

# AXES



*Illustration by Baden-Powell of Gwelf*

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Size and style can depend on preference and needs. One good combination would be a 12-inch hardwood handle and a 1-pound head. The head and handles of some models are forged from the same piece of steel, and the grip of the handle covered with leather. The steel handle will not break or loosen. But you may want to avoid this type. The steel handle transmits the shock of each blow up to the arms and shoulders. The narrow-bladed, thin headed-tomahawk styles and other unusual patterns are poor choices for routine camp chores.

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Painting an axe handle or applying varnish or lacquer is going to result in a bumper crop of blisters. If you want to protect the handle, rub it with warm boiled linseed oil. Soaking a loose axe handle in a pail of water will tighten it, by causing the wood to swell, but when it dries out it will be looser than ever and, of course, all the more dangerous. Instead, insert a small wooden wedge into the handle, in addition to the one already there.

Keep your axe sharp and it will make your work easier and safer. Use a file to take out the worst nicks, and a double-grit handstone for the finished edge. Never use motor-powered stones for grinding an axe, as you may burn out the temper or give the bit a "rolled edge."

When using your axe, first find a stump or log for a chopping block. In cutting wood, use the contact method. When cutting tent stakes, fireplace forks, or poles, always shape them on a log or stump to keep your axe blade out of the dirt. (Such stakes or poles don't require spear-sharp points. Slightly blunted ends will drive more easily.)

The axe should have a sturdy leather sheath. Some sheaths have a small pocket for a whetstone. They have the important virtue of keeping all essential tools in one package.

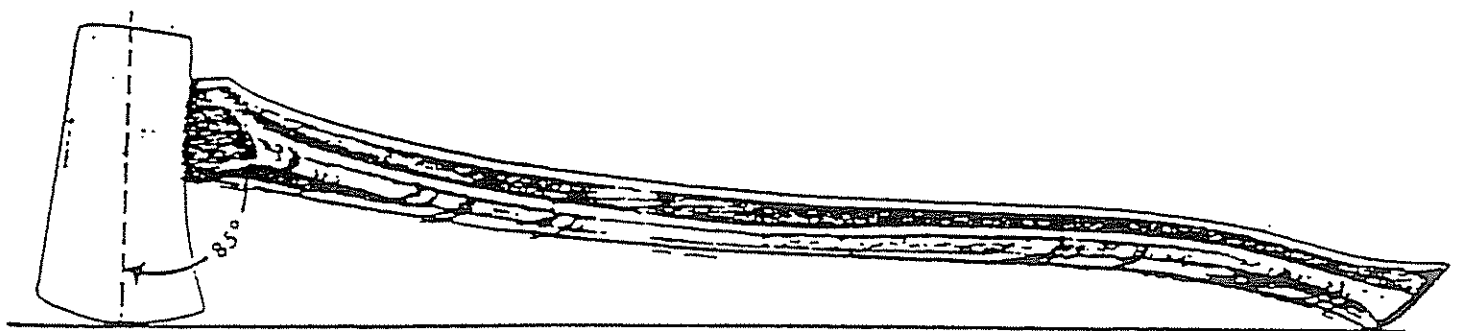
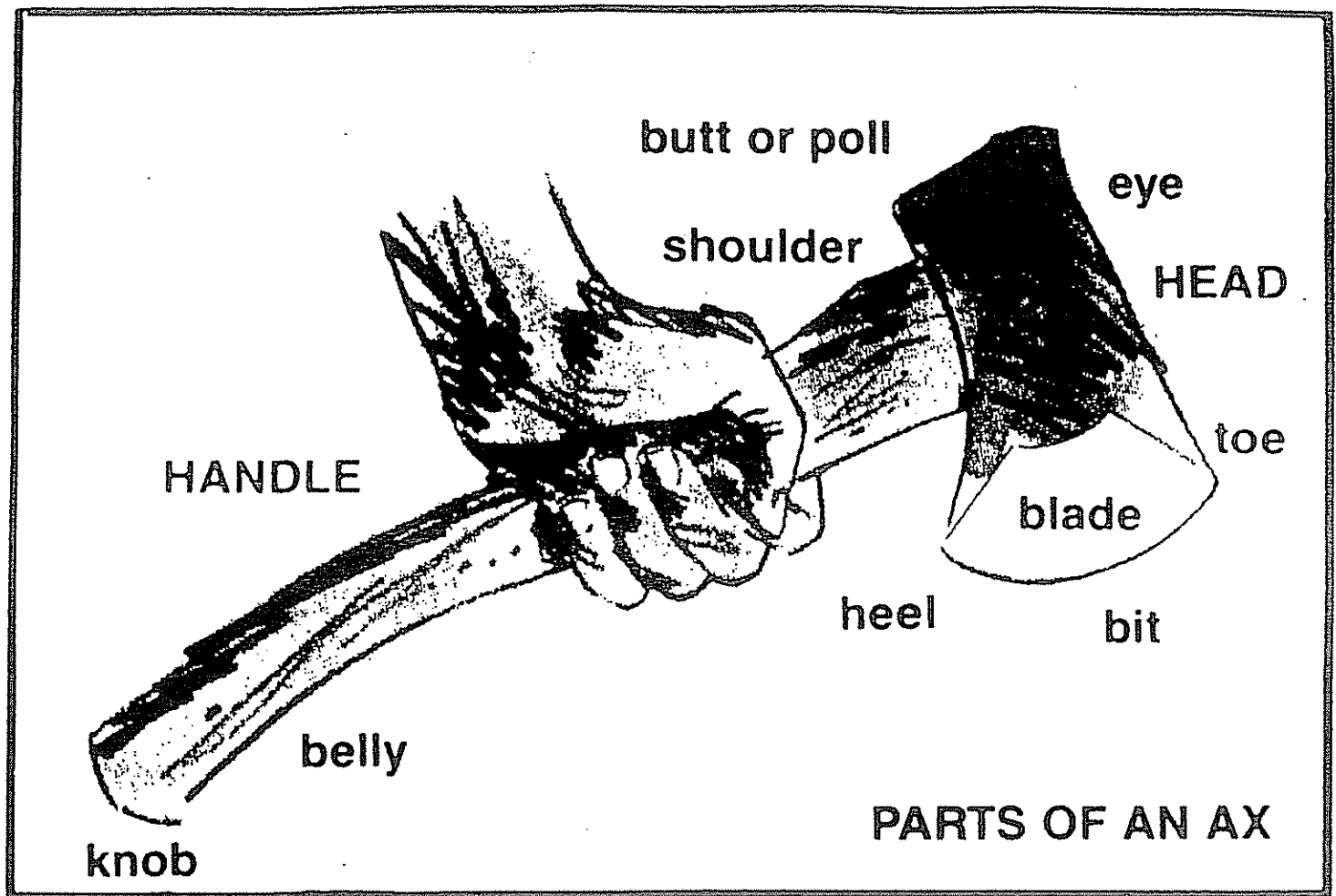
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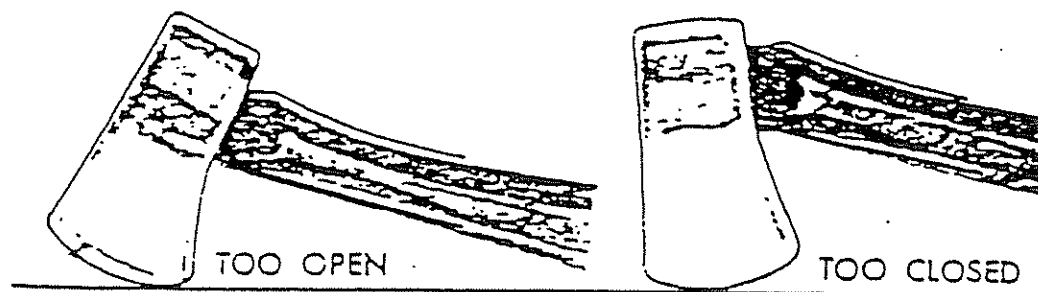
#### **BADEN-POWELL ON AXES:**

*In India, when we went "pig sticking" (that is, hunting wild boar with spears), we found how very necessary it was to keep our spears as sharp as razors. Every time we killed a boar we sharpened up our spear heads again, ready for the next fight. We could not carry grindstones about with us, but we carried a small, fine file, with which we were able to touch up the edge.*

