

# Knife Safety Training



## Overview

For most of our NiN courses, students use a knife for various skills. Completing our Knife Safety Training is essential to knowing basic knife use and safety. Most youth have very little training with knives. In this lesson, we teach safety practices to learn, and hands-on techniques to demonstrate competence.

**Estimated Time:** 30min-2 h

## Materials

- A locking blade or sheath knife. Our preferred knife for youth is the [Morakniv](#) sheath knife.
- Sticks/small branches for carving. Note- green wood is recommended.
- Sharpening Stone- Recommended [Water Sharpening Stone](#)
- A set of knives (one per student).
- Unsharpened pencils (optional- if they do at home)
- First aid supplies-optional if they make a kit at home (see Basic First Aid Kit video below).
- An example of a basic first aid kit (see video below).
- Knife Safety Patches (optional). [Here is where](#) you can order them.
- An example "knife skills stick" that you have made (see below)

## Setting

Have a space with ample room for people to sit and carve with a “blood bubble” around them (see details below). Benches, chairs, logs or just sitting on the ground will work.

## Safety

Have students learn the safety tips first before giving them an actual knife to use. You can have students demonstrate using a stick instead of a knife first (blood bubble, carving away from self, asking an adult first etc.), then transition to a real knife. We recommend locking blades or sheath knives. Non-locking blades (ex. Swiss Army knife) can close accidentally on fingers. Many young kids have trouble closing locking blades, thus sheath knives are preferred. Having your own knives that you distribute to students will ensure that you are not dealing with different knife types with issues such as different locking blade mechanisms. If you have a large group, it helps to have an assistant instructor to roam and help students. Have a first aid kit nearby. Green wood (living wood) is much easier to carve, and thus safer to use with new students. Make sure you know the kind of wood and are not using hazardous materials such as poison sumac or poison ivy. Be aware of incorrect carving techniques such as carving towards self, walking with an open blade, lack of blood bubble, and carving with body parts (legs) under the knife.

## Preparation:

Make a **Knife Skills Stick** that has all of the carving techniques in it. Watch the Knife Carving Techniques video below to learn these skills.

## Lesson:

1) **Ask-** Who here has used a knife to carve wood before? **Ask-** what are some of the things you need to think about to be safe when carving wood? **Say-** Today we will learn knife safety techniques. When you can tell me all of the knife safety

techniques and complete the skills for this training, then you may use a knife during our training. (Optional) You will earn the knife safety patch (show them), which will show me that you have completed this training.

**Say-** Here are the 6 knife safety techniques that you need to know. (Optional- show them the knife safety video).

### **Knife Safety Practices (6)**

- Ask an adult/guardian/instructor **first** if it is ok to use your knife.
- Blood bubble (arms length safety zone around you). No one should enter your bubble.
- Be stationary (don't walk around with the knife).
- Carve away from yourself with no body parts under or in the way of the blade.
- Keep your knife sharp (a dull knife is a dangerous knife).
- Put your knife away (in its sheath) when you are done, and return the knife to the adult if you borrowed one.

2) **Do-** Go over each of the above practices in detail to discuss them.

3) **Say-** Let's review these 6 safety practices. How many can we name as a group? Raise your hand if you remember one of the skills. Have students name or review them all.

4) **Say-** Here are the knife skills techniques you need to do to complete this training. **Do-** As you name the skills below, show them a sharpened pencil, a sharpening stone, and your own **knife skills stick** that has all the techniques carved into it.

## Knife Skills Requirements

- Sharpen 10 pencils with a knife (show an example of a pencil sharpened with a knife)
- Demonstrate basic carving safety (carve away from self, not over body parts)
- Remove bark from a stick with a knife (show on your stick)
- Carve a stick to a sharp point (show on your stick)
- Carve an angled edge to a length of a stick (show on your stick)
- Carve a notch in a stick (show on your stick)
- Carve rings of bark (areas of bark on/off, show on your stick)
- Put together a simple wound kit (bandaids, gauze, tape, ointment in a bag (see First Aid Kit video link below). Show your example kit.
- Demonstrate how to sharpen a knife with a wet stone.

