

Axe

An axe can be a very useful tool in camp. Note however that there are many different types of axe and they tend to be suitable for a limited range of work. In Scouting this should not present too much of a problem as we tend not to use the more 'specialist' types of axes.

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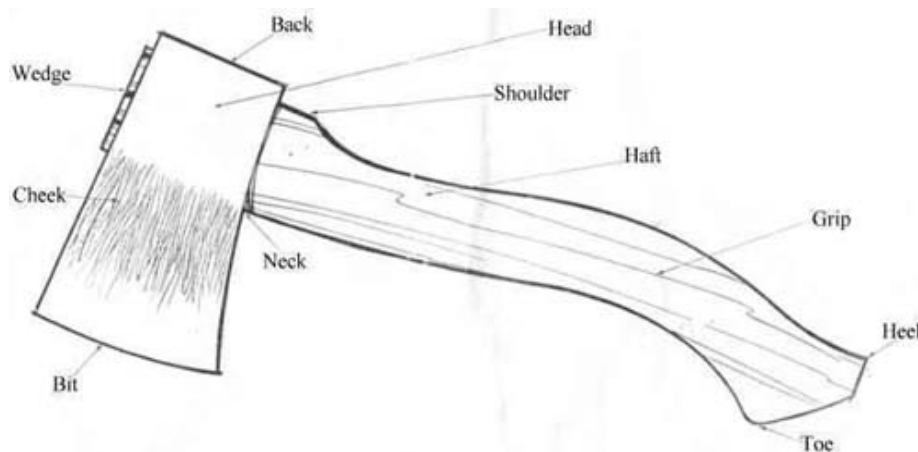
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Axe - Names of Parts



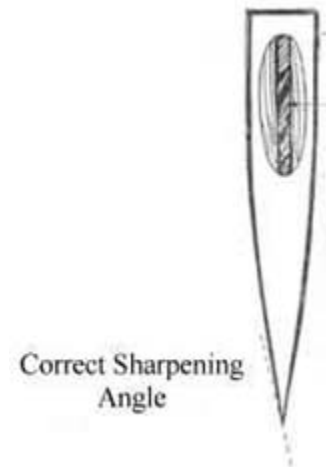
Axe Parts

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Sharpening an Axe

Sharpening an Axe

An axe with a blunt edge becomes no more than an inefficient hammer, and indeed a great deal more dangerous as you struggle to use it. Always keep your axe sharp. For large 'burrs' a file is probably your best bet. Make sure you use the file correctly though, it will only work in one direction, it works when pushed, not pulled.



Axe Parts

To sharpen your axe prop the axehead between a log and a peg driven into the ground. Always try to sharpen inwards from the cutting edge (to avoid producing any burrs). First use a file or rough stone to remove any burrs and rucks. Then finish with a smoother stone, using a circular motion. Don't drag the stone off the cutting edge, push on to the blade.

Turn the axe over and repeat the process, circling in the opposite direction.

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Chopping Areas

Darren Dowling

When chopping wood at camp, you will need to create a specific chopping area. Choose a site that is fairly close to the fire and clear of any obstructions (not only on the ground. Ensure there are no overhead obstructions that could catch your axe as you swing). Make a circle that is at least 2m (6 ft) in radius (or at least 3 axe lengths). Rope this area off and ensure it is clearly marked. Make sure that everyone knows where the chopping area is. No loose clothing should be taken into the area, and no one should enter the area without strong shoes or boots (and of course checking it is safe to enter).