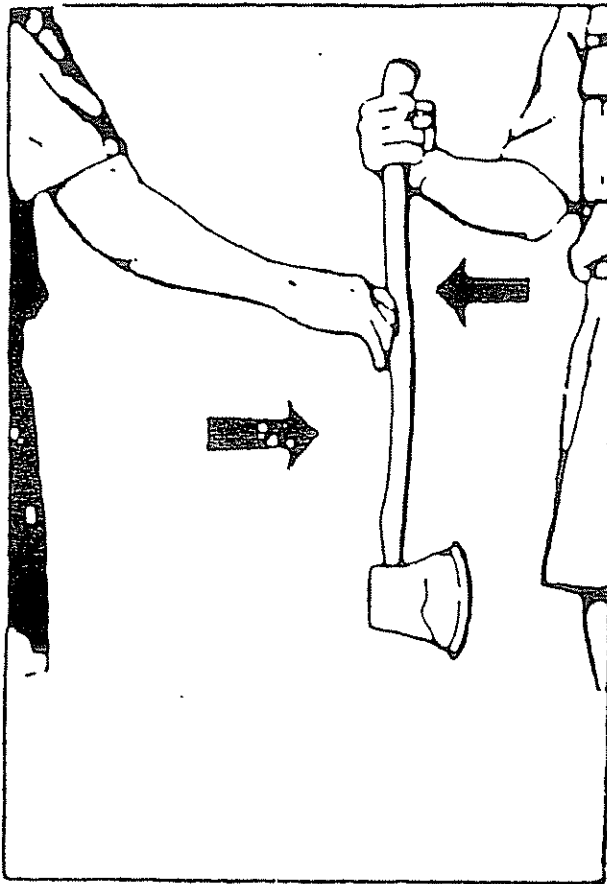
*Many an old backwoodsman carried such a file with him to keep his axe keen. There is a saying with these men that "You may lend your last dollar to a friend, but never lend him your axe – unless you know that he is a good axeman and will not blunt it."*



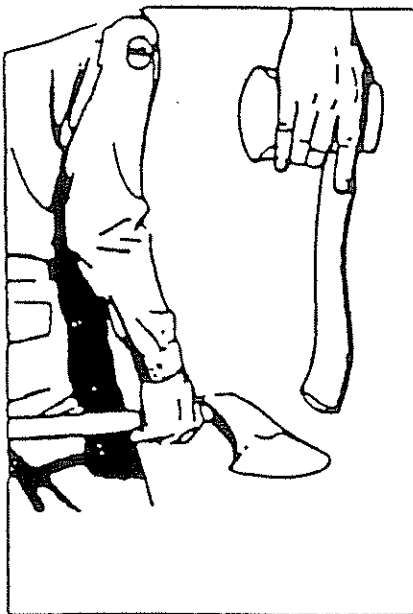
A CORRECTLY HUNG AX HEAD IS SLIGHTLY OFF RIGHT ANGLE TO HANDLE.



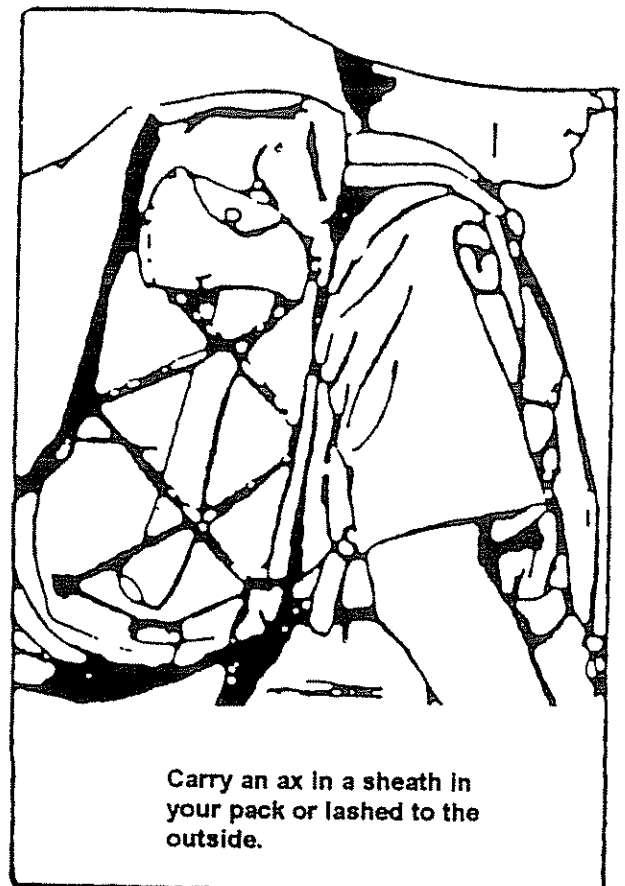
INCORRECTLY HUNG AX HEADS



To pass an axe to another person, hold the handle near the knob with the head down. Pass the ax with the bit facing out at right angles between you and the other person. When your partner has a grip on the handle, (s)he should say, "Thank you." That's the signal to release your hold.



Carry an unsheathed ax at your side with the edge turned outward. If you stumble, toss the ax away from you as you fall. Never carry an axe on your shoulder.



Carry an ax in a sheath in your pack or lashed to the outside.

## SHARPENING YOUR AXE

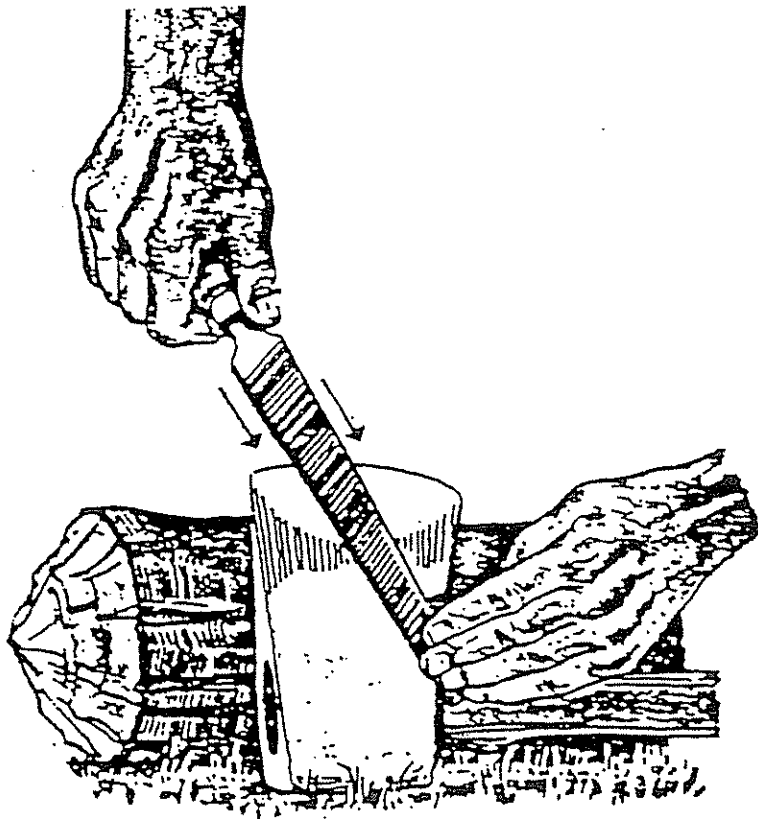
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Whenever you sharpen with a file, wear leather gloves to protect your hands. Also, make a knuckle guard from a 3-inch square of leather, plywood, or an old inner tube. Cut a small hole in the center of the guard. Slip it over the tang and hold it in place with a file handle. Buy a handle at a hardware store or make one from a piece of wood or a corn cob.

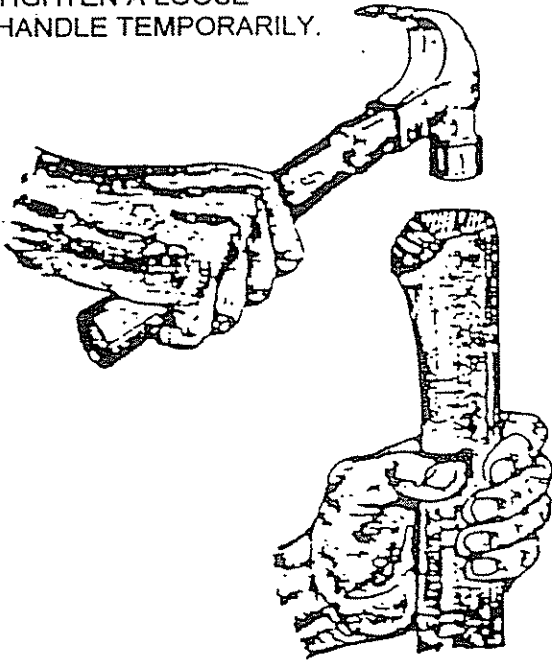
Brace the ax head on the ground between a small log and two wooden pegs or tent stakes. Place the file on the edge of the blade and push it into the bit. Use enough pressure so that you feel the file cutting the ax metal.

