



Basics about folding knives

A quality knife or multi-tool is one of the handiest things you can carry in your pack. It'll help you spread peanut butter, carve a tent stake, or fillet a rainbow trout. But you have to pick the right tool for the job. There is a large variety of high quality folding knives available for sale. It is important to check local laws. Many municipalities allow only knives less than four inches long to be carried. Common restrictions include, blade length, blade deployment methods (gravity knives, switchblades and butterfly knives are often banned). The main features are not complicated. Safety and usability are the main concerns when choosing a pocketknife.

Blade Lock

There are all-purpose folding pocketknives. Most come with tools such as a can opener, screwdriver, tweezers and, of course, knife blades — all in one compact package. Though they can be extremely handy, the downside is the knife blade doesn't lock into place, so it may fold up on your hand while you're using it. Blades should lock when open. Otherwise the knife could accidentally close on the user's hand. Stitches are not fun. Blades should also lock automatically on being opened. If a separate step is required to engage the lock, the step can be accidentally skipped.

Blade Length

Blade length will affect the usability of the knife more than any other feature. Bigger is not always better. A small, sharp four-inch-or-smaller blade can cut just as well as bigger knives but is much safer to handle and easier to maneuver in tight spots. Shorter blades are easier to control but may be too short for some tasks. Two inches is about the shortest practical length. Three inches is a good compromise length. Four to five inches is the maximum length for general utility use.

Serrated versus Plain Edged

Knives with serrated (saw tooth or wavy) edges do cut better for some materials (rope, clothing - good for rescue personnel). They stay sharp longer but are harder to sharpen. Unless there is a specific requirement for a serrated blade, a plain smooth edged blade is the safer choice.

Handle Grip

A good non-slip grip is essential for safety. A slippery handle can cause the hand to slide up onto the blade. A good grip comes from the surface of the handle. Rough handles will provide more





grip. However handles that are too rough can scrape the skin. Handles with finger indentations or that swell up towards the blade will help keep the hand off the blade.

Single Handed Opening

Modern folding knives have holes or studs in the blade so that they can be pushed open with the thumb - opening the knife using only one hand. This is a safety feature, not a gimmick. In an emergency, one hand may be occupied (holding on to something) or injured.

Lanyard Hole

While a small detail, a hole to allow a carrying cord to be attached is useful. It can prevent the knife from being lost. The cord can be clipped to the belt or the backpack.

Super Steels

Most blades are made of stainless steel; this avoids rust and provides the temper needed to complete the job that the knife was designed to do. High carbon steel is also used because it makes sharpening the knife blade easier; however, high carbon steel blades require more care. For added hardness a titanium nitride is frequently coated on the steel. This coating also makes sharpening easier. A knife from a well-known manufacturer will be fine for general use. Super steels with names such as 154CM, ATS-34, ZDP-189, VG-10, CPM-S30V are nice but not necessary. Many knife manufacturers list a Rockwell C rating on their steel. A low C-scale rating means that the blade could be too soft and will lose its edge quickly. A high C-scale rating might mean that the steel is too hard and as a result, the blade cannot withstand pressure, impact or torque.

Multi tool knives

Multi-tool knives come with a variety of tools to choose from. Swiss Army was the first in multi-tool folding knives, but since then there have been many different brands making many different variations. When looking for a multi-tool knife, consider the size and extras packed into the knife. Many people want a multi-tool knife with the basics: screwdriver, scissors, large and small blades, can opener, bottle opener, tweezers and corkscrew. There are many tools in each multi-tool knife so you will need to decide which ones will be the most useful.

The only good knife is a sharp knife. A blunt knife requires too much force on it.

