



BASIC SAW USE

- As with all sharp cutting tools, ensure a fully stocked 1st aid kit is close to hand!
- One of the most important things when using a saw is ensuring that what you intend to saw is held securely so that it doesn't move about and is stable. If the wood moves about the saw is likely to jump and be more dangerous. This is most easily achieved by keeping the wood long so that you can get a good grip on it and we usually encourage the children to participate by taking turns to hold the wood securely for each other. A piece of wood that is only a foot long is much more difficult to hold steady than something that is 2 or 3 metres long.
- Make sure the part of wood that you intend to cut is resting over the edge of something such as a log or saw horse. If you try to cut through a piece of wood that is resting in between two places that it is supported, the saw is likely to jam. As shown in the picture once you cut in to the wood there will come a point where the blade can become jammed with the wood pinching on to the blade. Students can often get frustrated with this and try to push harder, this will often result in bending and damaging the blade (which will make it even harder to use!) or the blade suddenly jumping out.
- The safest method for sawing is what we call the hand over method. If the saw jumps out (as they sometimes do) the only part that is likely to catch you is the back of the blade, which is (hopefully) blunt. The focus on sawing should be keeping the blade straight and using the full length of the blade rather than downward pressure and speed as many people often try to do but we'll cover that a bit more later. If you are cutting discs and there isn't enough wood to hold on to with the hand over method then approach the wood from the other side so that you are holding the longer length rather than the disc end.

Using a bow saw

Check that the blade is tight and not bent or damaged in any way. Ensure that it has a guard to protect the blade and always replace this when the saw is not in use. There may be occasions when in between sawing it is impractical to keep putting the guard on so we usually place the saw leaning up against a log with the teeth pointing towards the ground. Only do this if you are not using the saw for a few seconds.

Generally we recommend the type of bow saw that is 21" or longer. These are usually shaped so the top of the saw is parallel with the blade and this allows the saw to be used by two people in tandem (often the student and instructor). When using in tandem the student will usually hold the handle end while the instructor holds the other end and helps to guide the student, checking and reminding if there is too much downward pressure.

We normally demonstrate before we use the saw that if we push down on the saw the blade will bend and if that happens it will be much more difficult to use. So without putting a hand on top of the saw we focus on keeping the blade straight and using the full length of the

saw we just go backwards and forwards. If it seems difficult it is usually too much downward pressure or the blade is wobbling around a bit or it's a damaged blade.

Using a folding or pruning saw

The same applies in terms of using the hand over method although these are nearly always operated by one person. The teeth on these saws are usually designed to do most of the cutting on the pull rather than the push. It's worth checking that the blade is locked into position when it's open and the saw should always be folded away into its handle when not in use.

We have often seen people (students and facilitators) try to clear the residual sawdust left on the teeth by running their finger and thumb along the sides of the blade. As a facilitator/instructor you should always be setting the highest standards and we show them as we demonstrate how to use the saw that we give the side of the blade a gentle tap onto a log and this usually knocks the sawdust off.

When might you not use the hand over method?

There are a few occasions when it might not be appropriate or needed to use the hand over method. These are usually when both hands are holding the saw (when the wood is being held securely), when the other hand is well out of the way (sometimes when coppicing or pruning the other hand is supporting the wood to prevent it from splitting) and when the wood is being supported on a saw horse or in the crook of a tree the 'V' should act as a guard to stop the blade coming across the back of the hand. Some people advocate wearing a gardening glove or similar on the holding hand although in our opinion these mostly only offer protection for the front (palm side) of the hand.