Lift the file as you draw it back for another stroke. A file sharpens only when you push it away from the tang. Dragging the file across the blade on the return will break of the file's teeth.

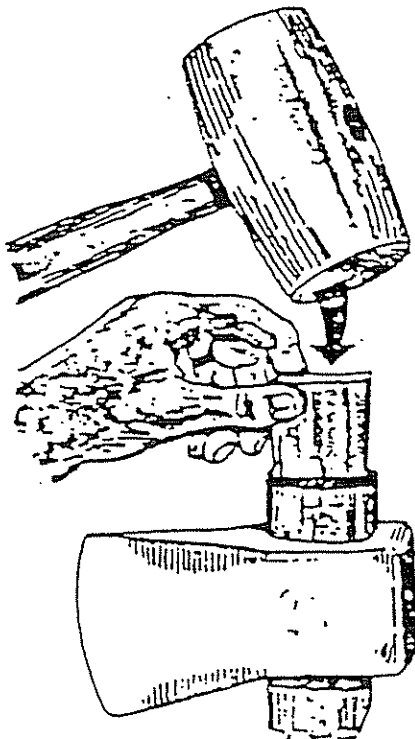
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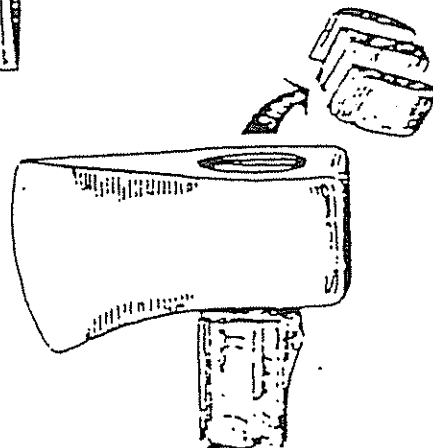
A QUICK WHACK ON THE KNOB WILL TIGHTEN A LOOSE HANDLE TEMPORARILY.



### TIGHTENING A LOOSE HANDLE

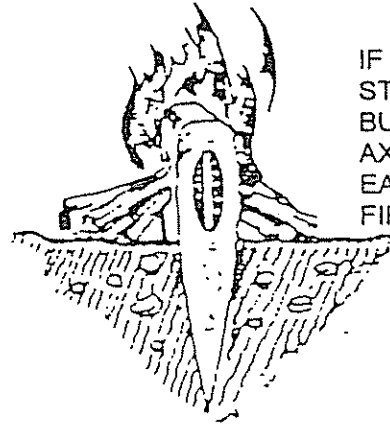


BUY A HARDWOOD WEDGE, OR MAKE YOUR OWN. HAMMER IT SECURELY INTO THE HANDLE.

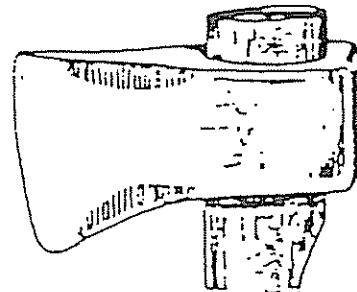


CUT OFF PROTRUDING PARTS OF HANDLE AND WEDGE CLOSE TO AX HEAD WITH A HACKSAW.

### REPLACING A HANDLE



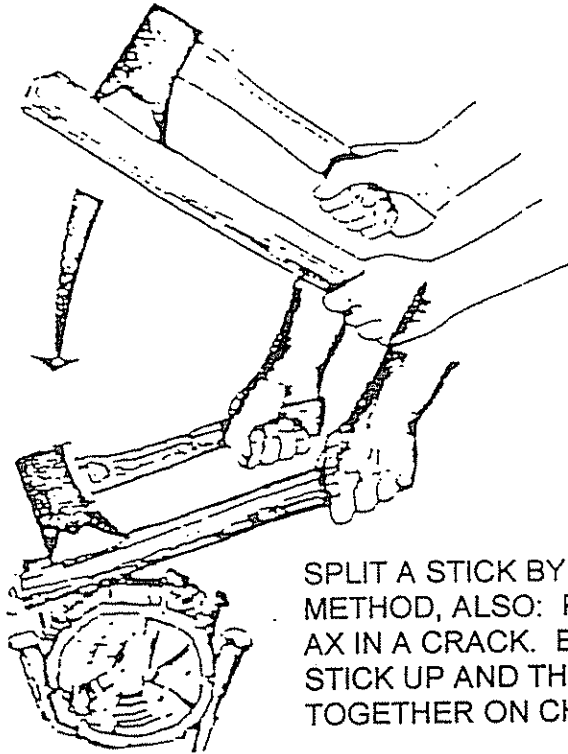
IF BROKEN HANDLE STICKS, YOU CAN BURN IT OUT. PUSH AX HEAD INTO WET EARTH AND BUILD A FIRE AROUND IT.



BUY A NEW HANDLE AT THE HARDWARE STORE. IF NOT ALREADY SPLIT, CUT A SLIT IN IT WITH A SAW, OR SPLIT WITH OLD KNIFE.

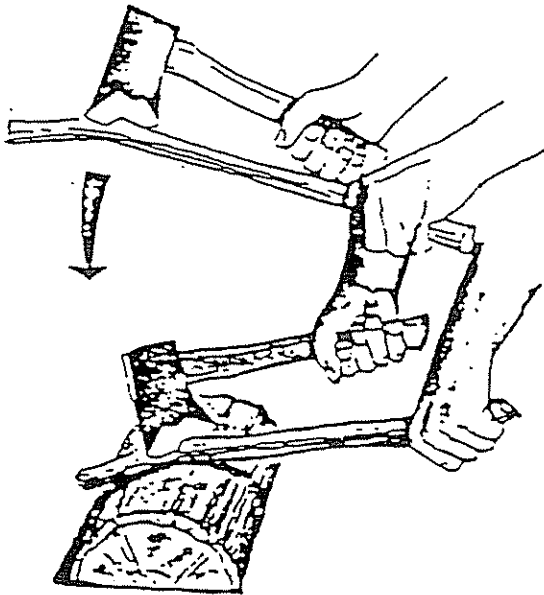


SOME AXES STILL COME WITH "FAWN FOOT" KNOBS. CUT OFF THE TIP WITH SAW TO PREVENT SPLITTING.

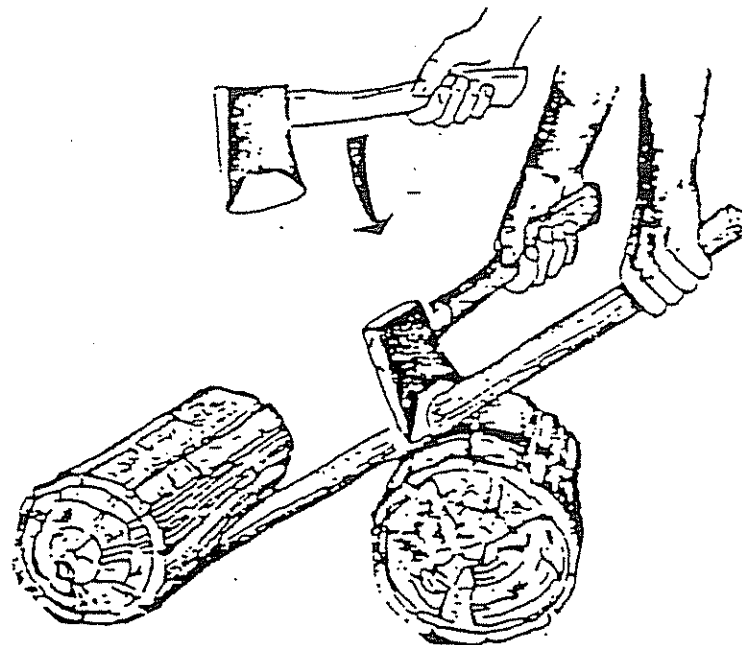


## THE CONTACT METHOD OF CHOPPING WOOD

SPLIT A STICK BY THE CONTACT METHOD, ALSO: PLACE EDGE OF AX IN A CRACK. BRING AX AND STICK UP AND THEN DOWN TOGETHER ON CHOPPING BLOCK.



