ROYAL CANADIAN ARMY CADETS

GOLD STAR

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

SECTION 1

EO M424.01 – SHARPEN A SURVIVAL KNIFE

Total Time: 60 min

PREPARATION

PRE-LESSON INSTRUCTIONS

Resources needed for the delivery of this lesson are listed in the lesson specification located in A-CR-CCP-704/PG-001, *Gold Star Qualification Standard and Plan*, Chapter 4. Specific uses for said resources are identified throughout the instructional guide within the TP for which they are required.

Review the lesson content and become familiar with the material prior to delivering the lesson.

PRE-LESSON ASSIGNMENT

Nil.

APPROACH

An interactive lecture was chosen for TPs 1–4 to introduce the cadet to a survival knife and how to care for and maintain a survival knife.

A demonstration and performance was chosen for TP 5 as it allows the instructor to explain and demonstrate sharpening a survival knife while providing the cadet the opportunity to practice these skills under supervision.

INTRODUCTION

REVIEW

Nil.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson the cadet shall have sharpened a survival knife with a sharpening stone.

IMPORTANCE

It is important for cadets to know how to sharpen a knife as it is an invaluable asset in the field. In a survival situation, a knife serves a number of purposes such as chopping, cutting, slicing and sawing. Having a sharp knife will allow the cadet to make the necessities they will need to live and thrive in the outdoors.

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Teaching point 1 **Identify types of knives.**

Time: 5 min Method: Interactive Lecture

TYPES OF KNIVES

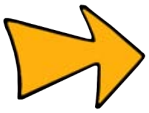


Knives come in many varieties and serve many purposes, including carving, hunting and survival. This TP will discuss three types of knives that are commonly carried by outdoorsmen.

If possible, have the three types of knives available so the cadet can see the differences between them.

Folding Blade

A folding blade knife connects the blade to the handle through a pivot, allowing the blade to fold into the handle. The blade typically has a locking mechanism to stop the blade from accidentally closing on the user. Some types of locking mechanisms include slip joint, lockback, liner lock, frame lock, and pick lock.



The following are locking mechanisms on a folding blade knife:

- **Slip joint.** Holds the blade in place by a spring device that allows the blade to fold when a certain amount of pressure is applied.
- **Lockback.** Includes a pivoted latch connected to a spring that can be disengaged only by pressing the latch down to release the blade.
- **Liner lock.** Uses a leaf spring-type liner within the groove of the handle that snaps into position under the blade when it is open. The lock is released by pushing the liner to the side, allowing the blade to return to its groove in the handle.
- **Frame lock.** Also known as an integral lock or monolock. This locking mechanism works in a similar manner to the liner lock but uses a partial cut-out of the actual knife handle, rather than a separate liner inside the handle to hold the blade in place.
- **Pick lock.**A round post on the back base of the blade locks into a hole in a spring tab in the handle. To close, manually lift the spring tab off the blade post, or swivel the bolster clockwise to lift the spring tab off the blade post.

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Note. From "R.L. Hammette & Associates", by R. L. Hammette & Associates, 2009, Lockback Knife. Copyright 2009 by R.L. Hammette & Associates. Retrieved February 25, 2009, from http://www.hammette.com/knives.htm

Figure 1 Folding Blade

Fixed Blade



Tang. The part of the blade that extends into the handle for strength. When the tang of the knife is full, the edge of the entire tang can been seen along the handle. A full tang is a solid piece of steel from tip to butt and is the strongest blade / handle arrangement.

A fixed-blade knife does not fold or slide. The blade is typically stronger due to the tang and lack of moving parts. It is best suited for use as a survival knife. The fixed-blade knife is a simple design; however, custom fixed-blade knives are produced in many different variations.



Note. From "Knives Plus Retail Cutlery and Cutlery Accessories Since 1987", by Knives Plus Retail Cutlery Accessories Since 1987, 2008, Buck Gen 5 Skinner. Copyright 2001–2008 by Knives Plus, Inc. Retrieved February 26, 2009, from http://www.knivesplus.com/buckknifebu-5rws.html

Figure 2 Fixed Blade

Multi-purpose

These knives come with many tools that may be useful in a survival situation. Some of these knives have bigger blades making them more suitable as a primary knife. However, these knives may have poor blade locks and small, weak blades, limiting their usefulness as a primary knife.

