

Axioms\_Of\_Axemanship\_2004.txt

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Subject: Axioms of Axemanship  
Summary: The basic do's and don'ts of using axes

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Axioms of Axemanship  
Colin Wallace  
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What do George Washington and Jack (of the Magic Beanstalk fame) have in common? Terrible axemanship.

George Washington gave us a shining example of honesty, but at the price of an innocent cherry tree cut down in its prime. And Jack may have saved us all from a giant's wrath, but he also killed the last magic beanstalk in the world (although he might be forgiven for thinking himself the only endangered species under the circumstances). So, remember -

Don't chop down a tree that's up; only cut up wood that's down. (Conservation aside, it's safer. We learned this from beavers, whose most common cause of death is being crushed by falling trees.)

Don't cut more wood than you need. (I know a guy who can fell a tree in 1.5 seconds. When I asked where he learned such a skill he said, "The Sahara Desert." I pointed out that there are no trees in the Sahara Desert and he said, "Not any more!")

The contact method of chopping requires coordination. If you're

frequently accused of being unable to walk and chew gum at the same time, you'd be wise to practise with a cardboard axe.

Use firm but controlled strokes, not brute strength. If Lizzie Borden had heeded this, she wouldn't have taken 40 whacks to accomplish what could have been done in one.

Keep your axe (and your mind) sharp. Regular cleaning and honing will prevent rust. And the same goes for your axe.

Mask your axe (and those of you who want to help keep the woods beautiful can do likewise with any ugly lumberjacks you encounter).

Keep the handle tight. (Which reminds me of the new Scout who complained, "The handle's come off this axe three times already and now the head's fallen off!")

Green wood is unsuitable for axe handles. (One time I used wood so green that it turned back into a log.)

An axe does have a heel, toe, head and cheek. It does not have lips, ears, fingers or freckles.

Avoid using puns like, "I'm glad you axed me" within two axe-lengths of a humourless, axe-wielding woodsman. (An axe-length is the distance covered by a thrown axe.)

Peavey, Spud, Jack, Adze and Maul are not the nicknames of a teenage gang. They are axing accessories.

Do not use an axe as a hammer or a wedge. (It may, however, do double-duty as a meat tenderiser, Scout cooking skills being what they are.)

"T-1-M-B-E-R!" is not recommended as a patrol yell.

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Mention firewood to a Scout and he'll pick up an axe. The simplicity of squaw-wood and the efficiency of a saw pale to insignificance beside the dramatic romance of an axe.

There is no distinction in the mind of a 12 year old boy between a tomahawk, a battleaxe and a handaxe.