

Disclaimer: The advice in this guide is considered to be correct at the time of writing, but Red Squirrel Resources accept no liability for actions inspired by these resources. You are responsible for creating your own risk assessments, here you will find considerations that may be relevant for your situation. Each Risk Assessment created should be specific to your site and the individuals in your group.



SITE RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

SITE LOCATION: Generic Site / School Site / Farm Site

ASSESSOR:

DATE:

HAZARD	RISK TO STAFF & PARTICIPANTS	RISK LEVEL H/M/L	EXISTING CONTROLS. FURTHER ACTIONS	New RISK LEVEL
Rough terrain : steep slopes, animal holes, uneven ground, wet ground	Slips, trips, falls	M	Appropriate footwear to be worn. First aid provision. Inform participants of risks.	M
Water bodies: pond, streams etc	Hypothermia, drowning	L	Children to be supervised by adults when in close proximity of the stream. Appropriate first aid provision and emergency action plan in place.	L
Adverse weather High winds, rain	Hypothermia Falling trees or limbs	M	Check weather reports when possible. All to have appropriate clothing : waterproofs, boots. Staff to have map reading/compass skills. Avoid woodland activities in high winds.	L
Hot weather	Sunburn, dehydration, sunstroke.	L	Check weather reports when possible. Staff to advise on sun protection measures, clothing and need to drink water. Provision of shade / shelter where needed.	L
Insects, ticks	Bites, stings, Lyme disease. Anaphylactic shock.	L	Repellent used and appropriate clothing. First aid provision. All advised on tick removal and symptoms of Lyme disease. Records kept of individuals with known allergic reactions.	L
Plants	Stings, rashes, scratches, poisoning.	L	Strict attention to positive ID of wild foods. Appropriate clothing. Good personal hygiene. First aid available.	L
Soil/water borne diseases	Tetanus. Leptospirosis, E. coli.	M	Risks made known to participants Good personal hygiene, handwashing with soap and water.. All water to be suitably treated.	L
Existing medical conditions	Forgotten medicines, reoccurrence of conditions	M	Staff to be aware of medical conditions, e.g. information on booking form to be carried by leaders. First aid kit available.	L
Old fly-tipped metal, broken glass, barbed wire and other rubbish.	Cuts, puncture wounds	M	Participants to be warned of key areas where dangers are present and urged to proceed with caution. Group to agree to protocol. (The most hazardous rubbish has been removed from the site, but some pieces may remain).	M
Agricultural machinery	Cuts, bruises, broken bones, falling	M	All machinery to be cordoned off in an out-of-bounds location, tools safely stored out of reach of children where possible. All participants to be given an orientation tour of the site to be clear on boundaries and hazards.	L
Livestock (cows/sheep/chickens)	Bites, pecking, diseases, collision	M	Any contact with livestock to be followed by handwashing. All participants to be given instructions on how to interact with animals respecting their space. Walking through fields with livestock, all to stay as one group along the perimeter of the field.	L
Wild animals (badgers, foxes)	Fox bites - rabies	L	Awareness of animals and the hazards. Any participants getting close to animals would have instruction / orientation to the hazards involved	L
Trees / structures	Falling from trees, breaking bones, bruises, cuts, sprains	M	Any climbing to be in suitable trees / structures as agreed by group leader. Health of trees monitored closely. Supervised and assessed by staff depending on who's care the child is in.	L

Risk level = likelihood x severity. High, medium or low.

All activities, games and crafts to be brought to groups in an age and stage appropriate manner

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Other Considerations:

Along with your site Risk Assessment and Activity Risk Benefit Analysis documents, you are responsible for having developed an **Emergency Action Plan** in order to respond effectively to any such emergencies, serious accidents and injuries.

For all groups, adequate provision of industry appropriate, First Aid qualified staff (IOL Band 3 compliant, such as ICT 16hour Outdoor First Aid qualification). It is generally understood that First Aid Qualifications expire 3 years after the date of last training, however you need to check this with your trainers and to be in alignment with what is appropriate for your group and setting.

It is recommended that all Forest School Leaders, Nature Mentors or Outdoor Educators update their practice as often as possible through CPD and training opportunities.

Some trainings vary and may not have included aspects that others do. It is good to be aware of the need for a woodland management plan (reviewed annually). It is also good practice to develop a policy around minimising detrimental ecological impact so that we are looking after our sites and all those who live there for the longevity and health of all projects.

