

Knives: Tools, not Toys

Knives have been a part of Scouting since the start. [Since March 1951 and the introduction of the Totin' Chip program, BSA has emphasized that having a knife is a *privilege*.](#) The knife is so critical to Scouting that it is considered one of the ten essentials that all Scouts should have outdoors.

That said, the knife has often been viewed and used more as a toy than a tool. The results can be damaging to the Scout, their fellow Scouts, and their environment. Thus, there is a need to re-emphasize the importance of possessing and using knives in a safe, respectful manner. The same principles first developed in 1951 as part of the original Totin' Chip remain true today: “I will use my...knife and axe as tools—*not playthings*.”

Some key takeaways

- Knives should never be used to harm or suggest harm to others. The safety of Scouts and Scouting participants is paramount and must always be our priority. [Incidents involving a Scout who uses or indicates the use of a knife to harm others should be addressed and reported promptly.](#)
- [The BSA neither encourages nor bans fixed-blade knives nor does it set a limit on blade length](#) but many councils and Scout camps have restrictions on the types of knives that Scouts can use. [Your unit may also set unit-level knife policies.](#)
- Make use of the Totin Chip program and repeat it regularly. Scouts should not be exposed to the concepts of knife safety once in their Scouting progression and never again. Repetition leads to mastery.
- Be aware of how to treat knife injuries. [Minor wounds can be treated by cleaning, treating, and covering the wound, however, more serious wounds should be evaluated by a medical provider.](#)

“Scouts pride themselves because of their knowledge of handling an axe and a knife to prevent accidents.”