ANOTHER WAY OF CUTTING A STICK IS TO PLACE AX EDGE IN CONTACT WITH STICK AND BRING BOTH UP AND DOWN ON CHOPPING BLOCK TOGETHER.



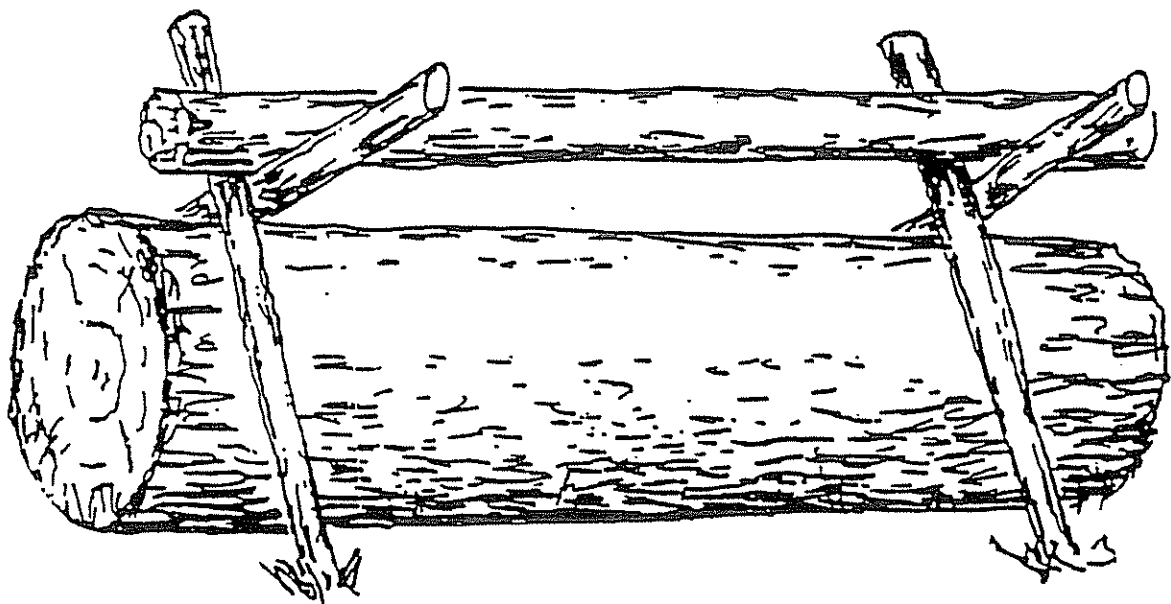
WHEN CUTTING A STICK, ANCHOR ONE END AGAINST A SMALL LOG, CUT AT THE POINT WHERE THE STICK RESTS AGAINST THE CHOPPING BLOCK.



## THE AX YARD

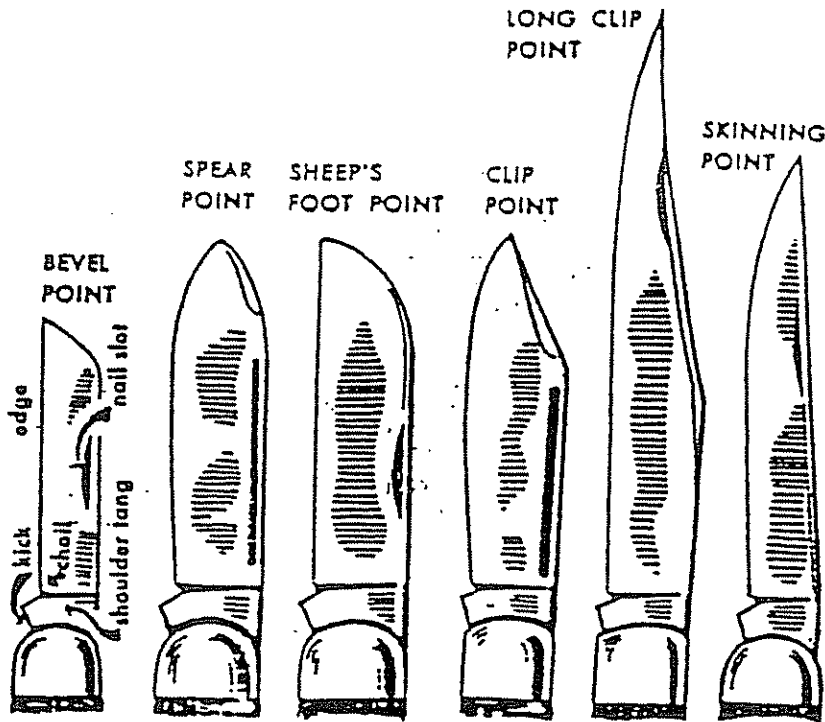
An ax yard must be set up prior to using the camp saw, ax and/or hatchet. Set up is quick and simple:

1. Select an area that is level, dry (footing), away from the basic camp and is relatively clear of brush trees and other possible safety conditions.
2. Using rope, engineer tape or some other marking materials, erect a barrier that is 3 to 4 feet above the ground. The marker line must provide sufficient room for a Scout standing in the center of the axe yard to have a clearance of at least an ax length all around. Tie white cloth strips on the line to enhance its visibility. Generally, the ax yard will be approximately 12 to 15 foot square.
3. There must only be one entrance and exit to the ax yard.
4. Normally there should only be one person in the ax yard at any given time. This is especially true during ax cutting operations. An exception may occur when using the camp saw. It may be necessary to have someone hold the log. This is the exception to the rule.
5. There should always be an adult or another Scout present outside of the ax yard for safety reasons and to call for help in the event of an accident or injury.
6. Designate an area outside of the ax yard for stacking cut and split wood. Remember for keep the area inside of the ax yard as clean and free of debris as possible.
7. Safety is the major reason for having an ax yard. A first aid kit should be at the site of the ax yard or nearby. Inspect all woods tools for damage and replace or repair prior to using. The hand ax and the saw are the preferred tools for cutting fire wood.

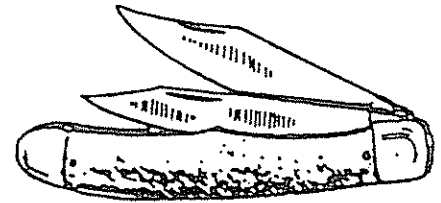


# Types of Knives

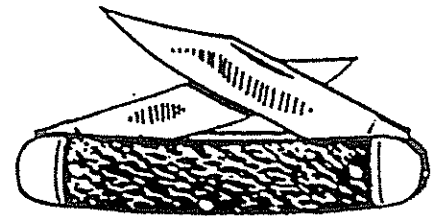
Different knife blades.



A jackknife has blades at one end only.

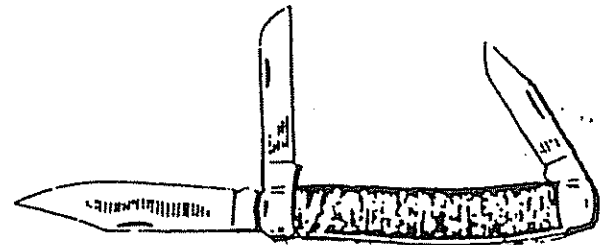
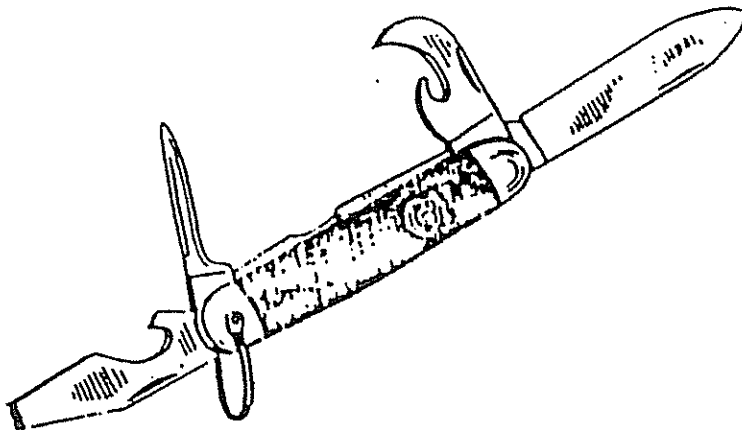


A penknife has blades at both ends.