Other policies to consider developing include:

- First Aid
- Child Protection
- Health and Safety
- Woodland Management Plan
- Minimising detrimental ecological impact

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Risk Assessment Considerations – Safe Knife Use (2 pages)

Activity Assessed: Activity Location: Assessed By:				Date: Next Assessment Due:			
Type of Hazard	Likelihood of Occurrence	Hazard Severity	Risk Factor	Action to be taken to reduce risk	New Likelihood of Occurrence	New Hazard Severity	New Risk Factor
Transportation around site	2	4	8	Knives stored until participants know the procedure Knife to be in sheath when in transit	1	4	4
Cut to user and/or other participants	3	4	12	Knives to be used with a safe working distance of an arms length plus knife length apart. Full Knife safety brief to be given Knives only to be used for carving whilst seated in a stable position with the exception of knife use for chopping food on chopping board whilst standing/sitting. Participants never walk around with knife out of sheath. Knives never to be left with tip in ground or stump while not in use.	2	4	8
Slipping when using/bouncing off	2	4	8	Tools kept sharp and usable No gloves to be worn when using Safe working space Instruction to be given before use Hands to be kept out of danger Suitable work surface to be used	2	4	8
Breakage/damage of tool	2	4	8	Regular and effective maintenance of tools All issues reported and noted immediately	1	4	4
Storage	2	4	8	Keep in storage until instructed Account for number of tools given out and returned back in	1	4	4

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Responsible adult to supervise the remainder of the group at all times as well as a responsible, trained adult to supervise whittling at all times. Suitable ratio of trained adults to persons with tools. No activity may be carried out where there is an individual Risk Factor of 10 or above.

Be aware of UK knife law. Currently it is advised that all knives are stored and transported in a locked bag or box along with evidence of purpose, for example a copy of your Forest School leader certificate or agreement of employment with role description.

Knife safety brief must include the following:

- Introduction to knives as a tool
- Ask the group what the risks are of using this tool.
- Always use this tool in a safe space. Seated with a checked and maintained 'blood bubble' or 'safety bubble'.
- Always carve away from yourself
- Never have a body part in the line of travel of the knife (carving close in to your lap puts legs FEMORAL ARTERY at risk)
- Introduce knife work with three safe postures to choose from:
 - Carving with elbows on knees
 - Gypsy knee
 - Working to the side, this could be with the addition of a wooden block for downward pressure onto which carving is done (or small wood being split along grain).
- Identify who the first aiders are and where the first aid kits are prior to a knife session.

Benefits and opportunities: develop sense of responsibility; develop dexterity; enhance understanding of different wood qualities and uses; learn safe tool use; understanding of coppicing and other woodland caretaking principles...

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Risk Assessment Considerations – Safe Tool Use (knife safety separate)

Children are introduced to the tools and shown that the different tools are used in different ways for different purposes and should only be used for that specific purpose. The sharp edges are pointed out. They are shown how to check the tools are safe and well kept and asked to inspect them carefully. The children are asked to think about what would happen if the tools slipped and where they might slip so they are taught to stand and hold the tools in the safest way i.e. no feet in the way of the axe and no fingers in the way of the saw. Children are told to stay alert when using tools and to keep at a distance when other children are using tools. Children are supervised at all times when using tools. Children are shown how to store tools safely when not in use i.e. cover on saw and axe safely in chopping block. Appropriate gloves and footwear to be worn. First Aid kit kept near by with an identified first aider.

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Type of Hazard	Likelihood of Occurrence	Hazard Severity	Risk Factor	Action to be taken to reduce risk	New Likelihood of Occurrence	New Hazard Severity	New Risk Factor
Transportation around site	2	4	8	Tools stored until participants know the procedure. Tools to be in sheath/folded away when in transit	1	4	4
Cut to user and/or other participants	3	4	12	Tools to be used with a safe working distance of an arms length plus the tool apart. Full Tool safety brief to be given. Tools only to be used for appropriate purpose and in safe position (to be demonstrated). Participants never walk around with tool out of sheath / open bladed. Tools never to be left open or on the ground while not in use.	2	4	8
Slipping when using/bouncing off	2	4	8	Tools kept sharp and usable. Glove to be worn on support hand only when sawing. Hands to be kept out of danger, utilising a natural barrier such as a 'y' in a tree or a saw horse. Safe working space and instruction to be given before use. Suitable work surface to be used	2	4	8
Breakage/damage of tool	2	4	8	Regular and effective maintenance of tools All issues reported and noted immediately	1	4	4
Storage	2	4	8	Keep in storage until instructed. Account for number of tools given out and returned back in.	1	4	4

Responsible adult to supervise at all times. Suitable ratio of trained adults to persons with tools. No activity may be carried out where there is an individual Risk Factor of 10 or above.