5) **Do-** Show them a simple basic first aid kit for wounds (see video below). Go over the individual components and describe how they are used.

6) **Say-** A sharp knife is a safe knife. Here is one technique to sharpen a knife. Option- show them the video below.

**Do-** Demonstrate how to sharpen a knife. Designate an area where students can bring their knife to practice knife sharpening. They can do this during the wood carving skills time if they think their knife has become dull.

7) **Do-** Hand out sticks to carve to each student (or have them go find one). If students go to find one, explain the difference between green wood and dried wood.

8) **Say-** Now I will hand out knives for you to use. **Ask-** When you come to borrow a knife, what is the first safety rule? (Ans.- Ask an adult/instructor if you can use a knife). **Say-** When you receive a knife, I want you to find a place where you can have a blood bubble. I want you to keep the knives in their sheath (or closed if a locking blade) until I tell you to take them out.

**Do-**Have each student ask you for a knife as you hand them out. Have students find a personal blood bubble zone and sit down.

9) **Say-** I will now show you the first carving technique (removing bark). **Do-**Demonstrate how to carve off bark. Carve and remove only the bottom half of the bark from a stick (you will need some bark remaining to demonstrate carving a ring of bark later). Have students take their knives out and work on carving bark. Walk around and observe safety and assist.

10) **Do-** Once students have carved bark off their stick, have the students sheath their knives, then demonstrate the next carving technique (carving a stick to a sharp point). They should continue to carve with the same stick. Continue this process with each of the remaining skills, doing each skill on the same stick.

11) **Do-** Walk around and assist students with carving and safety.

12) **Do-** When done, have students return knives to their sheath (or close locking blades) and return them to you.

13) After they have completed the skills, their home ninja mission is to sharpen 10 pencils and make a basic first aid kit. **Option-** do these skills together during a class.

## **Debrief**

**Ask-** What was something you learned doing these skills? Which skill was the hardest? Has anyone ever cut themselves with a knife? Did anyone carve green wood vs. dried wood? Who carved soft wood? Did anyone carve hardwood? What kinds of wood did you carve? What's the difference between "hardwood" and "softwood" trees? What did you notice about the different layers under the bark? Can anyone name some softwood trees (ex. Willow, or Conifer trees like pine or cedar).

## **Mind of the Mentor**

Most youth today have very little experience carving wood or working with knives. For this reason, most youth love doing this skill. The biggest challenge for kids will be learning the correct angle to hold the knife against the wood in order to carve wood/bark. Many students lay the knife at an angle that is too flat/low, and will not succeed in carving the wood off. Many will thus blame the knife for being "dull!" When this happens, have them sheath their knife and bring it to you to demonstrate the proper angle and to see if the knife is actually dull. Having freshly cut green wood (wood that is still growing) is extremely helpful to making a first lesson more successful for a student. If you provide them with green wood/stick, cut pieces with few side branches (side branches or knots are hard to carve for a new student). If students are responsible for sharpening pencils or putting a first aid kit together at home, be sure to communicate with parents/guardians. It is also important to share the 6 safety techniques with families.

**Allowing students to bring their own knife-** We like to require students to complete this training as a way to earn permission to bring their own knife from home to use. This helps provide motivation for learning these skills, plus students are very proud to earn this privilege (and the patch). The knife safety patch- this can be used as "regalia" (students proudly display on a pack or shirt). It is helpful as an instructor to have students display this patch on a pack or shirt so that leaders can confirm when a student asks "Can I use my knife?" Every time we use knives in a program, we ask the kids to name the 6 rules as a reminder.

## **Video Links**

[Knife Safety](#)

[Knife carving techniques](#)

[Knife sharpening](#)

[Basic First Aid Kit](#)

Join our private [NiN Mentors Facebook Group](#) to ask questions and share experiences from our curriculum.



The knife safety patch

[Here is where](#) you can order them.