



#TeamWilder Educator Toolkit: Using Tools Safely

Before You Start:

Remember to complete a Risk/Benefit Assessment before you get to work! We've created an **example** to help you write yours. This can be found in our **#TeamWilder Educator Toolkit: Assessing and Managing Risk**.

When introducing tools to groups:

1. **Gather** the participants together in a small groups. Ensure they can hear you.
2. **Introduce** each tool
3. **Demonstrate** safe use

It is important to go through this structured process to build up appropriate respect, understanding and handling of the tool, in the following sequence:



Age Appropriateness:

When using tools or sharp implements, the following age guidance is suggested as a minimum:

Tool being used (suggested minimum age for use)

Trowels (4+)

Spades, shovels, forks, hammers, rakes, screwdrivers (8)

Bow saws and loppers (10)

Sharp-edged swinging tool e.g slasher, grass hook (16)

Sharp implements e.g. kitchen/bushcraft knives (10)

Electrical tools (14 with 1:1 supervision)

However, if the young people are well known to you and their ability is high, you may use your professional judgement to lower the ages by which children can use certain tools – but you must include this in your risk/benefit assessment.



Please note that your appropriate supervision ratios will be altered by the use of tools, and especially the use of high-risk implements.

Appropriate Supervision:

Children must be appropriately supervised whilst they're taking practical action for wildlife. The ratio of adults (whether parents/guardians, staff or volunteers) to children should be appropriate to the activity and age group/capability of the children involved. You'll find more guidance about getting your ratios right in our **example risk/benefit assessment**.

Group Management:

- **Roles and responsibilities for all adults** in attendance should be made clear, particularly with regard to accident and emergency procedures and behavioural expectations.
- Establish **behavioural guidelines and ground rules**.
- Consider setting a **maximum time for tool use** (e.g. 20 minutes) depending on participants, as concentration does lapse.
- Depending on the group you are working with, it can be good practice to establish a **safe tool-use area away from the main group**, where participants can concentrate on learning new skills in peace and quiet, with a leader always present. The rest of the group should not enter the tool zone when others are working there.

Establishing a safe working area:

This will depend on the activity and the outdoor context. Often, seats aren't available or necessary. However, as far as possible, aim to:

- **Ensure good, solid, stable seating and benches.** Any log seats should be firm and not roll around. Benches formed in a circle, allows observation by leaders from the centre, and safe close supervision by leaders behind the circle. Kneeling while working also provides stability.
- **Provide a variety of large logs of different heights which can be used as work benches, and for sawing, carving, chopping or drilling.** A variety of heights is useful for different tool operations and for a range of child and adult heights.
- **Support children and adults who can struggle to hold the wood whilst sawing.** A large log, dug into the ground, around 20 - 24" high, with a V cut in the top, makes an excellent sawing bench. A forked tree can be used as a brace. Otherwise provide (or make) a stable saw-horse.
- **Ensure safe working distances between participants.** This is a minimum of an arm and tool's length away from each other, sometimes described as the working person's 'blood bubble'. The most appropriate descriptive term and distance set between people will also depend on the type of group you are working with.



Tool Talks.

All about... bowsaws:

2 person job

Glove on the helper hand

Tool Talk:

- This is a bowsaw
- This is the handle
- This is the blade cover
- I take the cover off
- This is the blade
- This is the cutting edge
- When I have finished sawing I put the cover back on
- I stand with the bowsaw like this (stand with the saw next to your leg with the blade facing down)
- I walk with the bowsaw like this: *walk with the saw next to your leg with the blade facing down*
- I pass the bowsaw like this: *keep the blade facing down, turn the handle to offer to the other person*
- When I use the bowsaw I use it 'two arms and a tools-length' away from anyone except my partner.
- I use the bowsaw to cut wood bigger than a two pence piece.
- I have bare hands on the tool.
- I wear a glove on my helper hand.
- When I am not using the bowsaw I put it down with the handle facing forwards and the blade facing inwards.
- When I have finished with the bowsaw I put it in the designated place or in the toolbox provided after checking it is clean and dry (use a gloved hand to wipe the blade from the top)



All about... secateurs:

1 person job

Glove on the helper hand

Tool Talk:

- This is a pair of secateurs
- This is the handle
- This is the blade
- This is the cutting edge