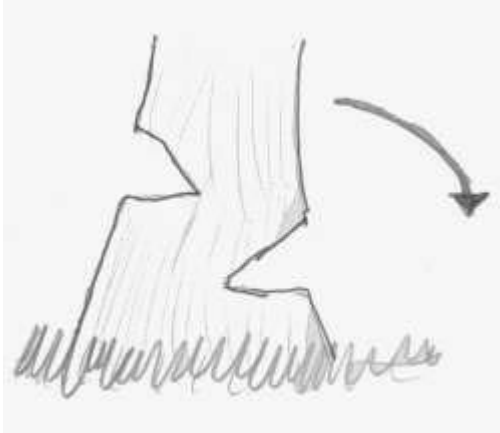
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Tree Felling

Using an Axe

Most people with have a 'j Always use the axe in a w swinging in an arc that fee firm grip, and always swir hands, and legs. Ensure th target and follow through, anyone else. Never throw sheath it or bury it in a log

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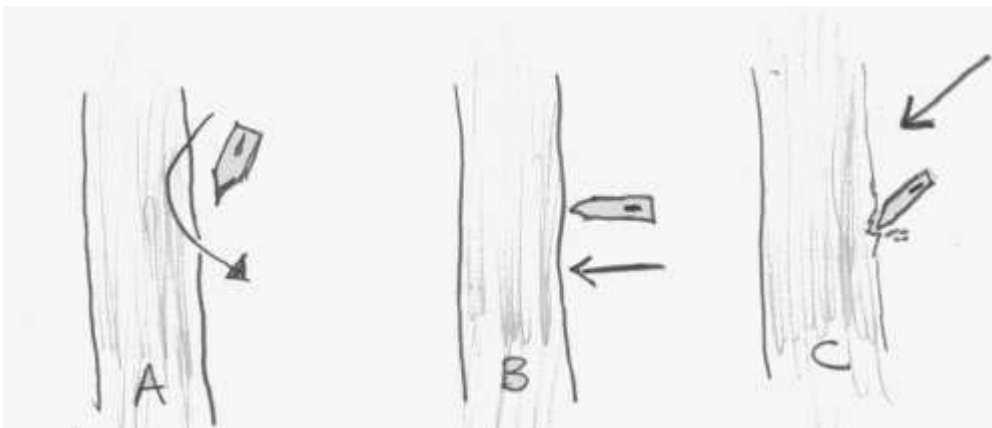
Main Cuts

Before you do anything else, check overhead for dead branches which may fall and injure you like hornets nests. Clear the area around the tree of any undergrowth or branches that could blow. If the tree has a particularly large spread of roots or boles around the base you may want to build a platform so that you can reach a thinner part of the trunk and save time and effort. Obviously make sure the platform is stable and you have a clear route of escape (in case something goes wrong).

Cut from both sides of the tree. First you chop a notch out at an angle of about 45 degrees and then another on the opposite side at a lower level, or you want the tree to fall.

Do not cut through more than half the tree before starting the other notch.

You must work at a height that is comfortable for you. Try to cut downwards at 45 degrees (occasionally a horizontal cut to clear debris etc.).



Hitting Angle

A steady rhythm of blows will cut much more efficiently than fewer big blows. If you put too much force on a single blow, the axe will bounce off the trunk and you will lose your rhythm.

behind the axe your aim will suffer, you will tire and then every swing becomes more dangerous. The weight of the axe does the work.

Alternating the angle of the stroke will prevent the axe from jamming. Too steep an angle will glance off, end-on will make the axe jam (or simply be inefficient). Try to aim for a 45 degree