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Note. From "Leatherman", by Leatherman Tool Group, Inc, Charge ALX. Copyright 2009 by Leatherman Tool Group, Inc. Retrieved February 26, 2009, from http://www.leatherman.com/multi-tools/full-size-tools/charge-alx.aspx

Figure 3 Multi-purpose Knife

CONFIRMATION OF TEACHING POINT 1

QUESTIONS:

Q1. What three types of knives may be used as a survival knife?

Q2. What type of knife would be best suited as a survival knife?

Q3. What are some of the negative factors that limit the multi-purpose knife as a survival knife?

ANTICIPATED ANSWERS:

A1. Three types of knives that may be used as a survival knife are the folding blade, fixed blade and multi-purpose knives.

A2. The knife that would be best suited as a survival knife is the fixed-blade knife.

A3. A multi-purpose knife can have a small, weak blade combined with a poor blade locking mechanism.

Teaching point 2 **Describe the parts of a survival knife.**

Time: 5 min Method: Interactive Lecture



During this TP, point out the parts of the survival knife as each one is mentioned.

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PARTS OF A KNIFE

A knife is the most common item carried by individuals who enjoy the outdoors and participate in expedition training. Not all knives have all of the parts listed, as it depends on the cost and intended use of the knife. The following parts are listed for a fixed-blade knife:

1. **Blade.**The cutting portion of the knife.

2. **Cutting edge.** The bottom edge of the blade. It can be very sharp and is used to slice, cut and chop.

3. **Tip or point.** Sharp tip of the blade.

4. **Back.** The back edge of the blade, also called the top or spine.

5. **Handle.** Where the user grasps the knife. It is comprised of many components including the bolsters, scales, fittings, sculpting, spacers, pins and tang framework.

6. **Tang.** The piece of the blade that extends into the handle for strength.

7. **Scale or slab.** The material that makes up the knife handle. These can be man-made or natural material such as bone, wood or ivory. Scales are pinned or riveted to the tang.

8. **Butt plate or pommel.** A metal piece at the end or the back of the handle. It is the butt area of the knife.

9. **Pins or rivets.** The hardware that is used to join scale handles to the tang.

10. **Shank.** Consists of the tang and blade. It is the continuous body of the knife.

11. **Spacers.** Material layered between the handle and the hilt or guard of the knife. The spacer is used to adjust the fit of the handle. The material can be any metal, (copper, brass, nickel, silver, or stainless steel) plastic and / or leather.

12. **Hilt.** Can also be referred to as the bolster or guard. It is the cross member attached to the blade and prevents the hand from sliding up onto the blade**.**

13. **Finger grips.** Grooves that are cut or shaped into the handle so that it fits the hand comfortably (as illustrated in Figure 5).

14. **Hollow grind.** The grind of the blade is where the side of the knife is hollowed out. Knives with a hollow grind cut easier, but are not as strong. A hollow grind is also known as the concave bevel (as illustrated in Figure 5).