- This is the safety catch
- I stand with the secateurs like this: *stand with the secateurs by your side with the blade in your hand and the handle facing down. Keep the safety catch on.*
- I walk with the secateurs like this: *walk with the secateurs by your side with the blade in your hand and the safety catch on*
- I pass the secateurs like this: *ensure the safety catch is on, turn the handle to offer to the other person*
- When I use the secateurs, I use them 'two arms and a tools-length' away from anyone
- I use the secateurs to cut wood smaller than a one pence piece
- I always wear gloves whilst using this tool
- When I am not using the secateurs I put them down with the handle facing towards me
- When I have finished with the secateurs I put them in the designated place or in the toolbox provided after checking they are clean and dry (use a gloved hand to wipe the blade)

All about... loppers:

1 person job (sometimes 2)

No gloves needed (unless you are the helper)

Tool Talk:

- This is a pair of loppers
- This is the handle
- This is the blade
- This is the cutting edge
- I stand with the loppers like this: *stand with the loppers under your arm with the blade facing forwards*
- I walk with the loppers like this: *walk with the loppers under your arm with the blade facing forwards*
- I pass the loppers like this: *keep the blade facing down, turn the handle to offer to the other person*
- When I use the loppers I use it two arms and a tools length away from anyone except my partner
- I use the loppers to cut wood smaller than a two pence piece
- I have bare hands on the tool
- When I am not using the loppers I put it down with the handle facing forwards and the blade facing behind me
- When I have finished with the loppers I put it in the designated place or in the toolbox provided after checking they are clean and dry (use a gloved hand to wipe the blade from the top)



All about... billhooks:

2 person job

No gloves needed

Tool Talk

- This is a billhook
- This is the handle
- This is the cover
- I take the cover off
- This is the blade
- This is the cutting edge
- When I have finished with the billhook I put the cover on
- I stand with the billhook like this: *stand holding the billhook handle with the blade facing forwards*
- I walk with the billhook like this: *walk holding the billhook handle with the blade facing forwards*
- I pass the billhook like this: *keep the blade facing down, turn the handle to offer to the other person*
- When I use the billhook I use it 'two arms and a tools-length' away from anyone except my partner
- I use the billhook to cleave wood
- I have bare hands on the tool
- When I am not using the billhook I put it down with the handle facing forwards and the blade facing towards me
- When I have finished with the billhook I put it in the designated place or in the toolbox provided after checking it is clean and dry (use a gloved hand to wipe the blade from the top)



All about... sheath knives:

1 person job (sometimes two)

Glove on the helper hand

Tool Talk:

- This is a sheath knife
- This is the handle
- This is the sheath
- I take the sheath off like this
- This is the blade
- This is the cutting edge
- When I have finished with the sheath knife I put it back in the sheath



- I stand with the sheath knife like this: *stand holding the sheath knife handle with the blade facing forwards*
- I walk with the sheath knife like this: *walk holding the sheath knife handle with the blade facing forwards*
- I pass the sheath knife like this: *keep the blade facing down, turn the handle to offer to the other person*
- When I use the sheath knife I use it 'two arms and a tools-length' away from anyone except my partner
- I always use the sheath knife on the outside of my body and away from me
- I have bare hands on the tool and a glove on my helper hand
- I use the sheath knife to whittle and cut string
- When I am not using the sheath knife I put it down with the handle facing forwards and the blade facing towards me
- When I have finished with the sheath knife I put it in the designated place or in the toolbox provided after checking it is clean and dry (use a gloved hand to wipe the blade from the top). This box will be locked otherwise.

All about... mallets:

1 person job (sometimes two)

Glove on the helper hand

Tool Talk:

- This is a mallet
- This is the handle
- This is the head. I check it's securely attached to the handle before I use it.
- I stand with the mallet like this: *stand holding the handle with the head facing downwards*
- I walk with the mallet like this: *walk holding the handle with the head facing downwards*
- I pass the mallet like this: *hold the head and offer the handle to the other person*
- When I use the mallet I use it 'two arms and a tools-length' away from anyone and I always check that no-one is behind me.
- I assume a firm stance when I'm using the mallet: *stand with legs apart*
- I have bare hands on the tool and a glove on my helper hand
- I use the mallet to split wood and hammer wooden pegs into the ground
- When I am not using the mallet I put it down with the handle facing towards me
- When I have finished with the mallet I put it in the designated place or in the toolbox provided after checking it is clean and dry (use a gloved hand to wipe the head)



Image credits: Andy Steele & Jo Rawson.

