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**Safe Use of Fire and Tools Policy**

This policy sets out the ways that fires and tools will be used during Nature Nicki sessions in order to reduce risk or injury to self and others and to avoid damage to tools and to the woodland.

**CAMPFIRES**

* Campfires are only to be built in the metal fire pit which will be brought onto site for sessions and placed at the centre of the ‘Fire Circle’ – an area of sitting logs at least 1m away from the fire pit. A Dakota fire pit may be dug in place of the metal fire pit only if weather conditions are safe, i.e. not during a long period of hot and dry weather.
* If fire circle is covered, the tarp should be above adult head height - high enough to be at no risk of catching fire – and sides should remain open for ventilation.
* Ensure adequate seating in fire circle and that everyone uses seating when group meets at the fire circle.
* Walk, don’t run, around the **outside** of the ‘fire circle’ when moving around fire area.
* No bags or other trip hazards to be inside the fire circle.
* Do not sit with your back facing into the fire-circle.
* Fire can be lit with matches or fire steels. Firelighters can be used if wood is too wet.
* Once the fire has started an adult needs to attend to it at all times.
* Only fire lighting group, if appropriate, to add firewood. They must be supervised at all times.
* Closed toe shoes should be worn within the fire circle, legs covered i.e. long trousers and hair tied back.
* No fire poking – long hot sticks are a serious burn hazard in a group situation.
* Ensure students are told not to throw anything into the fire, or pull anything out of it.
* All activities around the fire should be very closely supervised in small groups - 1 adult to 5 students.
* When tending to or undertaking an activity at the fire site it is always better to kneel with one leg only rather than two (where this is practical), as this allows you to move away more quickly if you are in danger.
* DO NOT SIT IN THE SMOKE - observe wind direction and keep smoky side of the fire clear.
* Keep a bucket of water, fire blanket, Safety Gloves, and First Aid Kit in an obvious and clear spot no more than 2m from the fire – make sure everyone is aware of where this kit is.
* Fire to be extinguished safely by spreading the embers with a stick and pouring water on slowly.
* Fires should leave no trace

**FIRESTEELS**

* Tools stay in Fire box when not in use - only to be used at work station and returned immediately after completion of activity to responsible adult – ensure all tools are accounted for.
* Never leave fire steel lying around on ground as they easily get lost.
* No gloves to be worn when using a firesteel.
* Safe working space maintained.
* Spark is created using a strong downward stroke of the scraper along the steel at a 45º angle. Always strike away from yourself and upwind to prevent burns from ignition of tinder.
* Never strike the steel towards someone else – the spark is very hot.
* Only to be used on flammable materials as per instruction from leader.
* Suitable clothing to be worn for activity with no dangling fabric or jewellery.
* Long hair must be tied back.

**WOODCRAFT KNIVES**

* Good supervision, ratio of 1 adult to 5 children.
* Tools stay inside locked toolbox when not in use and returned immediately after completion of activity to responsible adult – ensure all knives are counted out and in.
* Ensure knives are in sheaths when not being used.
* Never leave knife lying around on ground or stuck into something.
* Glove may be worn on ‘helping hand’ only when using knives.
* Children are made aware of knife safety rules -
  + SITTING with knees apart.
  + Elbows on knees.
  + Whittle away from you NEVER towards you.
  + Do not use leg as a rest - if knife slips it will go into a main artery.
  + ‘Blood bubble’ – a stretched arm with knife should not touch others.
  + If distracted and you need to look away, stop whittling.
* If tool gets stuck children should be instructed to request leader’s assistance rather than struggle to release it themselves.
* Suitable clothing to be worn for activity with no dangling fabric or jewellery. Long hair should be tied back.

**POTATO PEELER**

Children use this tool prior to going on to using a woodcraft knife. This is to ensure they have the appropriate motor skills and are able to follow relevant safety procedures. The instructions for this tool are therefore exactly as those for the woodcraft knife above.

**BOWSAW**

* Tools stay inside Nicki’s trolley when not in use and returned immediately after completion of activity to responsible adult – ensure all tools are accounted for.
* The blade is sharp – keep hands clear of it and ensure cover is on when not in use.
* To be carried at arms length, parallel to ground.
* Glove to be worn on ‘helping hand’ and optionally on hand holding saw.
* Safe working space maintained.
* Suitable work surface to be used.
* Use saw in controlled fashion when working in pairs.
* Older children can use on their own, if so, the hand bracing the wood may cross over the saw between the saw blade and its handle - this ensures that if the saw slips it will not cut you.
* Ensure your knees are far enough away not be cut by the saw as it gets lower.
* Make sure you are parallel to what you are cutting and use the whole of the blade to saw. This is important because if your body, the saw, and the wood are not in a straight line the saw is liable to bend and get stuck, making the sawing hard work and hazardous.
* If tool gets stuck children should be instructed to request leader’s assistance rather than struggle to release it themselves.
* Suitable clothing to be worn for activity with no dangling fabric or jewellery. Long hair to be tied back.

