

## Rope and Its Care

### By Jeff

#### Types of Rope

Not all rope is well suited to bondage. The worst are very stiff synthetics, like polypropylene, and very scratchy natural fibers, such as manila and sisal.

The most common natural fiber ropes used are cotton and hemp, while the most frequently used synthetics would be nylon and multifilament polypropylene (MFP).

Synthetic ropes tend to be very strong, very resistant to moisture, but don't hold knots as well. Natural fibers aren't as strong, and must be dried more carefully to avoid rot, but hold knots well. Opinions vary on which are more comfortable - synthetics tend to be softer, but also cause friction burns at lower speed.

Both are available in braided and twisted versions. Braided rope tends to last longer, and is easier to maintain. Twisted ropes have a bit more texture, so all other things being equal, they hold knots a bit better. When buying braided rope, solid braid is superior. Cheap nylon rope, braided over a core, is commonly available by the package; you'll probably have to buy solid braid by the foot.

The most commonly recommended widths range from 1/4" (6mm, #8) to 3/8" (10mm, #12), but individual preferences vary.

Thinner lines tend to hold knots better, but too thin a rope may be difficult to untie, and dig in uncomfortably.

#### Care

Most rope can be machine-washed on a gentle cycle; treat it much as you would clothing of the same material. Use a mesh laundry bag to avoid a hopelessly knotted mess or a jammed machine. Dry it on a cool setting, but be sure that it's dried thoroughly before shoving it in a bag in the back of your closet. If rope strength is critical, avoid machine drying, and hang-dry under tension.

Rope should ideally be stored in loose coils, without imparting a twist on the rope while coiling it. The second-best and more practical option is to zigzag the rope back and forth, and tie a rolling hitch or similar knot around the whole bundle. Leaving your rope stored with tight knots in it will impart 'bad habits' and the rope will become more difficult to handle.

Mind you, if you don't care about your rope getting a bit kinked, feel free to just tie it in a big overhand knot; it'll make the purists make amusing faces.

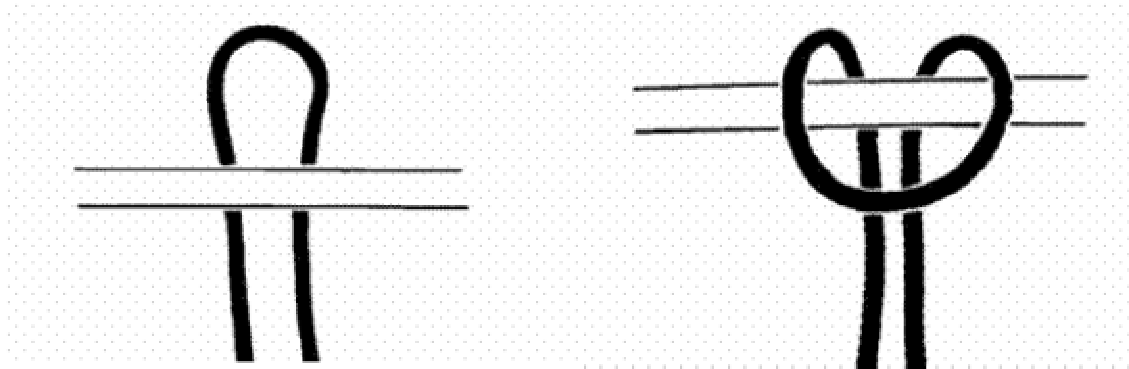
## Basic Knots

The ties presented in this workshop will all be accomplished with a few relatively simple knots.

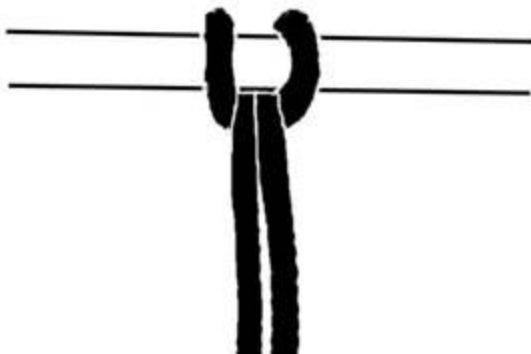
### Lark's Head

- The lark's head is an ideal **starting knot**. Find the middle of the rope, take it a half turn around the target, and pull the rest through.
- It's impossible for clever fingers to untie if the remaining rope is tied off somewhere out of reach.
- It's ideal as a quick knot to pass through the D-ring of a cuff.
- By itself, this is a slip knot, but it provides a starting point for other ties.