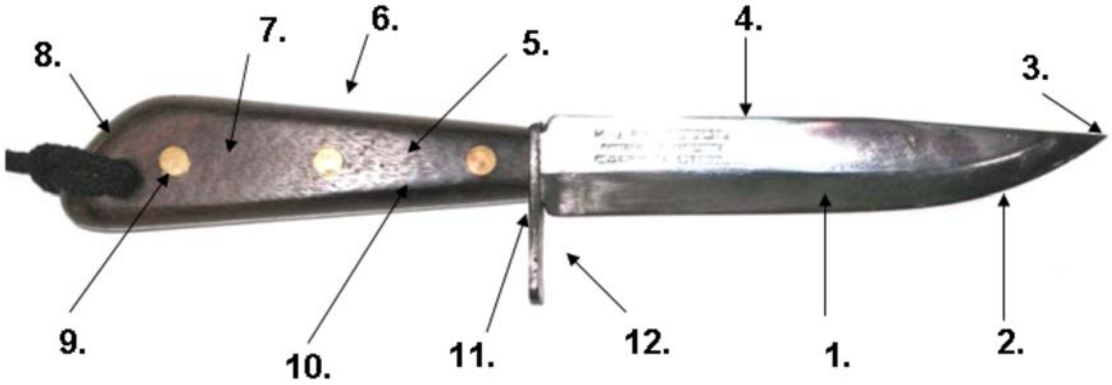

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Figure 4 Knife Parts

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Note. From "Foldingknife.com", by Foldingknifepro 2007, Kalinga Pro. Copyright 2007 by Foldingknifepro.com. Retrieved March 9, 2009, from http://www.folding knivepro.com/pro1322538.html

Figure 5 Hollow Grind and Finger Grips

CONFIRMATION OF TEACHING POINT 2

QUESTIONS:

Q1. Identify six parts of a survival knife and explain each part.

Q2. What is a shank?

Q3. What is a tang?

ANTICIPATED ANSWERS:

A1. Any six of the following:

- blade,
- cutting edge,
- tip or point,
- back,
- handle,
- tang,
- scale,
- butt plate or pommel,
- pins or rivets,
- shank,
- spacers,
- hilt,
- finger grips, and
- hollow grind.

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A2. Shank refers to the tang plus blade, the continuous body of the knife.

A3. Tang refers to the piece of the blade that extends into the handle for strength.

Teaching point 3 **Describe the characteristics of a survival knife.**

Time: 5 min Method: Interactive Lecture

CHARACTERISTICS OF A SURVIVAL KNIFE

Length of the Blade

The ideal survival knife should have a blade length somewhere between 10–15 cm (4–6 inches). This size of blade offers a good mix of size and control. Anything bigger is bulky and adds to the weight of the survival gear.



Note. From "Knives Plus Retail Cutlery and Cutlery Accessories Since 1987", by Knives Plus Retail Cutlery Accessories Since 1987, 2008, Buck Gen 5 Skinner. Copyright 2001–2008 by Knives Plus, Inc. Retrieved February 26, 2009, from http://www.knivesplus.com/buckknifebu-5rws.html

Figure 6 Blade Length

Width of the Blade

The optimum survival knife will generally have a blade thickness of between 0.4–0.6 cm (5 / 32 to 8 / 32 inches). Any thinner and the blade becomes too flexible; yet thicker blades lack the finesse for the finer work for which survival knives may be used.



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Figure 7 Blade Width

Composition of the Blade

The material of a knife blade will affect the durability and maintenance of the knife. Most blades are made of stainless steel, an alloy that contains chromium to make it corrosion-resistant. Chromium is softer than steel and is blended with stainless steel. Stainless steel blades offer a compromise between rust resistance, edge retention and ease of sharpening.

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Numbers marked on the blade (usually a 400 number) indicate the type of alloy used. For example, a marine knife that will be exposed to salt water, salt air and spray is usually made of rust-resistant, high chromium steel such as 420. A blade intended for frequent cutting or food preparation will be harder steel such as 440.

Letters A, B, and C indicate progressively higher levels of carbon and thus harder steel. A harder blade will hold a sharp edge longer, but will be more difficult to sharpen.

The two main types of steel used in making high quality survival knives are:

- **Carbon steel.** Knife blades are tough, can be very sharp, retain their sharp edge fairly well and sharpen with little effort. They have a tendency to be brittle and can break under stress. This blade will rust if not used or cleaned regularly or coated. Carbon steel blades hold an edge better than their stainless steel counterparts.
- **Stainless steel.** Knife blades are rust resistant and work especially well in wet environments. They require less care than the carbon steel knives. Drawbacks to using stainless steel knives are that they tend to be more expensive, are more difficult to sharpen, and may not hold an edge as well.