**FOLDING HAND SAW**

* Tools stay inside locked toolbox when not in use and returned immediately after completion of activity to responsible adult – ensure all tools are accounted for.
* Never leave tool lying around on ground – it will rust and be a hazard to others.
* To open press safety button on handle, open up blade carefully ensuring it **locks open** - do not put hands on blade - it is very sharp. The saw has a safety position when opening so the button must be pressed a second time (or held down) for the saw to open the full way.
* Once you have completed sawing tap the blade against a log to remove sawdust from blade – DO NOT try to remove this with your fingers.
* Close saw with care - hold handle so fingers do not obstruct closing blade, press safety button with same hand and carefully and slowly close blade with the other. This can be fiddly and children should be encouraged to ask for help if needed rather than try to force the blade.
* Use the folding hand saw for branches too big for Loppers but not big enough to warrant a bow saw. If branch is too small the saw will jump about, if too big it will get stuck.
* Glove to worn on helping hand and optionally on hand holding saw.
* Safe working space maintained.
* The hand holding the saw should cross under the hand that is bracing the wood.
* Suitable work surface to be used.
* Children my work in pairs or more - one sawing, others bracing.
* Ensure your knees are far enough away not be cut by the saw as it gets lower.
* Make sure you are parallel to what you are cutting and use the whole of the blade to saw - if your body, the saw, and the wood are not in a straight line the saw is liable to bend and get stuck, making the sawing hard work and hazardous.

**HAND DRILL**

* Tools stay inside locked toolbox when not in use and returned immediately after completion of activity to responsible adult – ensure all tools are accounted for.
* Do not transport about with bit still attached.
* Never leave tool lying around on ground – it will rust and be a hazard to others.
* Two people are required to operate this tool.
* Use the top of a stable stump to drill on.
* One person holds the object to be drilled in place – wearing gloves to prevent injury if drill slips.
* The other person – not wearing gloves - puts pressure with hand on head of drill and twists handle clockwise.
* Be careful that the bit does not get drilled into stump, it may get stuck.
* To remove drill bit from wood turn anticlockwise.
* If tool gets stuck children should be instructed to request leader’s assistance rather than struggle to release it themselves.
* Suitable clothing to be worn for activity with no dangling fabric or jewellery. Long hair should be tied up.

**LOPPERS**

* Tools stay inside Nicki’s trolley when not in use and returned immediately after completion of activity to responsible adult – ensure all tools are accounted for.
* To be carried at side of body pointing towards floor, using both hands to prevent them opening.
* Never leave loppers open or lying on the ground, the blade will rust and it is a hazard to others, instead lean them against a tree, handles on ground.
* Safe working space maintained.
* Gloves may be worn if desired.
* Hands/feet of user and assistant(s) to be kept out of danger – clear verbal communication.
* Use rubber grip part of the handle.
* Only cut wood suitable for size of tool – up to the size of a ten pence piece.
* If tool gets stuck children should be instructed to request leader’s assistance rather than struggle to release it themselves.
* Suitable clothing to be worn for activity with no dangling fabric or jewellery.

**SECATEURS**

* Tools stay inside locked toolbox when not in use and returned immediately after completion of activity to responsible adult – ensure all tools are accounted for.
* To be carried at side of body pointing towards floor with safety catch in place when not in use.
* Do not allow children to put Secateurs in pockets just in case the blade opens.
* Never leave tool lying around on the ground – it will rust and be a hazard to others.
* Gloves may be worn if desired.
* Safe working space maintained.
* Hands to be kept out of danger from blade, and ensure you apply pressure from the handles, not further up – where you risk pinching your skin in the mechanism.
* Persons assisting, keep hands safe distances from blade with clear verbal communication.
* Only cut wood suitable for size of tool – about the size of a five pence piece.
* If tool gets stuck children should be instructed to request leader’s assistance rather than struggle to release it themselves.
* Suitable clothing to be worn for activity with no dangling fabric or jewellery.

**USING WOODLAND MATERIALS**

No green wood will be cut unless supervised by Nature Nicki.

* Branches to be carried by dragging them along woodland floor holding the trunk end with branch end trailing on ground.
* Sitting logs to be rolled not carried by younger children.
* Longer sitting logs (more than 1 metre) to be rolled by adults.
* Branches not to be carried above waist height to avoid injury to face.
* Sharpened branches to be blunted off.
* Ensure the right tool is used for the size of the wood that is to be cut.
* Cut the wood from the correct point on the tree to ensure that it grows back appropriately.
* Ensure that when participants are cutting wood that they cut it clean to avoid stumps which can be tripped over, or sharp points that could be walked into; and to enable tree to grow back where necessary.
* Ensure that when cutting poles that participants are working in twos.
* Ensure that when working in twos (one cutting and one holding limb) that team is aware of where falling limb is going to land to ensure that no one is standing in the way and that it has a clear landing.
* Ensure participants are aware of how to identify wood and what they can cut by asking the following questions: Is it abundant, is it stopping other stronger trees from growing? Is it a hard or soft wood?

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