1) Fold the rope in half, forming a loop, and wrap that loop a half-turn around the object you are tying to.



2) Then, simply pass the remaining rope through the loop, and pull tight.



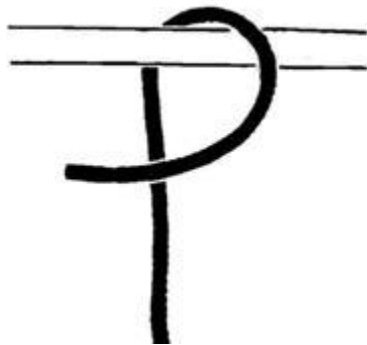
## Half hitch

- The half hitch is an **intermediate knot**. Generally, it isn't secure unless the line continues under tension.
- It's used to quickly secure the work that you've done so far, before continuing on with the rest of the rope.

1) You'll typically begin a half hitch by turning 180 degrees around some object, or another rope that you've already laid down.

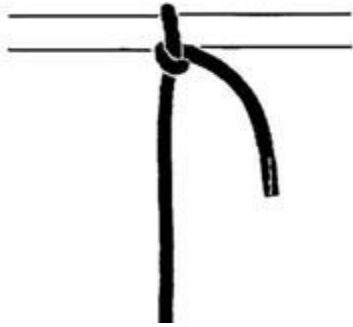


2) Form a loop, and pass the remaining rope through it



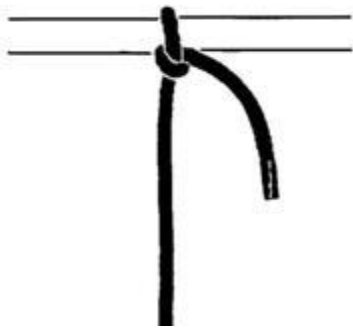
*continued on next page...*

3) Pull the knot snug before continuing with the remaining rope.

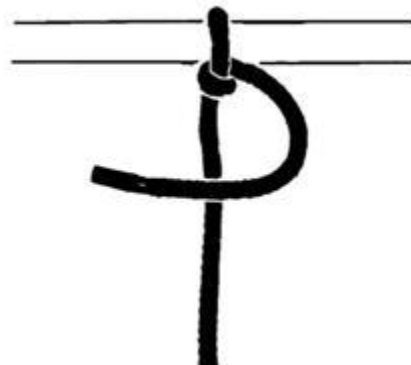


### Double Half Hitch

- The double half hitch is the first **finishing knot** we'll cover.
- It's a bit bulky, and tied in doubled rope, it doesn't hold as well as a square knot, but it's quickly and easily done.

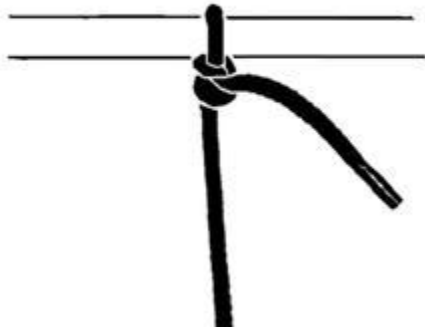


- 1) Start by tying a half hitch, as described above.
- 2) Make a second loop, in the same direction as the first, and pass the end of the rope through it.



*continued on next page...*

3) Tighten the knot to finish.

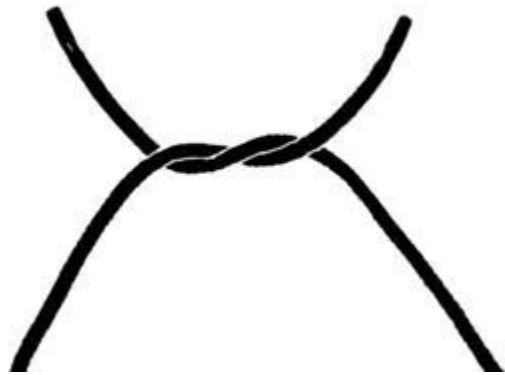
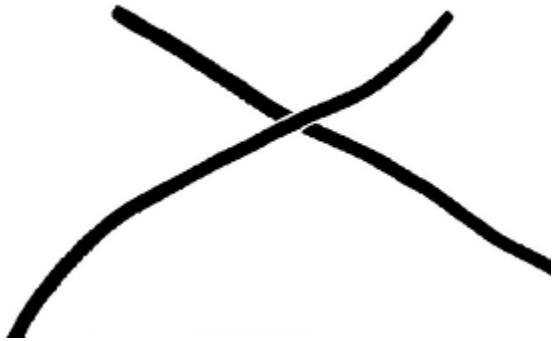


### Square Knot

- The square knot is the second finishing knot presented. It's a bit more complicated, but it lies very flat, holds more securely, and also uses less rope.
- It can also be used to tie two ropes together for non-critical applications.