Some factors a user may want to consider when determining which type of survival knife to use are:

- how the knife will be used;
- how easy it is to sharpen;
- how well it keeps a sharp edge; and
- how susceptible is it to corrosion.

Length of Tang

An optimum survival knife is constructed of one piece of metal (tang) to which there may be slabs of material attached to form a comfortable handle. A full tang is a solid piece of steel from tip to butt and is the strongest blade / handle arrangement. This kind of construction is known in among those who know knives as full tang or narrow tang.

- **Full tang.** The blade merges into the handle (this is the best option and stronger of the two types of tang).
- **Narrow tang.** The size of the blade material is reduced as it enters the handle.



Note. From "Recipetips.com", by Types of Kitchen Knives, 2009, Types of Kitchen Knives–Tang. Copyright 2009 by Tecstra Systems. Retrieved February 27, 2009, from http://www.recipetips.com/kitchen-tips/t--1075/types-of-kitchen-knives.asp#maintaining

Figure 8 Tang

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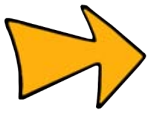

Poorly constructed or cheap survival knives are often made so that the metal blade is separate from the handle. This type of construction creates a weak point where the blade and handle may break and separate.

Composition of the Handle

The handle is comprised of many components including:

- bolsters,
- scales,
- fittings,
- spacers,
- pins, and
- tang.

The handle will be made of a specific material such as horn, bone, ivory or some other man-made material(s).

CONFIRMATION OF TEACHING POINT 3

QUESTIONS:

Q1. What is the recommended blade length for a survival knife?

Q2. What two types of materials make up the composition of the blade?

Q3. What does the letter designation on a blade represent?

ANTICIPATED ANSWERS:

A1. The recommended blade length for a survival knife should be 10–15 cm (4–6 inches).

A2. The two types of material that make up the blade composition are carbon steel and stainless steel.

A3. The letter designation indicates progressively higher levels of carbon and thus harder steel.

Teaching point 4 **Explain the care and maintenance of a survival knife.**

Time: 5 min Method: Interactive Lecture

CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF A SURVIVAL KNIFE

Practicing Proper Usage

When handling the knife the cadet must practice the following:

- Always cut away from the body, never toward.
- If the knife slips and is dropped, let it fall to the ground. Trying to catch it could cause serious injury.
- Never point or use a knife in the direction of another person.
- Never walk or run around with an open or unsheathed knife.
- Do not throw or place the blade into soil; this will rapidly dull the blade.

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- Use the knife in one location and close or sheath the knife before moving.
- Do not use a knife for prying lids open; it may damage the tip of the knife.
- Do not throw a knife to anyone. Hand it to them butt first so the receiver can grasp the handle.

CLEANING

A knife is low maintenance but should be cleaned on a regular basis (using a towel and cotton swabs). If water is used to remove stubborn debris, make sure the knife is completely dry before storage to stop rust from forming. Wiping the knife down with a clean towel and lightly blowing it with a hair dryer, if available, will ensure the knife is completely dry and ready for storage. Lightly wipe the blade with oil two to three times a year to keep rust from forming.

If the knife blade has a blue, grey, or black colour, it is a sign of oxidation and the precursor to rust—clean and oil the knife immediately.

STORING

When storing a knife for a prolonged period of time, keep it in a location that is dry and out of direct sunlight. Ensure the knife is clean before storage and secure it so it will not rub against other items. Do not store in a leather sheath. Leather is a natural material and can harm a blade because it will cause the blade to sweat and attract moisture. The acids soaked into the leather during the tanning process could leach out and damage the knife.

SHARPENING

Every knife requires sharpening from time to time. Ideally, a sharpening stone should be used; however, if that is unavailable, any sandstone, such as grey clay, quartz, or granite should be used. Rub two pieces of stone together to make them smooth and follow the sharpening process described later in the lesson.



Never sharpen a knife on a power-driven grinding wheel. This can burn the temper from your blade, which will make the edge brittle and possibly chip or crack.



