

Fire-Building

Where to build your fire:

- All fires must be built within the fire ring or burning barrel
- Always build the fire on sand, rocks or dirt (not asphalt or concrete these burn and or explode). If you do need to have a fire on asphalt or concrete additional supplies can be provided to you so you do not damage asphalt, concrete or grass.
- Clear the area of leaves, grass, sticks, etc.
- Never build a fire near the base of a tree or near enough for heat to kill the roots.
- Mark a clear fire circle, (powder paint works well) and set basic rules for children who are participating with your program.
- Make sure you a minimum of three meters from any tree, building, objects that could burn or melt including overhead power lines.
- All fire rings or burning barrels must also have a mesh grate with them to catch any sparks or embers.

For more information about the City of Edmonton's fire pit regulations, click here:

http://www.edmonton.ca/bylaws_licences/bylaws/fire-pits.aspx

Fire-Building Safety Rules

- Never play with fire or matches
- Never leave a fire unattended
- Always clear a wide area before building a fire
- Always enclose a fire in a fire barrel or established fire pit.
- Always have fire-fighting material in arms length, a pail of water, poking stick, sand and shovel. You must always have a pail of water handy to put out the fire if it starts to get out of control or to pour on a participant if they fall into the fire by accident
- Build small fires. A big bonfire or ceremonial fire is needed only on very special occasions.
- Always make sure the fire is completely out before leaving it.
- Never use lighter fluid or gas to light a fire
- Use your fire resistant glove when using a fire poker to stock or adjusted mesh grate

Fire-Building Materials

- Tinder: dry material no thicker than a matchstick (dry shavings, tiny pieces of bark, small dry twigs)
- Kindling: wood from matchstick size to thumb thickness – from a few inches to a foot long (should be dry – it will snap when it is broken)
- Fuel: logs split or unsplit – must be dry

Fires require three elements to burn:

1. Oxygen
 2. Heat
 3. Fuel
- All three elements must be available otherwise the fire cannot be maintained.

Putting Out Your Fire

- As soon as you are through with your fire, begin to put it out.
- Let the fire die down
- Scatter the coals in the pit and knock the logs apart
- Stir the coals, douse with water and stir again
- It should take 15-20 min. to completely out a fire in a fire pit.
- If you are using a fire barrel, this process will take longer as the fire barrel must be cool to touch.
- After coals are completely out and cold to touch dispose of them in an outside garbage can or dumpster. Do not bring ashes back to your service area office and never put ashes in an inside garbage
- **If you can't touch it, it's not out!**

Axe Handling

Safety

It is important that you take care to handle an axe safely at all times. Any other observers should watch from a comfortable distance. The first step of handling the axe is to ensure it is in safe working order. The head should be tight and not badly rusted, and the wood of the handle should not have large splinters along it. It is recommended to wear steel toed boots and gloves when handling an axe. Also be sure to **NEVER** swing the axe in the direction of people in case the axe head comes off. Finally, remember to maintain a clean space around the area you need to chop and have a sturdy chopping block.

Usage

When using the axe, your stance should be feet planted shoulder width apart. This is important in case you miss the wood, the axe will have a clear space to slice through – not your leg! Hold the axe above your head, one hand should be up near the head and one hand should be further down the handle. Swing the axe straight down and as you swing, your top hand should move down to meet the other hand. If the axe is wedged in the wood, tap the log on the chopping block to get the axe fully through.

Wood

Pick wood that is dry and does not have a lot of knots. Knots in the wood can make the chopping harder. Branches may also be an obstacle to clean chopping.

Care of the Axe:

- Do not lay on the ground as it will rust or may cause injury.
- Do not chop into the ground (it will dull your axe, and a dull axe is dangerous!)
- Always have a solid chopping block that will not roll or fall over.
- When carrying an axe no matter the distance always mask the head of the axe and carry it from the joint of the head and handle to ensure control.
- When axe is not in use it should be locked in your vehicle or locked in the shack where participants or parents cannot gain access to it.

Knife Skills

The following components will be covered in this section: basic knife parts, feather sticks, and teaching participants how to use a knife.

Parts of a Knife:

- Blade
- Handle

Feather Sticks

Feather Sticks are long, thin pieces of wood that have had its' edges "peeled" to the bottom. It produces a feathered look. Feather sticks are great to help start a fire because the edges light quickly. Extravagant feather sticks take a lot of practice but ALL feather sticks help! Making these is a good way to practice knife handling.

How to Use a Knife

- When using the knife to feather a stick you should be on your knees shoulder width apart to avoid cutting your leg. Press the knife into the wood, push in gently, scraping the knife down toward the ground (away from the body) to feather the stick.
- If the wood is hard and you end up just making chips, they can still be used for kindling!
- When passing a knife, aim the handle toward the recipient (not the blade) and face the sharp edge of the blade toward the ground.
- Keep the knife sheathed, or the blade folded in, when not in use. Store the knife in a safe place that is off the ground.
- Many folding pocket knives have safety locks, familiarize yourself with how to open and close the knife safely.
- When using a knife for cooking, make sure to cut on a solid surface that does not shake.
- Keep fingers tucked under while holding food items.
- Do not use the same knife to cut raw meats and produce.
- Make sure the knife is sharp. A sharp knife is much safer than a dull one!