

# HOW TO BUILD A CAMPFIRE

**GATHER** tinder, kindling and fuel together in the sizes and quantities shown *before any matches are struck*. Sizes and quantities are just a 'rule of thumb' - get close to the descriptions and you'll do fine. Don't make any of it too short or too big around.

**BUILD** the fire by adding kindling wood to the burning tinder and then adding fuel to the fire as it grows.. No need for a fancy fire lay, build it as you go.



**Tinder** from *dead* twigs found on the lower branches of trees and shrubs that snaps off easily when bent. No green wood!

**Kindling** should be dry, don't gather wet wood from the forest floor. Look for branches that are dead and down, not on the tree.

**Fuel** should be dry, split larger wood if possible and have a good sized stack on hand before you light the fire.

## TINDER



Around the size of a pencil lead.



No shorter than your outstretched hand



Enough to fill a circle made with your hands



## KINDLING



No thicker than your thumb.



About as long as your elbow to your fingertips



Enough for a generous armload



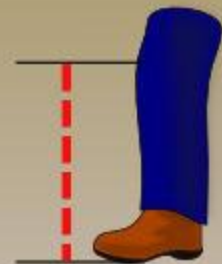
## FUEL



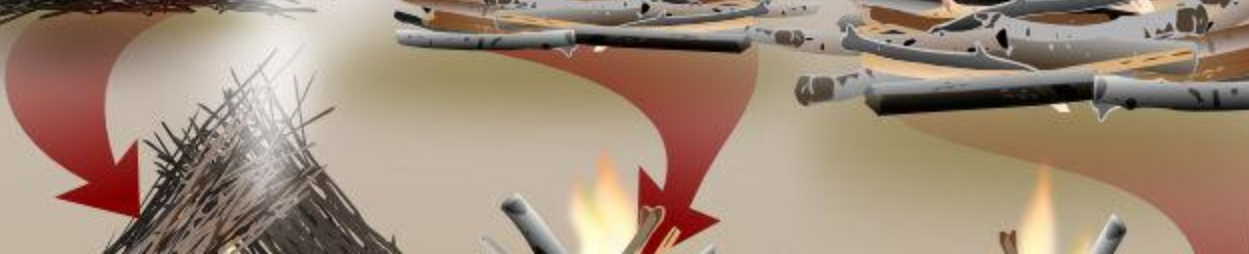
About as thick as your wrist

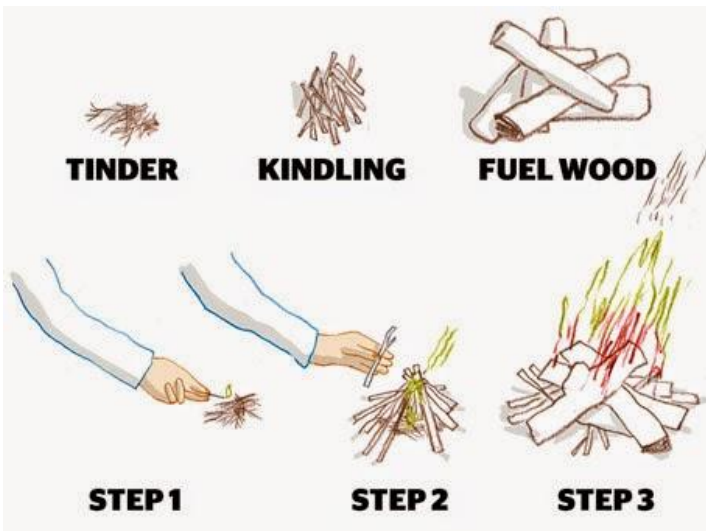


About as long as your arm






A stack about as high as your knee





### Common Fire Lays

- Teepee—quick 
- Lean-to—quick 
- Crisscross or log cabin—long burning 

29

- Read and understand fire use and safety rules from the Boy Scout Handbook.
- Secure necessary permits (regulations vary by locality).
- Clear all flammable vegetation at least 5 feet in all directions from fire (total 10 feet).
- Attend to fire at all times.
- Keep fire-fighting tools (water and/or shovel) readily available.
- Leave fire when it is cold out.
- Subscribe to the Outdoor Code and Leave-No-Trace

**Tinder:** Thin, dry material that ignites instantly with a match. It’s the basis of every fire. Examples include dead, dry grasses; the shredded inner bark of cedar trees; thin shavings cut from a stick; or birch bark (collected from the ground, not the living trees). Tinder that is available in one region might be unavailable in another. But all will work if you follow this rule: Tinder must be bone-dry and no thicker than a wooden match. Gather a handful of tinder for each fire you make.

**Kindling:** Burns fast and creates a bright, smoke-free flame. These bone-dry sticks should range from pencil-thin to no larger than your thumb. Bark (with some exceptions) does not burn well. Split kindling burns best. You’ll need an armload of kindling for each fire you build.

**Fuel:** Wood needed to keep your fire going. Split logs burn best. Some wood burns better than others, but few campers can tell species apart. Gather dead, dry wood from a wide area of land away from camp.

**Fire starters:** Handy but not essential. You can buy them or make your own. Examples: cotton balls dipped in petroleum jelly, cigar-sized logs rolled from newspaper and dipped in melted paraffin, or clothes-dryer lint. (You should never use gasoline to start a fire!) Review the *Guide to Safe Scouting’s* policies on chemical fuels before creating your own fire starters.

**BEFORE YOU TRY**

1. The thinner the wood, the faster and more smoke-free it will burn. Piling on wood that’s too thick too soon is one of the major reasons fires fail.
2. Smoke tells you that the fire needs more oxygen. You should see “light” between every stick/log you place on the fire. If you see smoke between two sticks, move them farther apart.
3. Wood burns better when organized in roughly parallel layers. This creates a “chimney effect,” which produces a better draw and hotter flame.
4. Don’t overload the fire base with kindling or fuel. Instead, insert a few sticks at a time into the developing flame. Every stick/log you add draws heat from the young blaze. Add too much wood at the start, and your fire might cool and go out.