Note. From "Recipetips.com", by Types of Kitchen Knives, 2009, Types of Kitchen Knives–Sharpening Stone. Copyright 2009 by Tecstra Systems. Retrieved February 27, 2009, from http://www.recipetips.com/kitchen-tips/t--1075/types-of-kitchen-knives.asp#maintaining

Figure 9 Sharpening Stone

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CONFIRMATION OF TEACHING POINT 4

QUESTIONS:

Q1. Identify three guidelines to handling a knife.

Q2. What is a sign that oxidation is beginning to occur on a knife blade?

Q3. How should a knife be stored for a prolonged period?

ANTICIPATED ANSWERS:

A1. Guidelines to handling a knife include:

- Always cut away from the body, never toward.
- If the knife slips and is dropped, let it fall to the ground. Trying to catch it could cause serious injury.
- Never point or use a knife in the direction of another person.
- Never walk or run around with an open or unsheathed knife.
- Do not throw or place the blade into soil; this will rapidly dull the blade.
- Use the knife in one location and close or sheath the knife before moving.
- Do not use a knife for prying lids open; it may damage the tip of the knife.
- Do not throw a knife to anyone. Hand it to them butt first so the receiver can grasp the handle.

A2. If the knife is found to have a blue, grey, or black color, it is a sign of oxidation and the precursor to rust.

A3. When storing a knife for a prolonged period of time, keep it in a location that is dry and out of direct sunlight. Ensure the knife is clean before storage. Do not store a knife in a leather sheath.

Teaching point 5 — **Explain, demonstrate and have the cadets sharpen a survival knife.**

Time: 30 min — Method: Demonstration and Performance



For this TP, it is recommended that instruction take the following format:

(1) Have the cadets lay out their sharpening stone and knife in front of them.

(2) Explain and demonstrate each step to sharpen a survival knife and have the cadets then practice it.

(3) Have the cadets continue to sharpen the survival knife after all steps have been observed and practiced.

Note: Assistant instructors may be used to monitor the cadets' performance.

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STEPS TO SHARPEN A SURVIVAL KNIFE

For best results use the appropriate sharpening stone. A fine grit stone will be useful for quick touch-ups on blades that are not too dull. For a more thorough sharpening on a blade that is dull, use a heavier coarse grit stone first, then go to the fine grit stone.

1. **Lubricate the sharpening stone.** To prepare the sharpening stone, apply a light-weight oil or water to assist sharpening the blade. The oil or water will allow the knife to glide across the stone with ease and disperse the heat buildup that may affect the temper of the steel. A stone can be used dry but is not recommended.

2. **Lay the sharpening stone on a flat surface.** The sharpening stone should be positioned on a flat surface. This will allow the user to adjust the angle at which they sharpen the knife.



Note. From "Recipetips.com", by Types of Kitchen Knives, 2009, Types of Kitchen Knives–Sharpening Stone. Copyright 2009 by Tecstra Systems. Retrieved February 27, 2009, from http://www.recipetips.com/kitchen-tips/t--1075/types-of-kitchen-knives.asp

Figure 10 Placement of the Sharpening Stone

3. **Hold the survival knife by the handle.** Hold the knife firmly by placing the handle in one hand with the index finger on top of the blade and the thumb on the back / spine. The blade should be facing away from the individual. Place the fingers of the other hand along the length of the blade.



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Figure 11 Holding the Knife

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4. **Determine the sharpening angle of the knife blade.** Place the edge of the knife on the stone so it is angled at the same bevel (the angle at which the blade is made) as the edge of the knife, which should be at a 20-degree angle. The sharp edge should be facing away from the individual.



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Figure 12 Sharpening Angle

5. **Apply pressure to the blade while pushing it in a circular motion on the sharpening stone.** Start at the tip and grind in a counter-clockwise motion as if cutting a fine sliver off the surface of the stone. Continue to lightly rotate in this circular motion on the stone while gradually moving the length of the blade across the stone, keeping consistent pressure. Grind along the entire length of the blade edge. As the knife edge is being sharpened, a slight ridge will form along the edge on the side that is not being sharpened. This ridge indicates that the other side is ready to be sharpened.

