



Beaundesert Outdoor Adventures

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) & Risk Assessment: Bushcraft: Shelter Building

Document ID: SOP-BOA-SHELTER-001

Effective Date: February 2026

Review Date: February 2027

1.0 Purpose

To outline the standardized and safe procedure for conducting Shelter Building sessions. This activity encourages teamwork, problem-solving, and outdoor survival skills by allowing participants to build emergency shelters from natural materials and tarpaulins.

2.0 Scope & Leadership

This SOP applies to all instructors, visiting leaders, and participants engaging in Shelter Building activities.

- **Technical Advisor (TA):** Martin Kirby (Operations Manager).
- **Instructor Requirement:** In-House Trained and Assessed under a TA-approved scheme.
- **Self-Led Sessions:** Visiting group leaders assume responsibility for ensuring these safety rules are followed.

3.0 Location & Ratios

3.1 Location

- **The Bushcraft Area:** Situated at the Southeast corner, just outside the walled Garden area itself.
- **Selection:** A suitable flat area should be chosen to build the bivouacs.





3.2 Ratios

- **Standard Ratio:** 1:12 (One Instructor/Leader to twelve participants).
- **Maximum Group Size:** 12 participants per instructor – Up to 24 participants

4.0 Equipment

- **Supplied Kit:** Plastic sheeting/tarpaulins and string/ropes. Note: Ensure enough people carry the plastic sheets as they can be quite bulky.
- **Natural Materials:** Fallen branches, logs, and bracken found on the woodland floor.
- **PPE:** Gloves are strongly encouraged and should be provided for handling rough timber and specifically for harvesting bracken to prevent slicing hands.

5.0 Safety Briefing & Rules

Mandatory briefing before any lifting or building commences.

1. **"If it is bigger than you, it takes two":** Larger sticks and branches must be carried in pairs or dragged safely.
2. **Heavy Logs:** Logs thicker than 15cm should ideally be rolled, not lifted.
3. **Height Limit:** Logs and sticks must **not** be placed over shoulder height when rested against trees or ridgepoles. This minimizes the risk and impact of heavy items falling.
4. **Gathering:** Use natural resources from the ground only. Participants must **not** break living branches off trees.
5. **Movement:** No running or throwing of wood. Watch out for low branches and moving logs to prevent eye injuries.

6.0 Session Procedure

6.1 Pre-Session Checks (Instructor/Leader)

- **Walk-round:** Conduct a full walk-round of the area before the group arrives.
- **Overhead Hazards:** Look up for hanging, dead branches ("widow-makers") trapped in the canopy that could fall on the building area.

6.2 Introduction & Instruction (The IDEAS Model)

- Use the **IDEAS** learning model (Introduction, Demonstration, Explanation, Activity, Summary).
- **Knots & Lashings:** Show the participants some simple knots (e.g., clove hitch, square lashing, timber hitch). While imagination is encouraged, providing them with structured techniques will support and aid their success.





6.3 Activity Phase

- Groups build their emergency shelters.
- Instructor continuously monitors lifting techniques and dragging.
- **Stability Check:** The instructor *must* physically check the shelter for stability before any participants are allowed to enter the structure.

6.4 Session Conclusion & Dismantling

- **Participant Involvement:** The tarpaulins, ropes, and structures must be taken down *with* the kids as part of the session.
- **Dismantling Protocol:** * No one is allowed inside the shelter while it is being dismantled.
 - Shelters must be taken down carefully, **one piece at a time**.
 - Drag poles away from the bottom; do not pull them from the top towards the face/body.
- **Pack Down:** All equipment (tarps/ropes) must be returned to Reception in a neat and tidy state.

7.0 Emergency Procedure

1. **Collapse:** If a shelter appears unstable or collapses, halt the activity immediately. Ensure all participants are clear.
 2. **Injury:** Treat cuts, grazes, or head injuries using the nearest First Aid Kit. Report any accidents/incidents to the Duty Manager.
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8.0 Risk Assessment

Activity: Bushcraft / Shelter Building

Review Date: February 2027

Assessment by: Martin Kirby – Operations Manager

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed?	Controls: What are you doing to control hazards?	Risk Rating (with controls)
Physical injuries (Lifting/Carrying)	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rule: "If it is bigger than you, it takes two." • Logs >15cm must be rolled. • Instructor demonstrates safest dragging and lifting techniques. 	Trivial
Head Injuries (Falling wood / Collapse)	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Height Limit: No lifting or placing heavy objects above shoulder height. • Instructor checks stability before anyone enters. 	Tolerable
Eye injuries	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing on the risk of low branches and whipping twigs. • Strict "No throwing wood" rule. 	Trivial
Injuries to hands (Cuts/Splinters)	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gloves encouraged, especially when harvesting bracken (to prevent slicing hands). 	Trivial
Dismantling Injuries	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear protocol: taken down one piece at a time, dragging poles from the bottom. • Participants must not enter shelter while dismantling. 	Trivial
Overhead Hazards (Falling Branches)	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructor conducts pre-session visual check of the canopy for dead/hanging branches ("widow-makers"). 	Tolerable
Environmental (Ticks, Stings, Flora)	Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing to check for ticks after the session. • Highlight avoiding stinging nettles or thorny bushes during the gathering phase. 	Trivial



10.0 Document Control & Review History

Document Creation

Action	Name / Role	Date
Created By	Martin Kirby – Operations Manager	February 2026
Approved By	Martin Kirby, Luke Chance & Oliver Tombs (OM / SI / AOM)	February 2026
Technical Auth.	Martin Kirby (Operations Manager)	February 2026

Review Log

This document is to be reviewed annually or following any significant incident or change to the activity.

Date of Review	Reviewed By	Comments / Changes Made	Next Review Due
February 2026	MKirby / OTombs / LChance	Document Created (V1.0). Updated to include specific lifting limits, SE Walled Garden location, and dismantling with participants.	February 2027

