Age Guidelines for Tool Use and Work at Elevations or Excavations

Training and Supervision

The use of tools, by any youth or adult, requires training in the proper use of those tools before a project starts and continuous, qualified adult supervision and discipline during the project. Manufacturers' literature and age and skill restrictions shall supersede the recommendations on the chart below. If there is a conflict, leaders shall follow the most restrictive guidelines. The table below is not comprehensive; if in doubt, adults should be recruited for all tool use or job functions that might be dangerous.

Note on Personal Protective Equipment

Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) must be used at all times when using hand or power tools. Types of personal protective equipment include the following:

- Work gloves
- Safety glasses
- Safety helmets
- Earplugs or muffs
- Steel-toed shoes
- Protective aprons
- Safety face shields
- Other personal safety equipment as defined by OSHA standards

Hand Tools

Type of Tool	Youth Up to Age 14	Youth 14 Years and Older	Youth 16 Years and Older
Leaf/grass rake	■	■	■
Hoe	■	■	■
Shovel	■	■	■
Hand clipper (small)	■	■	■
Screwdrivers	■	■	■
Nail hammer	■	■	■
Handsaw	■	■	■
Trowel	■	■	■
Hose spray washer	■	■	■
Wood sanding block (handheld)	■	■	■
Wood chisel (Scouts with Totin' Chip)	■	■	■
Pocketknife (Scouts with Whittling Chip or Totin' Chip)	■	■	■
Pickaxe		■	■
Mattock		■	■
Posthole digger		■	■
Wheel cart (1-, 2-, or 4-wheeled)		■	■
Paint roller with extension pole		■	■

Note: Shaded areas indicate age-appropriate use.

Power Tools

Type of Tool	Youth Up to Age 14	Youth 14 Years and Older	Youth 16 Years and Older
Screwdriver (electric)			
Handheld sander (small)			
Cutting tools (e.g., Dremel®, small)			
Paint sprayer (small, less than 50 psi)			
Residential lawn mower (self-propelled, riding)			
Commercial lawn mower (push, self-propelled, riding)			
Line trimmer (electric, gas-powered)			
Edger (electric, gas-powered)			
Leaf/grass blower (electric, gas-powered)			
Hedge trimmer (electric, gas-powered)			
Belt sander (electric, cordless)			
Pressure washer (>50 but <100 PSI)			
Circular, reciprocating, jig, or radial saw			**Age 18 and older**
Band and scroll saws			**Age 18 and older**
Router/planer			**Age 18 and older**
Chain saws			**Age 18 and older**
Log splitters			**Age 18 and older**
Wood chippers			**Age 18 and older**

Note: Shaded areas indicate age-appropriate use.

Working at Heights and Elevations

Heights and elevations are measured from the bottom of the shoes or boots above the ground level or floor.

Elevation of Work	Youth Up to Age 14	Youth Age 14 or Older
Up to 4 feet	**Step stools***	
Above 4 feet	**Not permitted**	**A 6-foot ladder is permissible with the manufacturer's recommended practices.**
On scaffolds (above 4 feet)	**Not permitted**	**Age 18 or older**
Open platforms (above 4 feet) with proper fall protection**	**Not permitted**	**Age 18 or older**

Fall Protection Requirements According to OSHA Standards

29 CFR–Subpart M, 1926.500, 1926.501, 1926.502, and 1926.503

*Step stools, with one or two steps, are permissible for use by youth if the total height is 4 feet or less.

**Proper fall protection would require the use of full-body harnesses, helmets, and the ability to be anchored to a stable object. Refer to safety practices from the BSA's Project COPE and climbing national standards.

Note: Pioneering projects, such as monkey bridges, have a maximum height of 5 feet. Close supervision should be followed when Scouts are building or using pioneering projects.

Excavations

Youth or adults are not permitted to work in any excavation areas greater than 4 feet in depth, such as trenches for plumbing, digging wells, or building foundation work.

Youth can work on hiking and biking trails or other similar work where the depth of digging is not greater than 4 feet. Digging postholes for fences, gates, etc., is permissible if the depth is limited to 48 inches (4 feet) and the width is limited to 18 inches (1.5 feet).

It is critical to locate all underground utilities (e.g., water, gas, electric) at the site before any work begins. Most states have "call before you dig" call centers to assist with this effort.