

Firem'n Chit

TROOP 23 BROOKLYN · [HTTPS://WWW.T23B.ORG/ADVANCEMENTS/AWARDS/FIREMN-CHIT](https://www.t23b.org/advancements/awards/firemn-chit)

The Firem'n Chit is a Scouting America certification. A Scout who holds it may carry matches or a lighter on a campout and build a campfire. To earn it, you show a leader, at a real fire, that you can do the whole job safely: decide whether a fire is the right choice, pick and clear the spot, lay a fire that lights from one match, keep it under control, and put it out cold.

This page is the guide Troop 23 teaches from, in the order you will do the work at the fire ring, and each step names the requirement it covers. Read it before the campout — the session itself is for doing. A printable copy, the sign-off sheet and the instructor guide are at the bottom of the page.

In our troop the chit is what lets a patrol cook on its own fire: a patrol with no Firem'n holder in it cooks on fire only with the help of a Scout who has one, or of an adult. Most fires also need a knife, and often a saw, to get the wood ready — that is the Totin' Chip.

Fire Needs Three Things

A fire needs three things at once: heat, fuel and air. Take away any one of them and it goes out.

Every step below is about those three. You bring the heat with one match, the fuel with the wood you gather and how you stack it, and the air with how loosely you build. Putting a fire out works the same way in reverse: water takes the heat away, dirt shuts off the air, and spreading the coals pulls the fuel apart.

Step 1 — Should There Be a Fire?

Not every campsite or every evening needs a fire. A camp stove cooks faster, works in the rain and leaves no mark on the ground. Build a fire when it does a job a stove cannot — warmth, a campfire program, cooking over coals — and only where it is allowed.

Fire rules change from place to place and from week to week. Many parks allow fires only in their own fire rings, some do not allow them at all, and in a dry spell officials can declare a burn ban that closes fires even where they are normally fine. On private land you need the owner's permission. On a troop campout a leader checks the rules before anyone strikes a match; your part is to know that the question has to be asked, every time.

Requirement 2. The same question is Second Class requirement 2a.



Step 2 — The Right Spot

Use the fire ring that is already there. A fire marks the ground for years; an established ring keeps all of that in one place, which is what Leave No Trace asks.

Then clear the ground around it. Everything that can burn — leaves, pine needles, twigs, dry grass — comes away for at least five feet in every direction, a circle ten feet across. Look up as well: no branches hanging over the fire. Keep tents, tarps, ropes, packs and fuel bottles well back.

Before anyone lights anything, a bucket of water, a shovel, or both stand right next to the ring — not back at the campsite, next to the ring.

Requirements 3 and 6.

Step 3 — The Right Material

A fire is built from three sizes of wood, and it needs all three, gathered and sorted before the first match:

- **Tinder** catches from a match: dry grass, dry pine needles, birch bark, and thin curls shaved from a dead stick. Nothing thicker than a pencil lead.
- **Kindling** catches from burning tinder: dry twigs and split sticks, from pencil-thin to thumb-thick.
- **Fuel wood** keeps the fire going once the kindling is burning well: dry branches and split pieces, wrist-thick and up.



The two usual mistakes are too little tinder, and no kindling at all — going straight from tinder to logs. Big wood needs far more heat to catch than a handful of tinder can give. Gather a good double handful of tinder, more kindling than you think you need, and all your fuel wood before you light.

Use dead and down wood only, and only where the camp lets you gather it. Dry wood snaps when you bend it; green or wet wood bends. On a wet day, split a wet stick — the inside is often dry — and keep your tinder in a plastic bag until you need it.

Requirement 4, and Second Class requirement 2b. Shaving tinder and splitting kindling is knife and ax work, so it calls for the Totin' Chip.

Step 4 — The Right Shape

Lay the fire so the flame from the tinder can climb into the kindling and air can reach the middle. Three shapes cover nearly every fire you will build:

- **Tepee.** Kindling leaned together in a cone over the tinder, fuel wood leaned around it. Lights fast and burns tall — good for a quick fire or a single pot.
- **Log cabin.** Sticks crisscrossed in a square, layer on layer, around a small tepee of tinder and kindling. Burns steadily and leaves a good bed of coals — good for cooking and for a larger campfire.
- **Lean-to.** A stick pushed into the ground at an angle, tinder underneath it, kindling leaned against it. Good when the wind blows steadily from one side.



Whichever you build, keep it loose. Fire needs air, and a fire packed tight with wood smothers itself.

Three Fire Lays



Step 5 — Light It

Check once more: water and shovel by the ring, tinder, kindling and fuel wood within reach, the area around the ring clear.

Crouch close to the fire lay with your back to the wind. Strike the match away from you and hold it in cupped hands until the wood of the match itself is burning — most matches go out because they are pushed into the tinder too early. Then bring the flame to the bottom of the tinder, where it can climb. As soon as the tinder flames, feed kindling a few sticks at a time, smallest first, and add fuel wood only once the kindling is burning well.