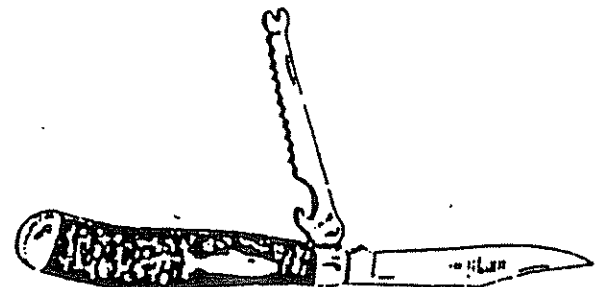


A whittler's knife has blades for carving.

A good all-around camping knife has a punch blade (awl), cap lifter, screwdriver, can opener, and a cutting blade. In another words – a Scout knife!

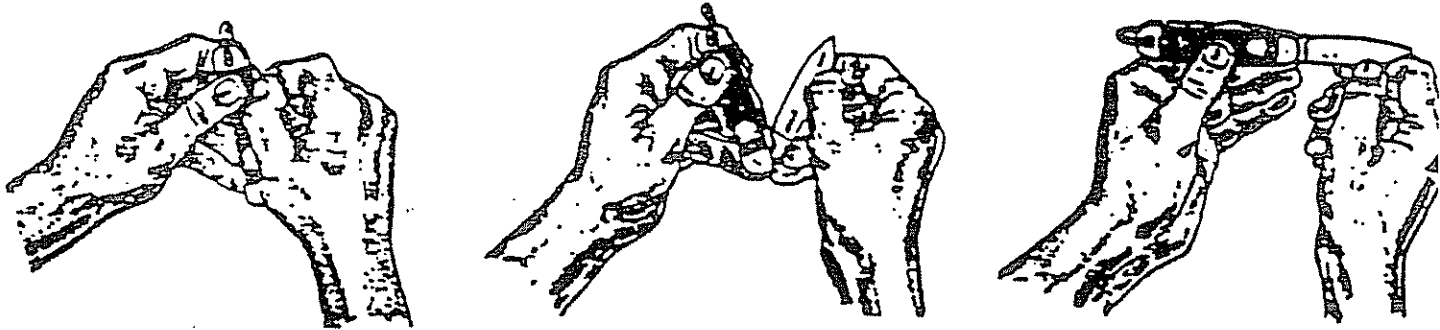


A fisherman's knife has a scaling blade and hook disgorger.

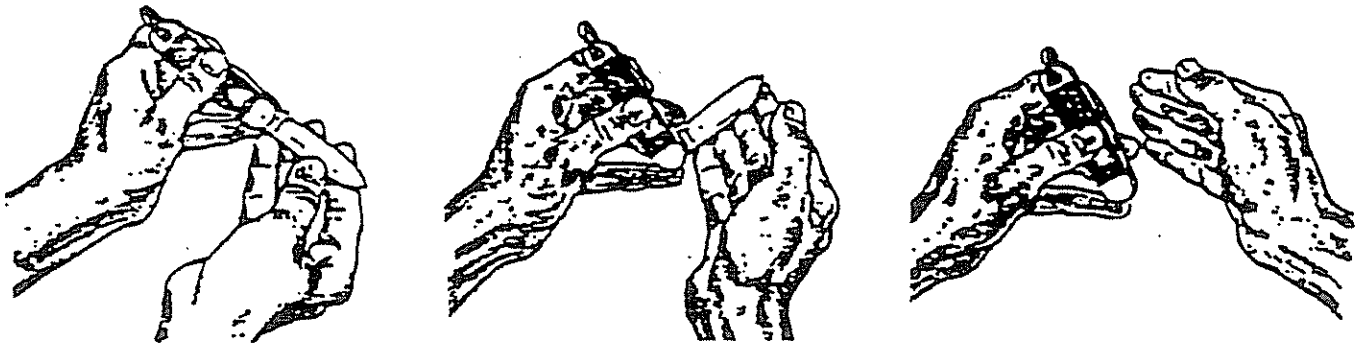


# Opening & Closing a Knife

To open a pocketknife, hold it in your left hand and put your right thumbnail into the nail slot. Continue to hold onto the handle and blade until the blade snaps into open position.



To close a pocketknife, hold the handle with your left hand, with the fingers of your right hand safely on the sides of the blade. Push against the back of the blade with the fingers of your right hand (or with your palm). Let the knife blade snap shut.



## Knife Safety

Unless knife is in use, blades should be shut.

Never walk around with an open knife.

Never throw a knife.

Always cut away from yourself.

Never use the tip of a knife to pry something.

Never put a knife in the fire — it could ruin the temper of the steel.

# Cleaning & Sharpening Knives

The safest knives are clean and sharp.

## CLEANING

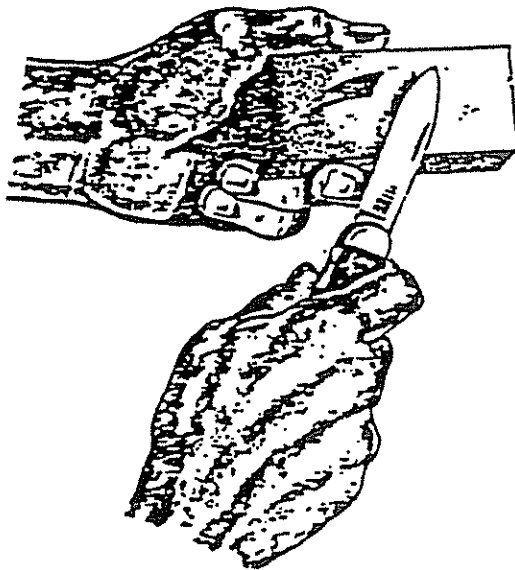
Clean dirty blades with hot, soapy water. Dry thoroughly.

Open all blades. Put a cloth or paper towel over the end of a toothpick, moisten with honing oil, and wipe out the inside of the knife. Swab out any extra oil with a clean cloth or paper towel.

## SHARPENING

Knives can be sharpened with a whetstone. Some whetstones can be used dry; others require water or honing oil.

To sharpen your knife, hold the blade against the whetstone at a 30 degree angle. Push the blade along the stone as though slicing a layer off the top. Sharpen the other side by pulling towards yourself. Wipe with a clean cloth and look directly at the edge of the blade. A dull edge reflects light. A sharp edge is so thin it doesn't reflect light at all.



P.S. Making a fuzz stick is a great way for Scouts to practice their knife skills. It is also a terrific spare time activity for Wood Badge Scouters.



