

# Knife Guidelines for Troop 240

The following are Troop 240's policies on pocket knives developed over many years in accordance with the "Guide to Safe Scouting". No Scout should be carrying a knife if he has not been trained and received his Totin' Chip emblem and card. Do not let your son acquire a knife until he has taken this course. This training covers everything from how to hand off a knife, to how to sharpen it, to how to clean the blades after use. It is a half hour learning period. This training is given by one of our Assistant Scoutmasters and is taught on an overnight. There is another half hour training module on axes and saws.

## Lockable Blades

Lockable blades are good to bring on a campout assuming they are not too big. A 4" blade is largest a Scout should carry. Anything beyond 4" can be more of a hazard than serving a useful purpose. Many Scouts prefer using blades that lock because there is no chance of the blade folding back on their fingers during use.

## Serrated Edges

Serrated edges have the benefit that they usually stay sharper 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 that serrated edges are harder to sharpen and need to be sharpened by someone who is experienced at sharpening this type of knife.

## Maximum Blade Length

A knife with a blade of 4" (five fingers) can handle most needs a Scout will have for a knife. In New York City a knife with a blade over 4" is considered a concealed weapon. Therefore, our Troop has set a blade length of 4" as the maximum a Scout can have.

## Double-edged Blade

Double-edged blades serve no practical purpose in Scouting and a Scout should not have one. There is no reason a Scout should need one. They are more of a danger than a useful tool. A double-edged blade means a Scout has twice the chance of cutting himself or someone else. It is important that Scouts' understand a knife is a tool and not a weapon or toy.

## Spring-loaded Blades

They serve no purpose in Scouting no matter how far they pop out and a Scout should not have one. Many times spring-loaded blades invite Scouts to play with them and see how they work, with an end result of someone getting hurt.

## Switch Blades

Switch blades are illegal in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Our Boy Scout camps have a policy of taking switch blades from Scouts and calling the police.

## Butterfly Knives

Recently knives that open with an easy flick of the wrist and have a scissor type handle have become popular with some people. Because of the danger they pose to everyone since they are mainly a weapon Troop 240 has decided to ban them.

## Sheath Knives / Fixed Blade Knives

The official BSA policy regarding sheath knives according to the "Guide to safe Scouting" is 'Avoid carrying large sheath knives' and none of our camps allow Scouts' to carry them. Many years ago the BSA sold official sheath knives. However, Scouts had to one up each other till they were carrying machetes. At that point all Scout camps banned all sheath/fixed blade knives. The only knives a Scout should be carrying are ones that allows them to fold the blade into the handle for safe carrying. Almost every camp will allow Scouts to have fixed blade knives in kitchen areas at campsites but the knives must stay in the kitchen area.

Our Troop prefers that Scout's carry Swiss Army knives or a similar type of knife, with a 3" blade, in a **case** with his **name** on it. The Swiss Army type of knife has a very strong blade that does not break if accidentally dropped while open. They also have many useful gadgets in them. Do not buy one that has so many gadgets that is awkward to work with. They are also very expensive. Many Scouts' find a pocketknife that has a scissor in it, rather than a huge knife, is more useful since the scissors will most likely be used more than the knife blade. They also have a very good locking mechanism. When buying a knife check out how easily the blade(s) closes. If they closes too easily do not buy it. Further, when buying a Swiss Army knife buy the one that has red handles not the black handled one. The red handled knife can be quickly seen if it is laid on the ground for any reason.

Pocket knives should **NOT** be used for preparing meals; that is what kitchen knives are for. So there is no need for Scouts' to carry large blade knives. Try cleaning a pocket knife after using it for food preparation. Also, the Scout should ask himself just how hygienic his knife is before using it around food.

Our Troop has a policy that if a Scout is using a knife improperly, after being trained, he is again shown the correct way to use it and if he continues using the knife in an unsafe way the knife is taken away from him for a certain period of time. The most important thing is that a Scout needs to understand is that a knife is a tool that can seriously hurt them so they should treat the knife in an appropriate manner or they can loose the privilege of being able to use one.

# REMEMBER A KNIFE IS A TOOL!

