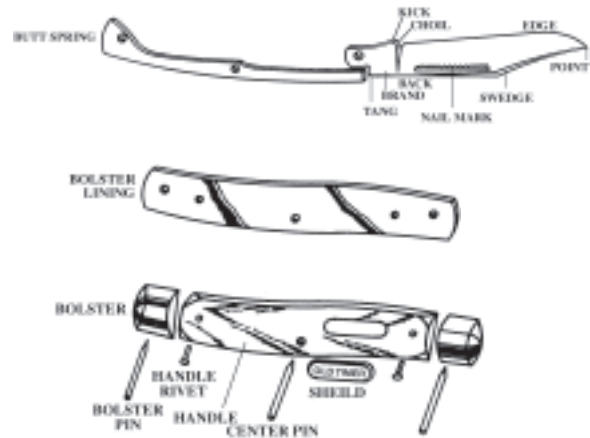
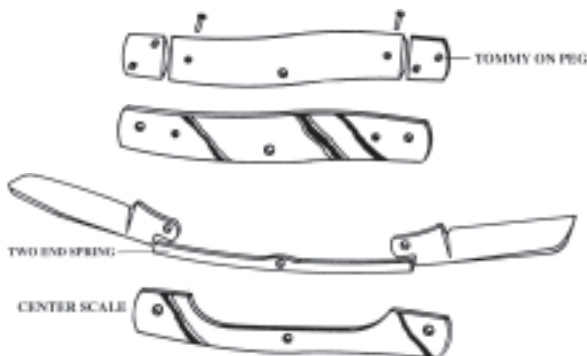
3.) Turn the knife around to the other side of the edge. Push the opposite direction, in the direction of the edge again.

When sharpening on a sharpening stone, some steel on both sides of the blade must be removed at a precise angle. Stroking the blade over the stone at a 10 - 15° angle slowly removes the metal. The metal is actually scraped from the blade making it sharper with each stroke as you push it across the stone, as if you're attempting to cut a thin slice from the stone's surface.

## Parts of a knife

The number of parts of a knife will vary. Typically a traditionally made pocket knife has over 20 parts, while a rigid or fixed blade has fewer.

Never attempt to take apart your knife, as doing so will leave you with an unsafe knife that will no longer be warranted by most manufacturers.



## Organizations

The following organizations can help you locate people in your area who would be helpful in organizing a program on knifemaking, knife safety, or general knife information for your group.

*AKTI American Knife and Tool Institute*  
 PO Box 68  
 Burlington, IA 52601  
 Phone: 319-752-8770  
 Fax: 319-752-6114  
 Website: [www.akti.org](http://www.akti.org)

*The Knifemakers Guild*  
 13950 NE 20th Street  
 Williston, FL 32696  
 Phone and fax: 352-528-6124  
 Website: [www.kmg.org](http://www.kmg.org)

*The American Bladesmith Society*  
 Box 977  
 Peralta, NM  
 Phone: 505-869-3912  
 Website: [www.americanbladesmith.com](http://www.americanbladesmith.com)

## Conservation

We are living in the age of the environment. Never before have so many people been concerned about the well-being of our planet.

“But what can I do?” you may ask.

The best way to become involved is to become part of a community program to help the environment. Here are a few programs that may already be going on in your area. Or, you may want to investigate joining a scout troop, school outdoor club, sportsman’s club, or public conservation organization that’s already involved in outdoor activities.

The U.S. Forest Service is now involved in a “Keep America Beautiful” program in which 30 million trees will be planted each year in nearly 40,000 communities across the nation. In years past, only one urban or suburban tree has been planted for every four that die or are cut down. For information write to

*America the Beautiful*  
U.S. Forest Service  
PO Box 96090  
Washington, D.C. 20090-6090  
Website: [www.fs.fed.gov](http://www.fs.fed.gov)

Saving habitat is another important goal of many organizations.

Ducks Unlimited (often simply nicknamed DU) is dedicated to providing habitat for ducks, geese, songbirds, muskrats, and other wildlife that live in or near water. Over the years, millions of acres of wetlands have been drained for development. DU is a conservation organization to stop that trend. DU manages wetlands in the prairie pothole area in the U.S. and Canada where most of the waterfowl do their nesting. Money is raised in cities, towns, and communities by hundreds of local DU chapters.

You may be able to help with fund-raising efforts or

get involved in projects run by a DU chapter near you.

To find out more, write

*Ducks Unlimited, Inc.*  
One Waterfowl Way  
Memphis, TN 38120  
Website: [www.ducks.org](http://www.ducks.org)

Another organization that buys valuable habitat for the preservation of plants and wildlife is The Nature Conservancy. This group operates over 1,000 nature sanctuaries scattered across the country.

