

TOTIN' CHIP — INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

TROOP 23 BROOKLYN · OCTOBER 2026 EDITION · T23B.ORG/ADVANCEMENTS/AWARDS/TOTIN-CHIP



Who teaches. Taught by an adult leader or by a Scout who holds the card.

Where. On a campout, in a roped-off axe yard, with the troop's own tools. Hands-on beats a lecture: pass the tools around and let every Scout do every step.

Before the session. Each Scout has read the knife, saw and ax pages of the Scouts BSA Handbook (requirement 1) and the guide at t23b.org/advancements/awards/totin-chip — it follows the same order as this sheet. Bring the group sign-off sheet.

What to have

- Work gloves and eye protection, enough for everyone working at once
- Rope or marking tape and stakes for the axe yard; a small tarp to keep the tools on
- The troop's ax and saw, sheathed; a pocketknife
- Whetstones for the knife and a file for the ax
- Logs to saw and split, and a chopping block
- The group sign-off sheet and a pen

Order of the session

1. **Safety circle and "Thank you."** Closed tool at arm's length, turn slowly — nobody and nothing inside the circle. A tool is not a toy: no throwing, no tricks, no hammering or prying. A tool changes hands only when the receiver says "Thank you." (*Req. 3, 4*)
2. **The axe yard.** Roped off, clear of brush, with room to swing. Only the person using the tool is inside; anyone else asks before stepping in and waits if told to. Idle tools sheathed on the tarp. (*Req. 4*)
3. **Pocketknife, sharpening, fuzz stick.** Open and close it with fingers clear of the edge. The blade is open only while cutting. Cut away from yourself and from anyone near you. Close it before passing it. Wash, rinse and dry it after food. Sharpen it on a whetstone. Carve a fuzz stick. (*Req. 2*)
4. **Saw.** Brace the wood on a solid support. Long, smooth strokes — let the saw do the work. Keep the blade out of the ground. Sheathed when not in use; carried and passed with the blade turned away. (*Req. 2*)
5. **Ax.** Check it first: tight head, sound handle, sharp edge — or it is not used. Gloves and eye protection. Chop on a chopping block, never on rock and never into the ground. Carry it sheathed, by the handle just below the head, blade turned away, never on the shoulder. Pass it sheathed, blade away from both people. (*Req. 2*)
6. **Requirement 5.** Each Scout says it in his own words. (*Req. 5*)
7. **Trees, property and the Outdoor Code.** Standing trees, alive or dead, cut only with permission and a good reason; no carving on trees or tables. Each Scout says the Outdoor Code and what one line means. (*Req. 6, 7*)
8. **Questions** — below.

What each Scout has to show

- Sharpens a knife blade on a whetstone, and carves a fuzz stick (*2*)
- Saws a piece of firewood, braced on a support (*2*)
- Splits a log on the chopping block (*2*)
- Carries and passes the ax and the saw, and passes a closed knife (*2, 4*)
- Works the whole session without horseplay with a tool (*3*)
- Answers the questions below out loud

Requirement 5 is not a demonstration. It is a promise about how a Scout behaves with a knife around people. The Scout says it in his own words; you watch for it for the rest of the session — and every leader keeps watching for it on every campout after.

Questions — ask them as the work goes

Every Scout answers out loud, in his own words. You are not checking wording; listen for the idea in the right-hand column. There is no written test.

#	Ask	Listen for	Req.
1	Where did you read the woods-tools rules? Tell me one rule for each tool.	The Scouts BSA Handbook; one correct rule each for knife, saw and ax.	1
2	When is a knife blade open?	Only while cutting. Closed to carry it, to pass it, to put it away.	2

3	Which way do you cut?	Away from yourself and away from anyone near you.	2, 4
4	Why is a sharp knife safer than a dull one?	It needs less force, so it slips less and is easier to control.	2
5	You just used your knife on food. Now what?	Wash it, rinse it, dry it.	2
6	When do you use a saw, and when an ax?	The saw for most cutting of firewood; the ax for splitting.	2 · TF 3d
7	What do you check before you pick up an ax?	Head tight, handle sound, edge sharp. If not, it is not used.	2
8	How do you carry an ax?	Sheathed, by the handle just below the head, blade turned away from you; never on the shoulder.	2
9	How do you hand a tool to someone?	Knife closed, ax and saw sheathed, blade turned away from both of you; let go only when the other person says "Thank you."	2, 4
10	Where do you chop or split?	On a chopping block — not on rock or concrete, and never into the ground.	2
11	What do you wear for ax and saw work?	Gloves and eye protection.	2, 4
12	Name two ways a tool turns into a plaything.	Throwing it, doing tricks with it, using it as a hammer or a pry bar, waving it around.	3
13	Before a cut, what do you check around you?	That nobody is within reach — your arm plus the tool, all the way around.	4
14	Someone wants to walk through the axe yard. What happens?	They ask first. You stop, and tell them when it is safe.	4
15	Say requirement 5 in your own words.	A knife is never pointed or waved at a person — not in anger, not as a joke.	5
16	You want wood from a standing tree, alive or dead. What comes first?	Permission — from the leader, who checks with the camp or the owner — and a good reason.	6
17	Say the Outdoor Code.	As an American, I will do my best to be clean in my outdoor manners, be careful with fire, be considerate in the outdoors, and be conservation-minded.	7
18	What does the Totin' Chip let you do on a service project?	Use a pocketknife or a wood-carving knife. Scouting America's tool rules for service projects allow it only to a Scout who has earned the Totin' Chip.	680-028
19	What happens if you break a safety rule?	A corner comes off the card. With all four gone, the card goes back to the Scoutmaster and the requirements are shown again.	troop

Signing it off

- Initial each requirement on the group sign-off sheet as the Scout shows it.
- The card is issued when all seven are initialed. It is signed by a Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster and by the Advancement Chair, and the chip is recorded in Scoutbook.
- Anything not finished is finished on the next campout. What is signed stays signed.
- Scouting America's own text says only that the Totin' Rights "can be taken away." The corners are this troop's practice, and they are printed on the back of our cards. Our cards carry all seven requirements; the older printed card carries six and lacks requirement 5.

Tenderfoot 3d on the same demonstrations

3d. Demonstrate proper care, sharpening, and use of the knife, saw, and ax. Describe when each should be used.

Question 6 covers the second sentence. Signed separately.

Requirement text: Scoutbook, Scouting America's advancement system, as of September 2026 (seven requirements; the scouting.org page and the printed pocket card list six). Tenderfoot 3d: Scouts BSA rank requirements, current edition. Service projects: Scouting America, *SAFE Project Tool Use*, No. 680-028, 2026 revision — pocket or wood-carving knives require the Whittling Adventure or the Totin' Chip. Session order and demonstrations adapted from Troop 272's *Teaching Plan & Student Guide for Totin' Chip*, 2013. Questions and answers: Troop 23 Brooklyn. Where this sheet and the Scouts BSA Handbook or the Guide to Safe Scouting differ, those win.