Donna Leigh Barnes

Instructor

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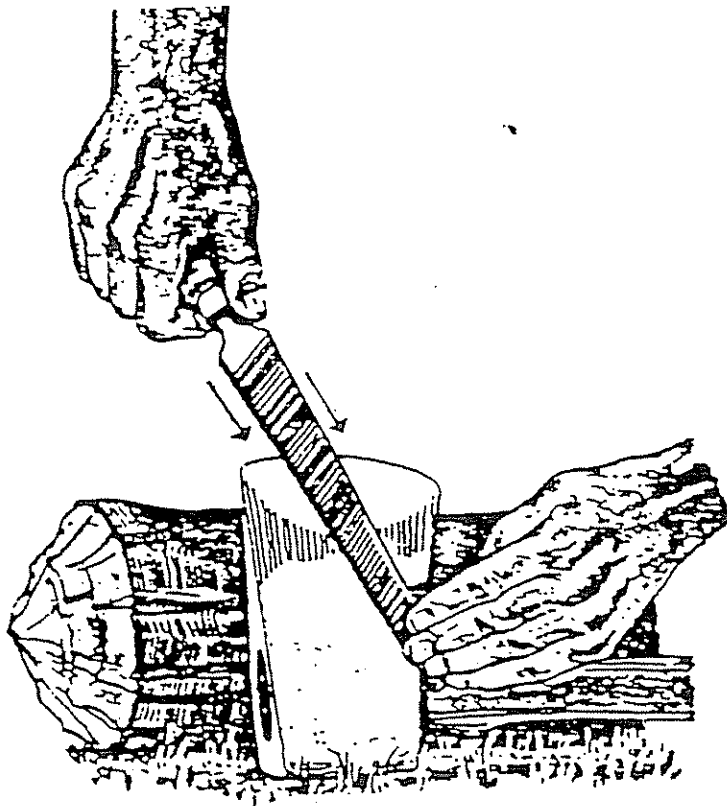
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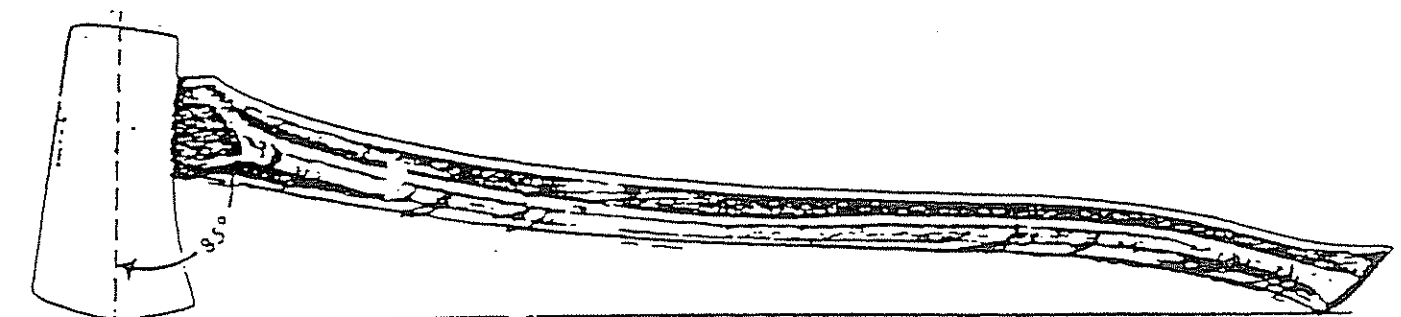
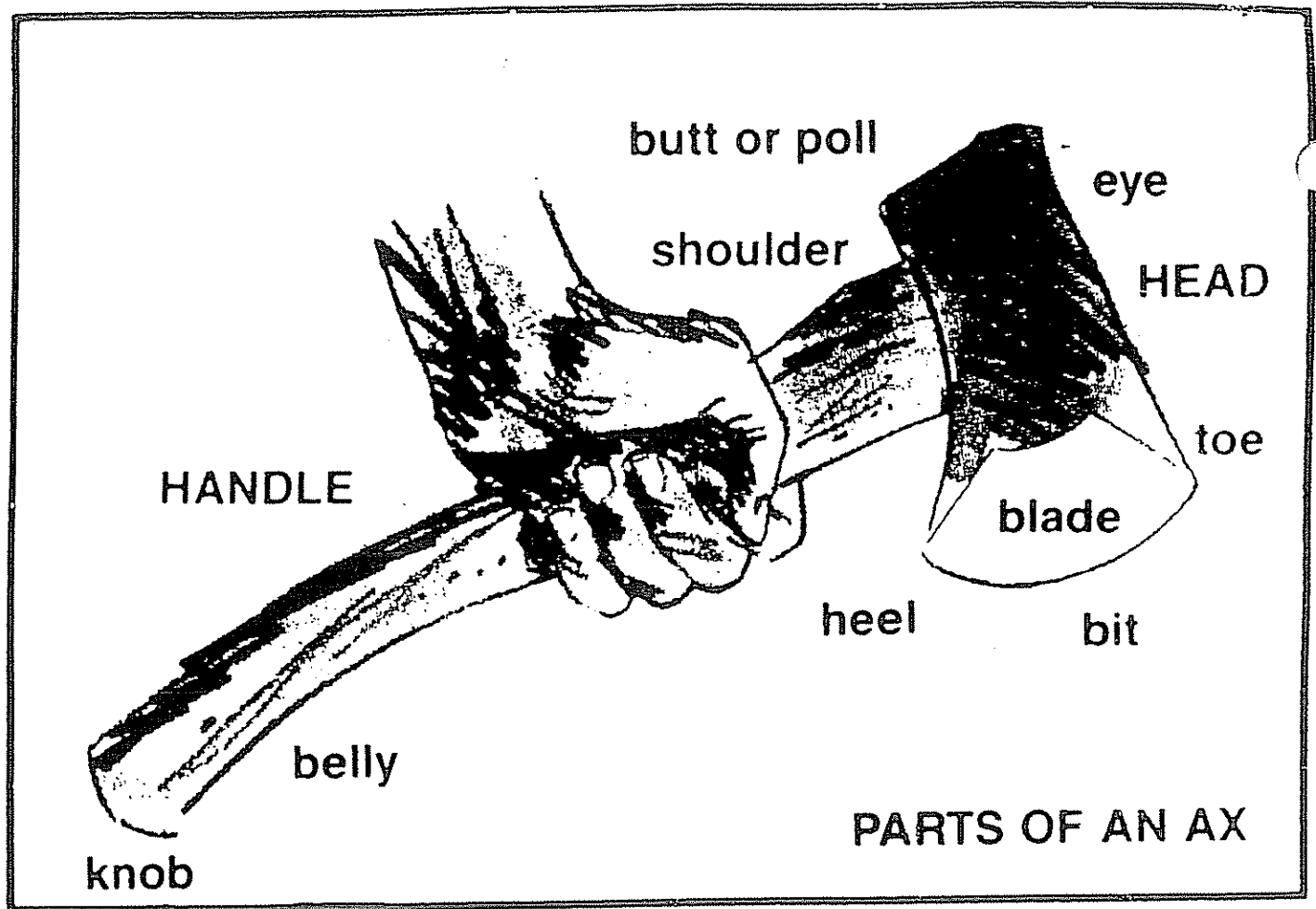
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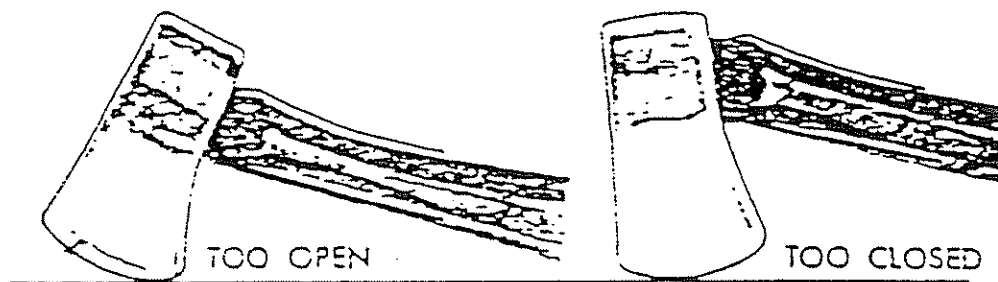
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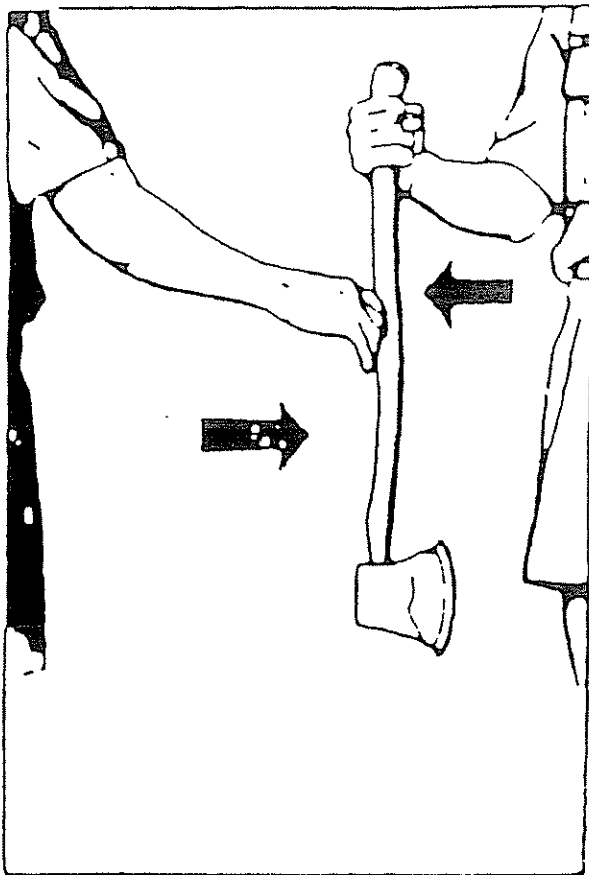


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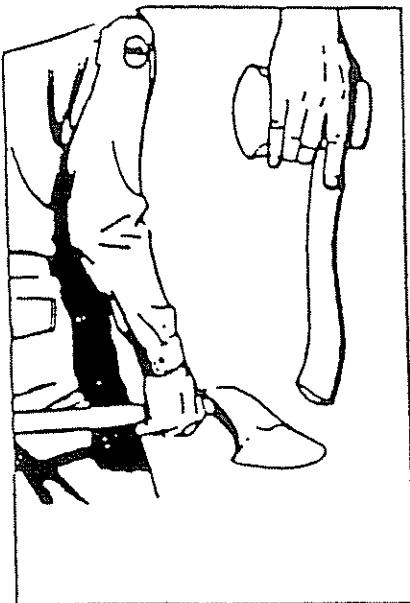