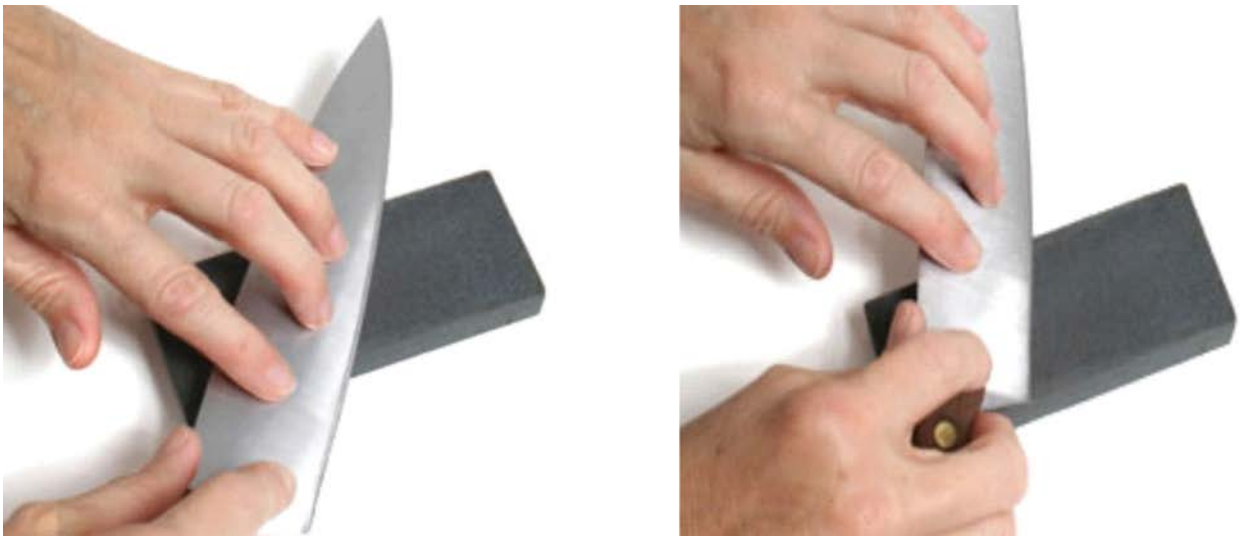

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Figure 13 Sharpening the Knife

6. **Turn the survival knife over and sharpen the other side of the knife.** As the knife edge is being sharpened, a slight ridge will form along the edge on the side that is not being sharpened. This ridge indicates

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that the other side is ready to be sharpened. To detect the ridge, use a fingernail (as illustrated in Figure 14) and run it along the edge of the side of the blade that has not been sharpened. If the fingernail catches the edge, the blade is ready to have the other side sharpened. Be sure to check the ridge in several locations along the length of the blade to ensure the entire blade has been sharpened. If there is a spot that has not been sharpened, go back and sharpen that area again.

7. Once the first side of the knife has been sharpened properly, turn the knife over so the blade edge is facing toward the individual. Hold the knife in the same manner as when sharpening the first side. Now the hand holding the handle will have the forefinger on the spine and the thumb will be on the blade (illustrated in Figure 15).

8. Begin grinding at the tip in a counter-clockwise direction in the same manner as before. Carefully apply consistent pressure across the blade. When finished grinding the second side, check again for the ridge to have formed. If it has not formed, continue to grind in those areas until the ridge forms.



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Figure 14 Checking the Bevelled Edge



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Figure 15 Sharpening the Reverse Side of the Knife

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9. **Check to ensure the survival knife is sharp.** There are various ways to check the sharpness of the blade, such as:

- rubbing the thumb lightly across the blade perpendicular to the length of the blade;
- cutting a piece of paper, watching to see that the knife slices with ease through the paper—the paper should have a clean cut with no tearing; or
- slicing a piece of fruit—there should be little resistance when slicing the fruit.