The matches or the lighter go straight back into their closed container — not into a pocket, not onto a log by the fire. And never use gasoline or any other liquid fuel to start a fire or to bring one back.

Requirement 4.



Step 6 — Keep It in Hand

One person is in charge of the fire at a time, and everyone knows who. That person stays with it; if they need to leave, they hand it over to someone by name. If everyone is leaving camp, even for a short hike, the fire goes out first.

Feed it from small to large, and only as much as the job needs. What goes into the fire stays in the fire: no waving burning sticks around, no poking at it for fun, and no running, wrestling or jumping near the ring. Some things never go in at all — plastic, which gives off poisonous smoke; sealed cans and rocks from a stream or lake, which can burst; and trash or food scraps, which you pack out instead.

If a spark lands outside the ring and something starts to burn, put it out at once if it is small and safe to, and tell an adult right away either way. A fire that gets away is reported to the authorities without delay.

Requirements 5 and 6.



Step 7 — Put It Out Cold

Putting a fire out takes longer than lighting one, so start before you are in a hurry to leave.

1. Let it burn down to coals if there is time.
2. Spread the coals apart with a stick or the shovel.
3. Sprinkle water over them — sprinkle, do not dump. A bucket emptied onto hot coals throws up steam and spatter that can burn.
4. Stir, and sprinkle again. Keep going until nothing hisses and no steam rises.
5. Do the cold-out test: hold the back of your hand just above the ashes, then touch them. If you cannot touch every part with your bare hand, the fire is not out — keep sprinkling and stirring.

No water? Stir dirt or sand through the coals, cover them, and keep checking: buried embers can smolder for a long time.

Then leave the fire ring clean, with nothing in it that will not burn, ready for the next group. In Troop 23 this step is checked at the end of the evening campfire, on a fire the Scout actually used.

Requirement 7.



How You Earn It

The chit is taught on a campout, at a real fire, by an adult leader or by a Scout who holds the card. Bring your handbook, and have the fire pages read before you arrive.

There is no written test. You show each requirement by doing it, and the instructor asks you questions out loud as you work — the same list every time, written out with answers, so every Scout is checked against the same thing. The list is in the instructor guide at the bottom of this page.

Each requirement is initialed as you show it. The card is issued when all eight are done: a Scoutmaster or Assistant Scoutmaster and the Advancement Chair sign it, and it is recorded in Scoutbook. Anything not finished on one campout is finished on the next — what is signed stays signed.

Scouting America's own text says only that the Fire'n Rights can be taken away; how is left to each troop. In Troop 23 a corner comes off the card for each safety slip. With all four corners gone, the card goes back to the Scoutmaster and you show the requirements again before you carry matches on a troop outing. The rule is printed on the back of our cards.

The Same Fire Counts for Second Class

Three Second Class requirements ask for exactly this fire. A Scout working on that rank can show them at the same session; they are signed separately.

- **2a.** Explain when it is appropriate to use a fire for cooking or other purposes and when it would not be appropriate to do so.
- **2b.** Use a pocketknife, and a saw or axe if needed, to prepare tinder, kindling, and fuel wood for a cooking fire.
- **2c.** Using a minimum-impact method, and at an approved outdoor location and time, use the tinder, kindling, and fuel wood from Second Class requirement 2b to demonstrate how to build a fire. Unless prohibited by local fire restrictions, light the fire. After allowing the flames to burn safely for at least two minutes, safely extinguish the flames with minimal impact to the fire site. Properly dispose of the ashes and any charred remains.

The rest of each rank is on our rank requirements page, and the other awards a Scout can earn are on Awards.

The Eight Requirements, Word for Word

"This certification grants a Scout the right to carry fire-lighting devices (matches, lighters, etc.) to build campfires. The Scout must show their Scout leader, or someone designated by their leader, an understanding of the responsibility to do the following:"

1. I have read and understand use and safety rules from the Scouts BSA Handbook.
2. I will build a campfire only when necessary and when I have the necessary permits (regulations vary by locality).
3. I will minimize campfire impacts or use existing fire lays consistent with the principles of Leave No Trace. I will check to see that all flammable material is cleared at least 5 feet in all directions from fire (total 10 feet).
4. I will safely use and store fire-starting materials.
5. I will see that fire is attended to at all times.
6. I will make sure that water and/or a shovel is readily available. I will promptly report any wildfire to the proper authorities.
7. I will use the cold-out test to make sure the fire is cold out and will make sure the fire lay is cleaned before I leave it.
8. I follow the Outdoor Code, the Guide to Safe Scouting, and the principles of Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly!

"The Scout's 'Fire'n Rights' can be taken away if they fail in their responsibility."

Where each one is covered on this page: 1 — the whole page, and the fire pages of your handbook; 2 — Step 1; 3 — Step 2; 4 — Steps 3 and 5; 5 — Step 6; 6 — Steps 2 and 6; 7 — Step 7; 8 — all of it: "Be careful with fire" is one of the four lines of the Outdoor Code. Requirement text as published on scouting.org.