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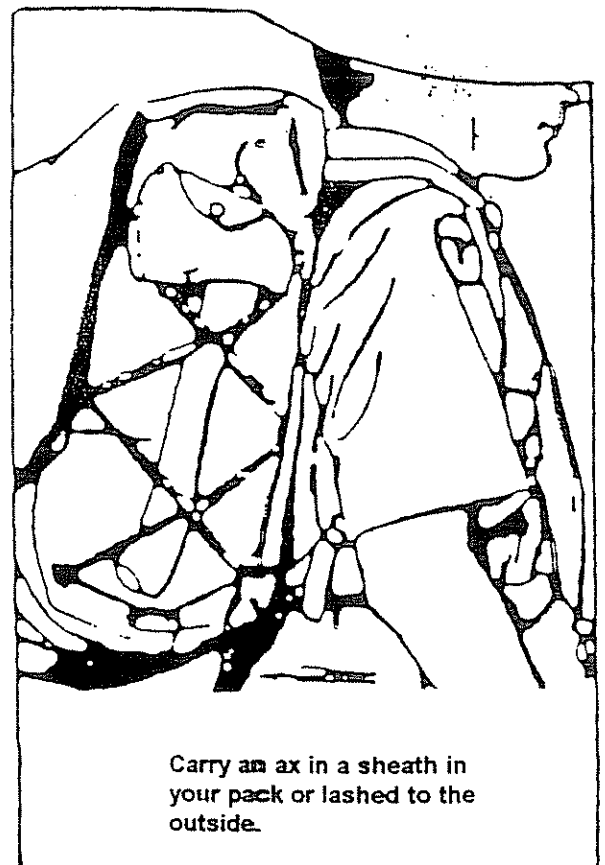




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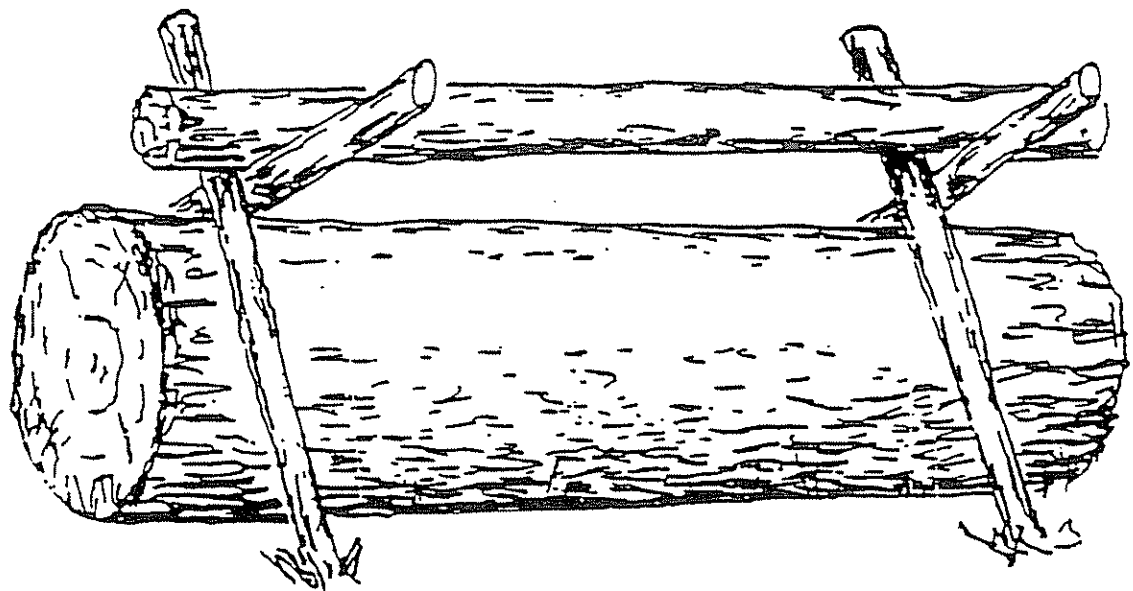


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# Using the Ax in Camp

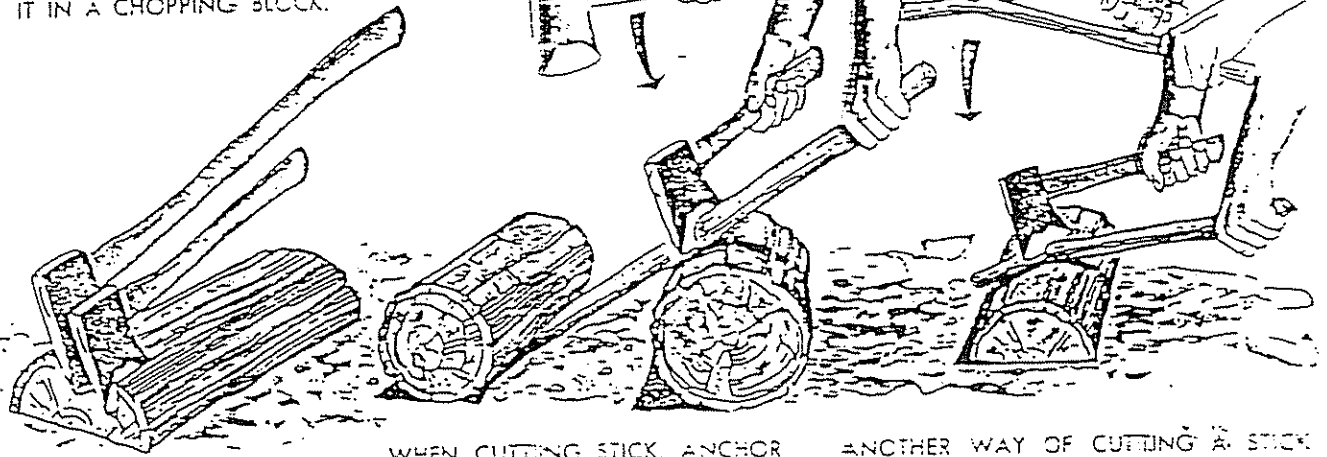
FOR GOOD axmanship in camp, use an ax that is sharp, and use it safely. The sharper the ax, the safer it is. It's hard to believe, but it is the truth. You can trust a sharp ax because it will stick where you strike. But a dull ax may be deflected; you have no control over it.

Most of your chopping and splitting will be done with the small hand ax. The best position for using this ax is kneeling on one or on both knees. Always use a chopping block underneath what you are cutting. That way there's no danger of having the ax land in the ground and nicking

the edge. Keep other campers at a safe distance when you wield your ax.

The felling ax requires a lot more skill than the hand ax. The main principle in felling a tree is to make a deep notch in the trunk a few inches above the ground on the side toward which the tree is leaning, and to finish the job with a similar cut from the other side. When the tree starts to totter, run crosswise to the direction in which it is falling. Remember never to touch a living tree except with permission, and only if absolutely necessary.

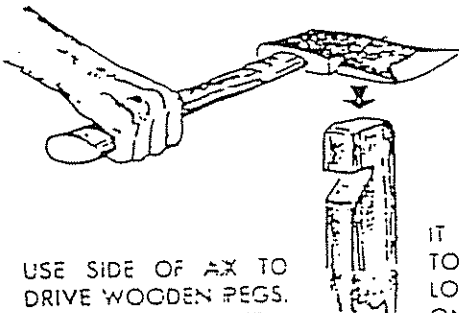
WHEN NOT IN USE, PUT AX IN ITS SHEATH, OR STICK IT IN A CHOPPING BLOCK.



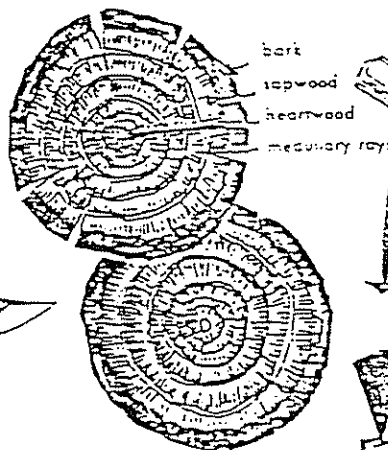
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ANOTHER WAY OF CUTTING A STICK IS TO PLACE AX EDGE IN CONTACT WITH STICK AND BRING BOTH UP AND DOWN ON CHOPPING BLOCK TOGETHER.