For information write

*The Nature Conservancy*  
Suite 800 N Kent Street  
Arlington, VA 22209  
Website: [www.tnc.org](http://www.tnc.org)

Perhaps the biggest contribution now is to prepare yourself for making a difference in Earth’s future. A good start is to learn all you can about ecology and conservation. If your teacher allows you to choose your own subjects for essays and term papers, pick an environmental topic. Do the same in your science classes, especially biology courses where you’ll learn about wildlife and its habitat needs.

Many other organizations are involved in environmental work every day. They provide information to citizens who want to learn more about their programs. Here are a few to which you may want to write for information.

*The Izaak Walton League*  
1401 Wilson Boulevard, Level B  
Arlington, VA 22209  
Website: [www.iwla.org](http://www.iwla.org)

is concerned with air and water quality, protection of wetlands and public lands, fish and wildlife habitat management, and outdoor recreation.

*The Future Fisherman Foundation*  
One Berkely Drive  
Spirit Lake, IA 51360  
Website: [www.asafishing.org](http://www.asafishing.org)

promotes participation in and education about fishing and conserving our water resources.

Each state also has its own game and fish agency. They supply information on such topics as endangered species, and wildlife and fish management programs that you can become involved in.

Of course, there are many things you can do without writing to anyone or getting involved in a project.

For example, if you camp out, remember to pack all your trash with you when you leave. If you see litter that someone else has left behind, pack it out too.

Many communities have recycling programs for paper, cans, and glass. These materials can be used again or made into new items and save landfill and dump space.

Often recycling is voluntary and materials must be taken to a recycling center. Check with your city or community government to see if there's a program in your area. If so, participate. You may even earn a bit of spending money by collecting and recycling aluminum cans.

Another source of information for learning what you can do to benefit the environment is the National Wildlife Federation. This organization is concerned with all aspects of the outdoors—from wildlife to clean air. The federation's "Make a Difference" program covers all aspects of environment and conservation. Write

*Make a Difference*  
National Wildlife Federation  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
Website: [www.nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org)

Remember, you *can* make a difference.

The future of our environment is in your hands.

## *Outdoor Ethics*

Someone once described outdoor ethics as "outdoor manners."

The way you act and what you do outdoors shouldn't be any different from the way you behave at home. You surely wouldn't throw a soda bottle or a candy wrapper in the corner of your living room and leave it there.

And you wouldn't carve out your initials on your father's walnut desk. But sometimes people don't seem to carry their "manners" with them when they camp, hike, hunt, fish, or bird watch.

For example, it's sometimes a big temptation to carve your name or "draw" a picture in the trunk of a smooth-barked tree. While the bark may heal in time, there is a chance that you may be opening a wound for infection.

In addition, defacing a tree is a form of vandalism that destroys the beauty of nature. Save carving for chunks of wood and soap.

Of course, outdoor ethics also means obeying game and fish laws, caring for hiking trails, leaving clean campsites, respecting nature—and much more.

Today millions of people enjoy some sort of outdoor recreation. More than 140 million people take part in outdoor activities that involve fish and wildlife.

If each person watches his or her "outdoor manners" it will not only create a cleaner outdoor environment, but a more pleasant one as well.

## *Fishing and Camping Tips*

Here are some tips to help you enjoy your outdoor fun.

- You can count on catching small panfish like

bluegills, pumpkinseeds, and sunfish on any camping trip. Just because they're small doesn't mean they can't make a meal.

The fish can be deep fried after removing the entrails and cutting off the head and tail. It's difficult to skin small fish and there's no reason to do it. The skin holds the flesh together during frying and can be eaten. But you don't want to eat the scales. Before cutting off the head and tail, press the fish against a board, hold its tail and scrape forward (against the scales) with the back (dull side) of your knife blade. The scales will fly off, leaving only the smooth skin. Now you're ready for some good-eating camp fingerfood.

It's also good to know that biologists say that small panfish should be kept and used. If a pond or lake becomes overpopulated with them, they become stunted because there isn't enough food to go around. Anglers can keep their numbers at a level which their pond or lake habitat can support.