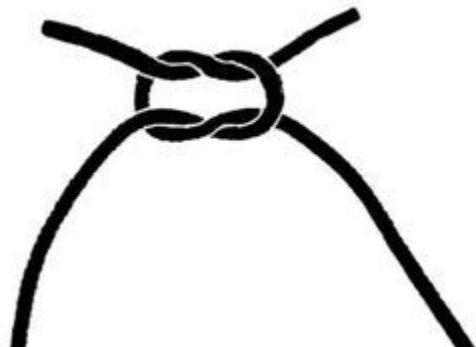
1) Cross the left rope over the right.

Take this rope, and twist it underneath, towards you, and back up.



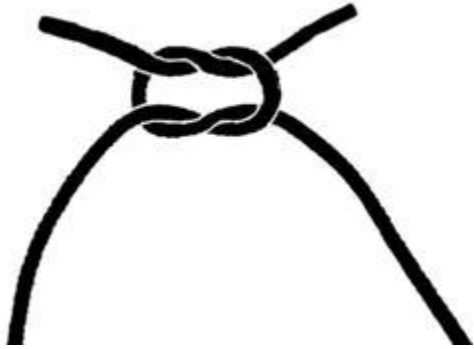
2) Cross the same rope (now the right) over the left.

Twist this same rope underneath and towards you.



If you've done this correctly, you will see an obvious U-shaped loop on one side - see the picture below. If you haven't got things quite right, you'll probably end up with a granny knot, which can slip or jam unpredictably.

SQUARE KNOT



GRANNY KNOT (INCORRECT)



3) Assuming you've got it right, tighten the knot to secure it.



For bondage purposes, it usually doesn't matter that much if you've tied a granny knot. Since the friction of the wraps takes the majority of the pressure, the knot really doesn't have to do that much work.

### Speaking of Friction

Okay, so we've covered these knots, and you're less than confident about your ability to tie knots that hold.

Or, you've got the technique down cold, but your bottom is a \*brat\*, and it's really annoying trying to tie off that last knot while they're struggling.

Or, you do the job too well - that cotton rope has seized up so tightly that you can't possibly undo it.

The solution for all of these is friction.

In rope rescue, they have the idea of a 'tensionless knot'. In simple terms, as you wrap a rope around an object (like a big tree) repeatedly, the holding power from friction rises exponentially.

Go around enough times, and it isn't *that* many, and you can hold the free end with two fingers as a piano hangs from the rope.

Now, since few of us are turned on by tying up pianos:

Throw a lark's head through the D-ring on a cuff, and then take the line around the bedpost.

But instead of immediately tying a knot, wrap the post a few times.

You'll find that this takes most of the pressure off, and you can easily tie this knot without the rope going slack, or mock struggles interfering with your handiwork.

Tie a half hitch or two to secure it, run the rope someplace they can't possibly reach, and tie off with a couple half hitches. Or three or four, if your knots suck.

This works best with a wider post, but it will always work if you wrap enough times.

Another variant is making use of the *internal* friction of the rope.

This is an ideal technique when the things that you're tying together are fairly narrow, or difficult to wrap. Like, say, cuffs to an overhead ring, ankles to a chest harness for a hogtie, or anything similar.

So tie a lark's head through that cuff's D-ring, and then run the rope around the target. Pull it tight.

Take it back to the D-ring, and through again. Pull tight.

Back to the target, and around in the same direction.

After three or four half turns, tie off with a finishing knot, or a few.

Each turn increases the holding power from friction, and passing back and forth also creates an improvised block-and-tackle. You can *really* tighten this - in fact, be careful.

