

Uses of a Pocket Knife

In a recent Preparedness Moment we advocated that every responsible person carry a pocket knife at all times. Someone has asked “Why? What would I do with it?” to which we give this brief and incomplete list of typical uses: (It goes without saying that it would be kept sharp, oiled, and appropriately cleaned before and after each use.)

Frequent Uses

Opening Mail. Removing staples. Opening boxes and packages, removing tags.
Peeling fruit and vegetables. Halving candy bars for children.
Cutting up cardboard boxes for disposal. Repairing and cleaning fingernails,
Removing splinters and thorns. Deburring wood, plastic and metal objects.
Chamfering holes and sharp edges. Marking parts for drilling or cutting.
Repairing handles on hoes, shovels, and axes before getting a splinter from them.
Scraping away rust, paint, dried or wet glue, labels and adhesive.
Cutting and trimming thread, string, fishing line, shoe laces, cord, wire, straps and rope.
Cleaning cracks and recesses. Extracting objects from slots, cracks and crevices.
Prying things loose. Trimming plants. Fashioning Wood and Plastic items by whittling.
Repairing clothing and shoes by trimming fabric, cutting threads, making holes.

Occasional Uses

Opening canned goods, Preparing food, and as an eating utensil. Preparing kindling for fire. Dividing an aspirin for fractional dose. Sharpening pencils. Killing centipedes and scorpions.
Making stick horses, marshmallow roasters, and other utensils and toys. Opening cheap locks. Making or modifying bandages. Rapping on jar lid to loosen seal. Trimming candles and wicks, and fishing line.
Scraping corrosion from electrical terminals. Trimming insulation from electrical wires.
As a Screwdriver substitute, to repair eyeglasses, watch, car, computer, or other machinery.
Field dressing game animals. Making all the components of a spear, sling, or slingshot.
Extracting nails from tires. Tapping on pipe to loosen stuck valve. Digging meat from a pecan.

Potential Uses

To Cut seatbelt to extract trapped driver, cut shoelaces to extract trapped foot.
To Remove clothing from injury in First Aid. To write by scribing on something.
For Personal defense against man or beast. Cutting hose for snorkel or breathing tube.
To Dig through a wall to safety. Remove thorns from prickly pear, so it can be eaten.
For the steel part of fire making by flint and steel (sacrificial; this really tears it up.)
To fashion weapons and snares for catching small animals, or cages to hold them.
To improvise clothing and shelter from available materials.

Since the Fall, no human has survived more than a few days in the natural world without having or making some kind of tool, and the quintessential tool, and tool-making tool, is the knife. Anytime something needs to be made, cut, killed, trimmed, blunted, butchered, altered, fixed, fashioned, assembled, disassembled, divided, pried, probed, scribed, scraped, perforated or dug at; anytime you need to interact with the physical world by fashioning or modifying materials more precisely than you can do with your fingers, or with greater pressure than you can apply with your nails and knuckles, a pocket knife is useful. While it is useful for small tasks at all times, the extended capability represented by a knife for similar tasks in an emergency makes it an especially valuable accoutrement. And the kind of knife you are most likely to have with you at a moment’s notice, everywhere you go, day or night, is a pocket knife.