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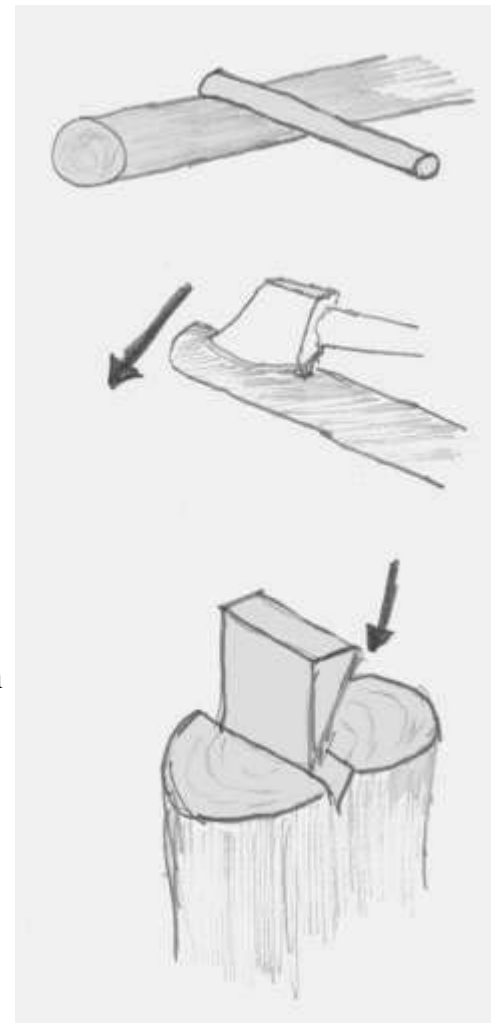
Splitting Logs

Splitting Logs

For a large log, as before, stand behind the log with your feet well apart. Swing down the cut the side away from you. Do not chop downwards. If you wish to split a smaller log, lay it against another log. Do not put your foot on it. There is an alternative to this though, hold the smaller log against the cutting edge and bring them both down together on to a larger log.

If in doubt, or if you have any difficulty, split larger logs with a wedge and a rock. Do not hold the wood upright in your hand and try to split with an axe.

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Making an Axe

Darren Dowling

First you will need to select the wood for your handle, any straight, knot-free hardwood will be suitable (ash and hickory are ideal). Cut two notches into the fluke of a buttress, spaced to the

Carrying an Axe

Carry an axe by holding it blade down or away from you so it will fall on top of the blade.

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desired handle length. Hit along the side of the fluke close to the cuts. It will split away at their depth.

Next you will need to fit the head. Whittle the handle into shape with one end cut to fit the hole in the axehead. Make sure you cut a notch in this end that is going into the axe head and make a wedge to fit the notch. With the head in place, drive the wedge into the notch and then soak the axe in water overnight (this will tighten the head onto the handle as it soaks up the water). Always check your axehead for tightness before you use them.

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Fitting an Axe with a Handle

Darren Dowling

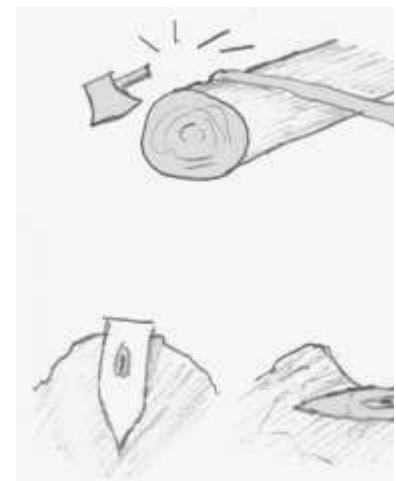
If the head is loose you can soak the axe for a few hours in a bucket of water but this will only ever be a temporary fix (the wood will swell and the handle will be tight for a little while). Ideally you need to replace the handle or at least replace the wedge.

Saw off the old handle close to the axe head (Note: you should not just burn the handle off as this will cause the bit to lose its temper, note the above arrangements) and drill out the wood that is left in the axe head. You can punch the rest of the wood backward from the handle side and then clean inside the hole.

Get the new handle and pound it into the head. Make sure the handle passes out the other side by at least an inch. Also be sure that the new handle is correctly aligned.

Put some glue on a wedge and in the slit for the wedge in the end of the handle (you did make a slit didn't you?) and then drive in the wedge. You can now saw off the excess handle and wedge.

Broken handles



Broken Handles

Using an axe takes a lot of the way handles get broke head misses the target and from the blow. To remove way is to put it in a fire, bi metal in the earth (to prev

Never attempt to repair an
Never use any axe that has

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It would be a good idea to fix the wooden wedge in place with a steel wedge, placed diagonal to the wooden wedge.

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