- A good way to attract fish is to “chum” for them. Poke holes in a small can of catfood, put the can in a net bag (like the sack in which onions are sold), tie a string to it and throw it in the water. It won't be long before the scent is distributed and fish will come searching for the food—and your bait.
- If a fish has swallowed your hook and you want to release it, don't try pulling the hook out. Cut the line near the mouth and set the fish free. In a few days the fish's digestive system will dissolve the hook.
- Sitting around the campfire is a perfect time for roasting hot dogs or marshmallows on a stick. Problem is, the stick often catches fire. To prevent this, collect green (live) stick from shrubs and bushes, then soak them in water for a few hours. They

won't catch fire as quickly.

- Going on a hike? Cut the center from a large apple and fill it with peanut butter. You may want to add raisins or nuts, too. Wrap it in foil or cellophane and it will make a tasty snack for whenever you get hungry.
- Before building a campfire, take the time to build a fire ring. Clear a 3-foot wide space down to bare soil by removing all rocks, twigs, and leaves. Then surround the ring with rocks to prevent the flames from spreading or the heat from becoming too intense along its edge. When you leave make sure the fire is out. You may not see a flame but a fire can burn for many hours in the decayed material under the soil. Stir the embers, add water, and place the rocks back where you found them. Leave no sign that you were there.
- Matches won't help you start a fire if they're wet. Break several wooden matches in half and store them in a plastic 35mm film container until they're needed.
- If the zipper on your jacket or sleeping bag sticks, rub the track with a piece of candle wax. You can also use a lead pencil which contains graphite, a dry lubricant.
- When you cook over an open fire, first rub the bottoms of the pots and pans with soap. After dinner the soot will wash off easily.
- “Leaves of three, let them be” is good advice for anyone walking in the woods. Poison Ivy always has leaves growing in clusters of three. The vine grows up trees and clusters of poison ivy often grow as dense as the tree leaves themselves, especially in the lower parts of the tree. Many people who get the itchy irritation have no idea when or where they touched the poison ivy. If you think you've come in

contact with it, wash your skin with soap and warm water as soon as possible.

- Inexpensive baking soda isn't as popular as it used to be but it's still a handy item to have on your outdoor travels. Sprinkle it on your hands when cleaning slimy fish and it will help you get a better grip. When you're done, it will remove the fishy smell from your skin. Sprinkle it in your boots to help absorb perspiration. Or store it in your ice chest to help absorb odors. Canteens can also be kept clean by rinsing them with three tablespoons of baking soda to one part water. And if you forget your toothpaste, it can even be used to brush your teeth.
- Keep your tackle box organized by using safety pins to store your swivels and hooks. Simply open the pin, thread the eyelets of the swivels and hooks on the pin, then close it. This is also an excellent way to keep different sized swivels and hooks from getting mixed up.
- If the thread holding the guides on your fishing rod is starting to come loose, coat it with clear fingernail polish.
- If you ever need to measure something and don't have a ruler, remember that a dollar bill is 6 1/8 inches long and 2 5/8 inches wide. Folded in half the bill measures just slightly over 3 inches.
- If your boots or waders spring a leak, slip a plastic bread bag over dry socks, then put your leaky footwear back on and continue fishing—comfortably.
- Whenever you're being photographed with a fish, remember to hold it in front of you. A fish held to the back or side will appear smaller than it really is. Most of us need all the help we can get when showing off our "big catches."

- Fishing line will wear out quickly if your rod guides are badly worn. To check their condition, use either a piece of nylon stocking or a cotton cue tip. If there is any resistance when either is rubbed inside the guide, it may need replacement.
- If you run out of bait on a fishing trip, don't despair. There's plenty of free-for-the-finding bait around. Grubs live in rotting wood. Grasshoppers and crickets abound in summer fields. Worms will often be on the surface of cool soil under flat rocks. In fall and winter the "lumps" (called galls) on goldenrod stems serve as home to a small, white fly larvae that panfish love.
- Never use a gas campstove or lantern to heat your tent. Not only is it a fire hazard but the gas fumes can be deadly.
- When hiking or hunting, always carry a plastic whistle. Work out a code with your companions. One whistle may mean "Where are you?"; two whistles, "Come quickly"; three whistles, "Emergency!"; and so on.
- Remember the cardinal rule of outdoor travel. "Leave nothing but footprints. Take nothing but pictures-and memories."

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- 4) **Knives have acceptable uses, but do not take knives where they are forbidden (schools).**

“Humans have been using knives as tools  
for millions of years.”

# *My* **FIRST** *Knife*

By Noted Outdoorsman

**Tom Fegely**

*Tips on Safety, Use, Maintenance,  
Sharpening, Conservation,  
Outdoor Ethics,  
Fishing, and Camping*



[www.AKTI.org](http://www.AKTI.org)

Phone: 319-752-8770

Toll free: 877-752-8770



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