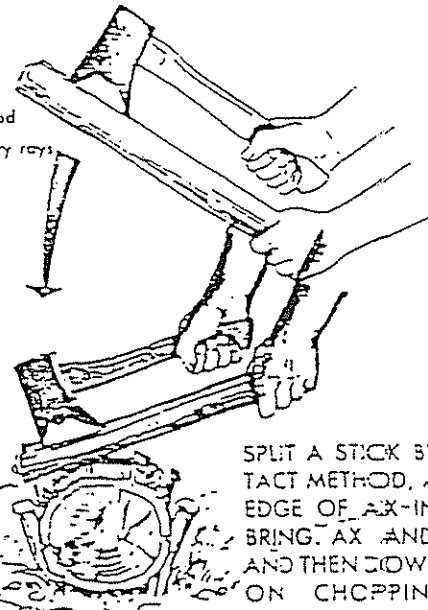
USE V-SHAPED NOTCH TO CUT THICK BRANCH IN TWO PIECES.



USE SIDE OF AX TO DRIVE WOODEN PEGS. NEVER DRIVE METAL PEGS WITH YOUR AX.

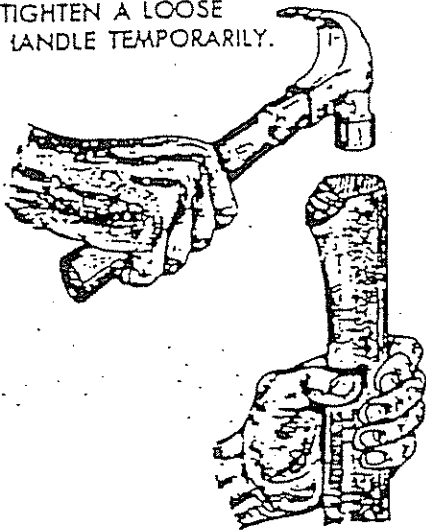


IT IS EASIER TO SPLIT A DRY LOG THAN A GREEN ONE. IN DRYING, RAYS OPEN UP INTO CRACKS.

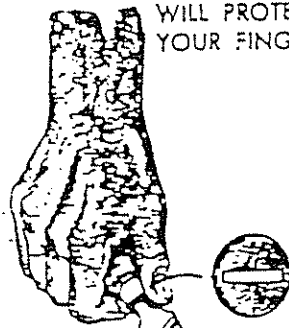


SPLIT A STICK BY THE CONTACT METHOD, ALSO: PLACE EDGE OF AX IN A CRACK. BRING AX AND STICK UP AND THEN DOWN TOGETHER ON CHOPPING BLOCK.

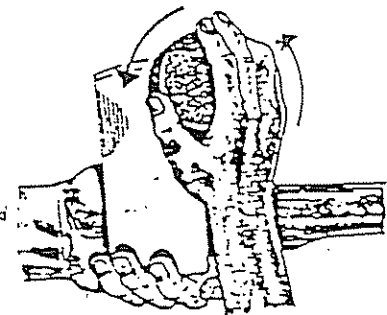
A QUICK WHACK ON THE KNOB WILL TIGHTEN A LOOSE HANDLE TEMPORARILY.



A PLYWOOD GUARD WILL PROTECT YOUR FINGERS.

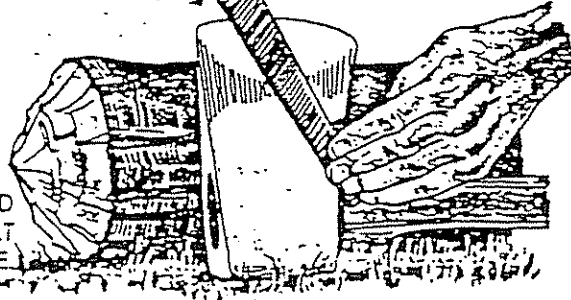


plywood guard

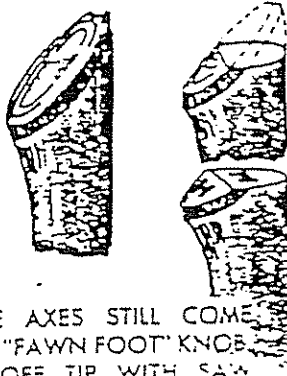


TO KEEP THE BIT KEEN, HONE IT OFTEN WITH A SHARPENING STONE.

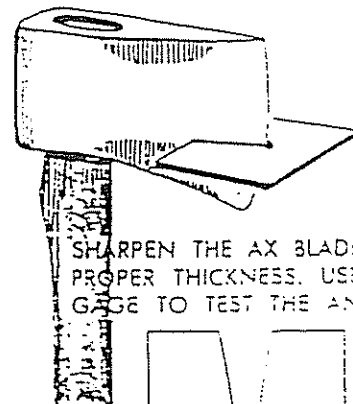
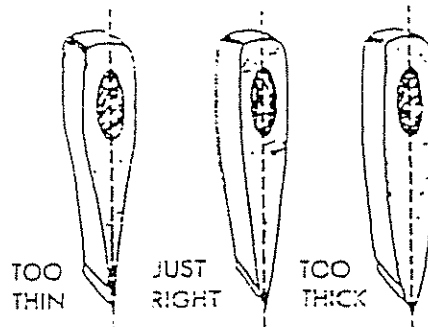
SHARPEN A DULL AX BY RESTING ITS HEAD AGAINST A LOG AND DRAWING A 10" FLAT MILL FILE FIRMLY DOWN OVER THE BLADE.



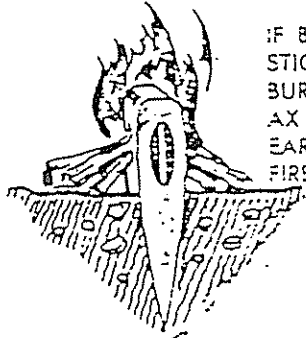
USING A PEG AS REST FOR AX HEAD.



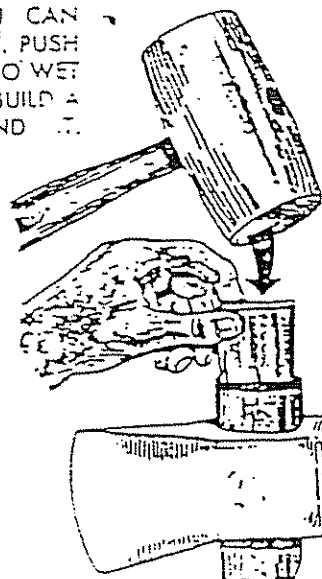
SOME AXES STILL COME WITH "FAWN FOOT" KNOB. CUT OFF TIP WITH SAW TO PREVENT SPLITTING.



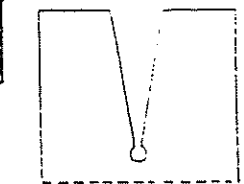
SHARPEN THE AX BLADE TO PROPER THICKNESS. USE AX GAGE TO TEST THE ANGLE.



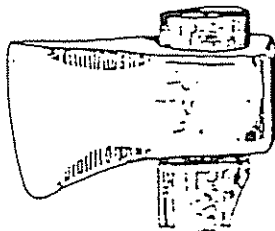
IF BROKEN HANDLE STICKS, YOU CAN BURN IT OUT. PUSH AX HEAD INTO WET EARTH AND BUILD A FIRE AROUND IT.



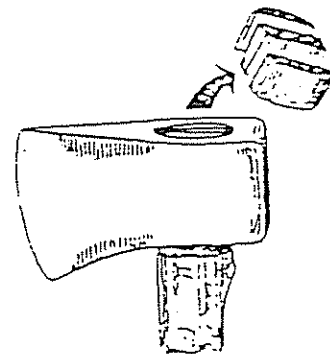
BUY A HARDWOOD WEDGE, OR MAKE YOUR OWN. HAMMER IT SECURELY INTO THE HANDLE.



USE THIS PATTERN TO CUT AN AX GAGE FROM A STRIP OFF A TIN CAN.



BUY A NEW HANDLE IN A HARDWARE STORE. IF NOT ALREADY SPLIT, CUT A SLIT IN IT WITH A SAW, OR SPLIT WITH OLD KNIFE.



CUT OFF PROTRUDING PARTS OF HANDLE AND WEDGE CLOSE TO AX HEAD WITH A HACKSAW.