

Trimmer/Weed Eater Safety

Weed eaters, also known as trimmers or weed whackers, offer the convenience of trimming grass and weeds in areas lawn mowers cannot reach. As with all electric lawn tools, if not operated properly, serious injuries will occur. In 2008, approximately 247,000 people were treated for lawn mower related injuries in the United States.

Note: The U.S. Department of Labor prohibits persons under the age of 16 to operate any power driven equipment including but not limited to: lawnmowers, golf carts, all-terrain vehicles, trimmers, cutters, weed-eaters, edgers, food slicers, food grinders, food choppers, food processors, food cutters, and food mixers.

https://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/childlabor101_text.htm

Prior to Use

To prevent injury, there are several general precautions the user should take **prior** to operating trimming tools:

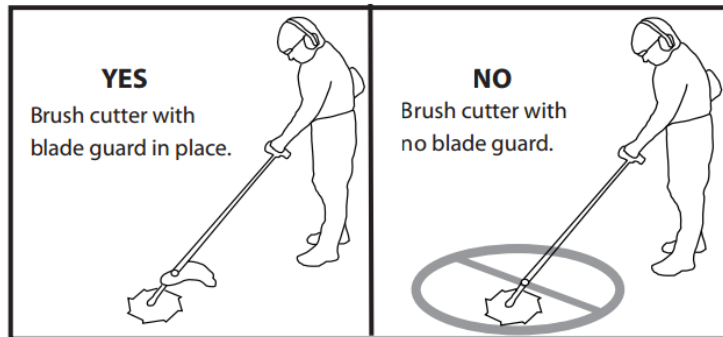
- Read the operator's manual to understand how it works.
- Never operate corded electric trimmers in wet conditions.
- Inspect the weed eater to make sure it is in good condition:
 - No leaks
 - Guards are in place
 - No loose or missing fasteners or deflectors
 - Handles are properly and securely attached
 - If it's electrical - the cord is in good condition (no wires showing).
- Do not use while on a ladder or other unstable support.
- Clear the area of stones, sticks, wire and other debris
- Secure long hair above the shoulder when operating trimmers
- Loose shirt sleeves, pant legs or jewelry can catch in the equipment's moving parts, resulting in injury; therefore, close-fitting clothes should be worn
- Do not wear any jewelry
- Sturdy footwear with good traction (work boots are best). Never wear sandals, which expose your feet, or tennis shoes, which can easily be severed if caught under the mower deck or in the trimmer's cutting swath.
- Work gloves to protect your hands from debris/cuts
- Safety glasses should be worn at all times when operating trimmers. A face shield should be used, in addition to safety glasses, when operating a string/brush trimmer and other times when your face could be hit by debris.
- Adequate hearing protection. Two common types of hearing protection are muffs and plugs. Ear muffs should seal around your ears to properly muffle loud noises. Reusable ear plugs should be washed with warm, soapy water after each use in order to prevent infection. Disposable ear plugs should be discarded after each use.



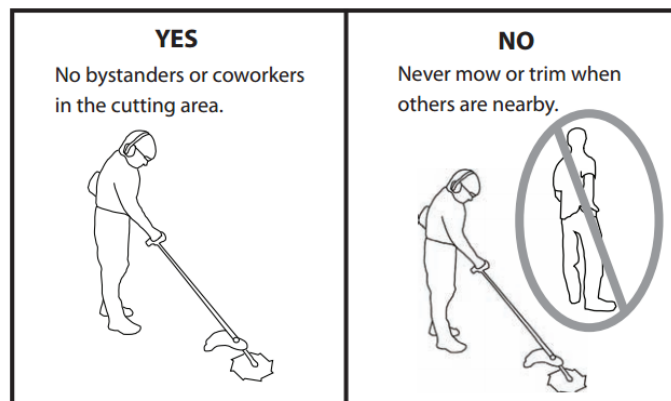
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While operating the tool, the guidelines below should be followed:

- Ensure blade/cutter guards are in place



- Start the engine on flat, firm ground – preferably in an open area for maximum control.
- Keep the cutting part beneath the waist, below knee height is best.
- Pay attention to what you are cutting and your surroundings, particularly next to roads and other areas of activity.



- Keep bystanders, pets and children at least 60 feet away from your working area and stop the trimmer if you are approached– debris can easily fly over 60 feet.
- Always cut away from yourself, never towards yourself as objects could be flung in your direction.
- When not cutting, run the engine at an idle speed.
- Stop the engine prior to setting the tool down.

Gas Powered Trimmer

If the weed eater is **gas powered**, be sure to follow these additional steps:

1. Fuel the equipment by using the correct fuel mixture and performing this task away from an ignition source (people who are smoking, fire, etc.).
2. NEVER fuel when the weed eater is running or still hot from running.
3. Do not start the motor or operate the weed eater in a confined space, building or near open window.

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While **maintenance** of the unit is integral to the overall safety, it should be the responsibility of adults. Students should not be permitted to make repairs to the units or load replacement line on the trimmer.

Working Outside - Other Personal Safety Precautions

Working outside involves dealing with the weather and natural conditions. Consider the following additional safety tips while operating weed trimmers outside:

1. If working near a street or road, wear a reflective vest. Be aware of nearby traffic.
2. Do not listen to music as it can be a distraction and add to noise exposure, instead wear hearing protection.
3. Use sun block and a hat to help protect from the sun.
4. Wear bug spray, long pants and long sleeves to protect from ticks and bug bites.
5. Drink plenty of water to avoid heat-related illness.
6. Know what plants to avoid.
7. Be on the lookout for animals and insects (such as snakes, spiders).
8. Check for ticks after working outside.
9. Notify co-workers and carry an epinephrine auto injector (EpiPen) if allergic to bee stings.

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, NIOSH Workplace Safety and Health Topics, Hazards to Outdoor Workers, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/outdoor/>

American Academy of Pediatrics, Lawn Mower-related Injuries to children,

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/107/6/1480.full?sid=0808431b-61b8-4dbb-bc38-8caca79e2aa54>.

Consumer Product Safety Commission, Power, CPSC Fact Sheet for Power Mowers; www.cpsc.gov

This Tribal First Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice. For more information on this topic, please contact Tribal First Risk Control Consulting at (888) 737-4752 or riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com.