Benefits and opportunities: develop woodland skills; develop dexterity; develop sense of responsibility; healthy focus of physical energy; understanding properties of natural materials; problem solving; co-operation

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Risk Assessment Considerations – Fire Activities

Activity Assessed:				Date:			
Activity Location:				Next Assessment Due:			
Assessed By:							
Type of Hazard	Likelihood of Occurrence	Hazard Severity	Risk Factor	Action to be taken to reduce risk	New Likelihood of Occurrence	New Hazard Severity	New Risk Factor
Toxic fumes inhaled	2	3	6	Knowledge of safe / hazardous fuels (tinder and wood). Only ignite non-toxic varieties (for example avoid burning wood or leaves of rhododendron for campfire)	1	3	3
Burns whilst tending a fire	3	4	12	Fire and activity safety orientation for all participants. Knowledge about suitable tinders and fuel for safety (non-spitting). Clean water and cup available to provide 'running water' to cool burns. Long hair to be tied back.	1	3	3
Burns whilst participating in a fire activity: Cooking, coal burning, charcoal making etc	3	4	12	Hazard brainstorm before activity. Fire gloves and fire blanket available for relevant activities. Suitable level of food hygiene training. Awareness of food safety in preparing and cooking food in an outdoor environment	1	3	3
Fire getting out of control and causing fire in woods	3	4	12	Clear responsibility allocated to any fires lit. Sufficient water provided to fully extinguish fires prior to group leaving site. Weather considered and fires avoided or kept minimal or small in hot, dry, windy conditions. Fire will be attended at all times by a responsible adult.	1	4	4
Hypoxia – lack of oxygen to the brain if around a fire in a confined space with poor ventilation (over-night camp out)	2	4	8	All fires lit to be in well-ventilated areas. Any fires lit near shelters to be approved by staff with awareness of this hazard. Group advised on how to reduce smoke inhalation.	1	4	4

Responsible adult to supervise at all times. Suitable ratio of trained adults to persons with tools. No activity may be carried out where there is an individual Risk Factor of 10 or above.

Benefits and opportunities: building relationship to fire; developing skills of lighting, tending and utilising fire; cooking and fire craft often enhance participants' feeling at home in the woodland environment; develops scientific understanding of heat through experiential activities; the essence of being human; recapitulative play; storytelling around the fire.

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Risk Assessment Considerations – Plant based activities

Activity Assessed:				Date:			
Activity Location:				Next Assessment Due:			
Assessed By:							
Type of Hazard	Likelihood of Occurrence	Hazard Severity	Risk Factor	Action to be taken to reduce risk	New Likelihood of Occurrence	New Hazard Severity	New Risk Factor
Skin irritation	2	3	6	Staff to look for plants with irritant oil in site risk assessment. Plants to look out for include: dropwater hemlock, lords and ladies, yew, If these are found introduce to the group in a good way or ensure they are outside of the boundaries you are using with the group.	1	3	3
Ingesting a toxic plant	3	4	12	Staff to only introduce wild edibles to groups where appropriate. When introducing edible/medicinal plants, highlight the hazards of ingesting plants that you are not 100% sure are edible. Highlight that there are many 'look-alikes' in the plant world. Get the group's agreement that they can explore this with you as you are a trained adult but if they want to do this outside of the session then they would need to confirm the plants with an adult who was 100% confident in their identification and knowledge of the plant. Good food hygiene practices to be adhered to	1	4	4
Ingesting contaminated plant	3	4	12	Staff must be aware of the potential for edible species of plants to be contaminated by heavy metals near roadsides, water borne diseases for those growing in or near water, pesticides and herbicides, animal or bird poo.	1	4	4

Responsible adult to supervise at all times. Suitable ratio of trained adults to persons with tools. No activity may be carried out where there is an individual Risk Factor of 10 or above.

Benefits and opportunities: Deep connection to plants; develops feeling and realisation that the natural world can provide for our needs; understanding the different qualities of plants and their potential uses can develop a deep respect for plants; crafting can be a very calming activity and develops dexterity; breaks down the impression of 'the wall of green' and start making connections with specific species...

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