

Tool User Level Indicators for Forest School

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This document is designed to assist evaluating tool users at Forest School. It is a systematic approach to the different elements required when using tools and provides a framework to identify strengths and weaknesses. It is by no means a definitive guide, nor should be used to replace common sense and professional judgement.

About the Indicators:

The indicators cover 4 distinct category of skills and understanding (Columns);

- Strength & Stamina – includes; applying and adjusting force; grip and secure items; ability to sustain movement and effort; and overall physical capability
- Dexterity & Co ordination – includes; hand eye coordination, fine motor skills, accuracy and efficiency and 3d manipulation
- Safety – includes; awareness of self and others, risk perception and value judgements, and safe operating procedures
- Tool design, maintenance and law – includes; knowledge of tool function and design and how this applies to its use, legalities of tool use, cleaning and maintenance.

There are 4 levels of ability described on the indicators (Rows). These levels are not age dependant; they are linked to experience and ability. An individual may have various levels across the columns, and also different levels for different tools. Broadly speaking the levels are progressive and can be described as:

- 1 – Novice/ new user
- 2 – Needs assistance
- 3 – needs supervision
- 4 –Unaided.

Also, within each level there is a progressive spectrum of ability.

How to use this framework:

- **For self evaluation and development** – practitioners can use this framework as part of their reflective practice, to help identify their strengths and areas needing development.
- **To support learners at Forest School** – the framework can be used to support practitioners observe tool users and identify their current level of skill/understanding. Based on this, practitioners can consider how to support the next achievable steps for an individuals development.

	Skills	
	Strength & Stamina	Dexterity & Co ordination
Unaided	Can independently and without using aids, accurately control the level of force applied to a tool or task and be able to modify grip and pressure as required. Tool use can be maintained for long periods, whilst ensuring a consistent high standard of practice. Control and power is demonstrated with a variety of tools, at all scales of work for a wide range of tasks.	Adept at complex tasks and techniques using a full range of tools unaided and to their full efficiency. Accuracy consistently high, including intricate work and own method of working developed. Complex techniques can be transferred and applied to a wide variety of contexts.
Needs supervision	Can independently grip and hold a selection of tools and the material worked. User can control the level of force applied and can vary it as required in both large and small scale tasks, using aids if needed. Consistent standards of practice can be maintained for long periods.	Can independently perform large scale tasks accurately and efficiently. Able to independently undertake finer tasks of growing complexity using a range of techniques, tools and aids, although support will be needed at times and the user will have variable accuracy and efficiency.
Needs some assistance	Can grip and hold lightweight tools independently and apply varying levels of force using large muscle groups. Using aids, they can independently perform a simple individual task although help may be required at times. Tools may be used for longer periods but control and quality will be inconsistent.	Can undertake large scale tasks using basic techniques independently with the addition of more complex movements where support may be needed at times. Accuracy for basic tasks managed independently, however efficiency will still be limited.
Needs assistance	Can grip tools for short periods and apply low levels of force using the whole body or large muscle groups. Aids and support is required to manage the weight of the tool, maintain control and allow user to focus on individual task.	Simple, large scale tasks performed using basic techniques with support and aids. Accuracy and efficiency will be limited and require support.

	Knowledge & Understanding	
	Safety	Tool Design, Maintenance & Law
Mastery	Can perform all tasks in previous levels in increasing levels of complexity. User can make predictions of risks when presented with unfamiliar tasks and can reduce risk through applying, adapting and modifying concepts and processes. User has a good understanding of the Health and Safety at Work act and how this is relevant to their own tool practice.	Provide explanations of the functionality of a variety of common and specialist tools based on their design and construction. Implement maintenance schedules for a range of tools, including sharpening. Have a good understanding of the Knife and Offensive Weapon Act and its relevance to own practice.
Needs supervision	Manage own, and assist others to manage their safe tool practices. Performing all tasks in previous levels unaided plus are able to check tool condition before using it. User can indentify risks associated with routine tasks and modify processes to reduce risk. Have an awareness of Health and Safety at Work Act and how this is relevant to tool practice.	Describe design features (materials, shape, tang, bevel etc) of common tools and how these affect function. Independently clean tools and check they are fit for purpose. Understand that if transporting and using tools in a public place, certain practices should be adhered to.
Needs some assistance	Independently manage own safety and be aware of others, possibly with occasional support. Users can follow instructions to select safe working areas and distances, adopt safe stances and use PPE giving reasons for selection. With minimal support users can carry, pass and store tools (using sheaths/guards) appropriately. Users respond to emergency protocols and show awareness of 1 st aid systems.	Select a tool for a given purpose independently and explain reasoning. Name specific tool and recognise key features of design. Clean and store tools with support. Understand that carrying tools in a public place is against the law.
Needs assistance	Have an awareness of own and others safety when using tools. Carry, pass and store tools, use sheaths/guards appropriately with support. Users may still need support to maintain safe working distances, select PPE for tasks and to adopt safe stances. With support will respond to emergency protocols.	Name general tools used and recognise some basic features of tool design. Understand that tools need to be treated with care and respect.