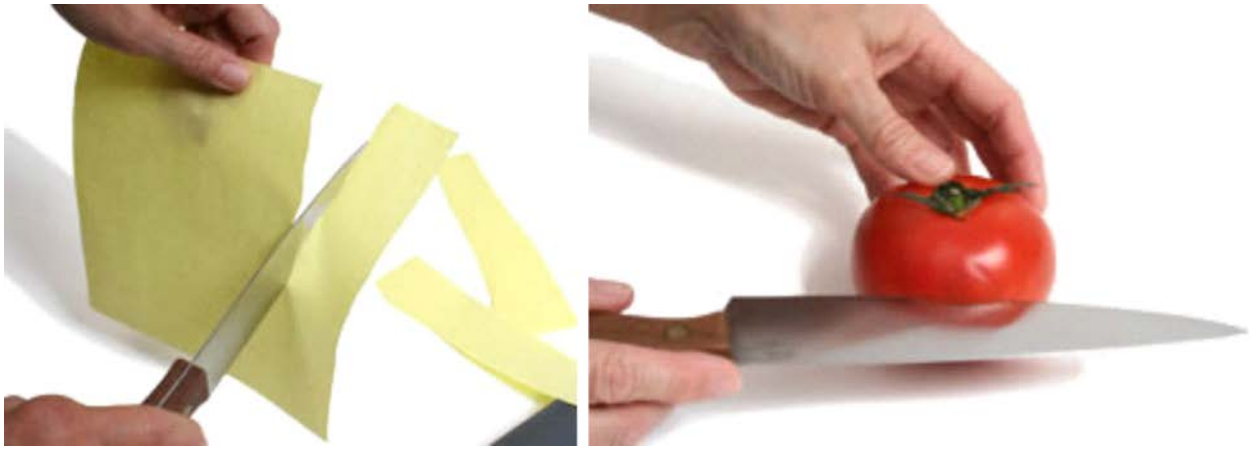

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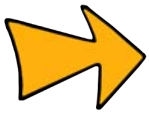
Figure 16 Sharpness Test

10. **Repeat sharpening on both sides, if required, until desired sharpness is achieved.** Using a fine grit stone, grind the blade edge using the same basic method used with a coarser grit stone. Make four or five counter-clockwise strokes across the stone and turn the blade over and make four or five strokes on the other side. Continue to alternate back and forth in this manner until the blade edge is polished and razor sharp. Repeat until the blade develops the desired sharpness.

11. **Clean the survival knife.** As a knife is sharpened, steel is being filed away, leaving shards or filings on the blade. Once the blade has reached the desired sharpness, wipe or rinse the blade. It is important to remove this leftover material to avoid it from splintering the user's hand or getting into food.

12. After the knife is cleaned, wash the sharpening stone(s) with hot soapy water and brush it to remove all debris. Allow the stone to dry completely before storing.



Although using oil is a plausible option, it is suggested to use water when removing dirt and grime from the stone after sharpening is complete.

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Verify against the official publication.



Note. From "Recipetips.com", by Types of Kitchen Knives, 2009, Using a Sharpening Stone. Copyright 2009 by Tecstra Systems. Retrieved February 27, 2009, from http://www.recipetips.com/kitchen-tips/t--1075/types-of-kitchen-knives.asp

Figure 17 Cleaning

CONFIRMATION OF TEACHING POINT 5

The cadets' participation in sharpening a survival knife will serve as the confirmation of this TP.

END OF LESSON CONFIRMATION

The cadets' participation in sharpening a survival knife will serve as the confirmation of this lesson.

CONCLUSION

HOMEWORK / READING / PRACTICE

Nil.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

Nil.

CLOSING STATEMENT

A survival knife is an important tool. It can help to procure food and materials and help build structures in a survival situation. Prolonged use of a knife will eventually wear down the blade, reducing the blade's ability to cut and slice effectively. Being able to sharpen a survival knife will help create materials in a survival situation.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES / REMARKS

This EO shall be conducted prior to the bivouac field training exercise.

The instructor shall remind the cadet to use the survival knife in a safe manner. Caution the cadet when working the blade on a sharpening stone. If it is dark, make sure a source of light is positioned nearby.

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