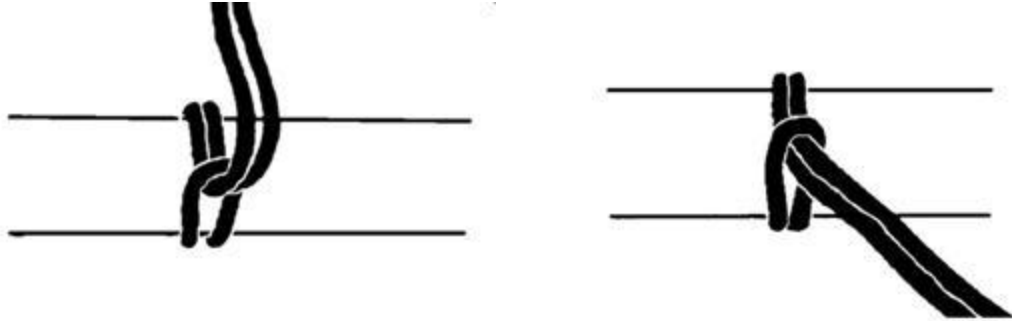
### **Single-limb Bondage: Fixed Loops**

- When doing single-limb ties, such as a spread eagle, you'll want to be able to create a loop that doesn't slip and tighten, cutting off circulation.
- This type of tie can be used to bind an individual wrist, ankle, or thigh, and is also the basis for various sorts of body harnesses.

#### **Lark's Head, Wrap, and Half hitch**

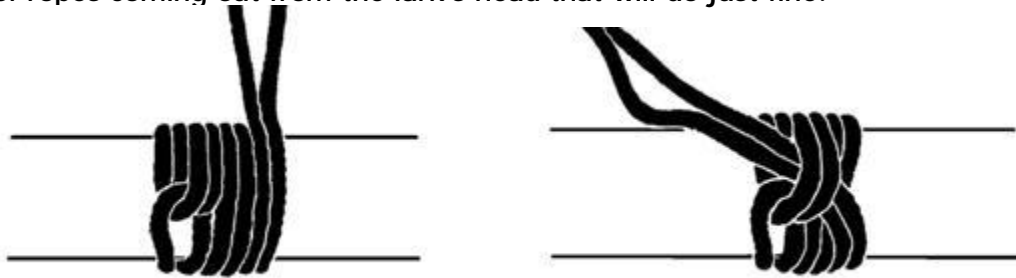
1) Start by tying a lark's head. If you're binding a wrist or ankle, it's easiest to keep a couple fingers underneath the knot for the entire process.

If you don't need multiple wraps, you can actually tie a half hitch right here to finish.



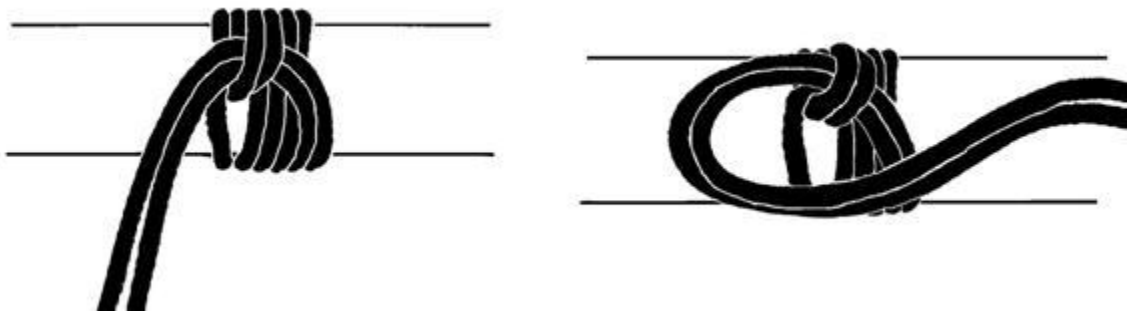
2) Generally, you want to wrap the limb at least two or three times. Try to keep the wraps even - it's helpful to gather the coils over a finger or two, as you work.

To finish this with a half hitch, we want to change direction - there's a convenient pair of ropes coming out from the lark's head that will do just fine.

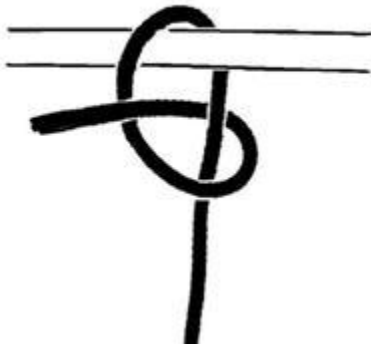
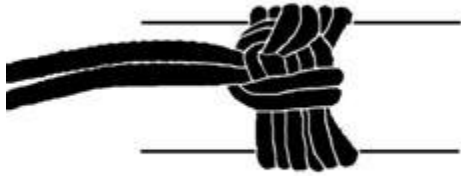


Review these two steps until you've got them down: we'll be starting most of the ties in the workshop with this method.

3) Form a small loop in order to start your half hitch.



4) Pass the remaining rope underneath the entire coil and through this loop. With a finger underneath the coil, tighten the ropes to complete the half hitch.



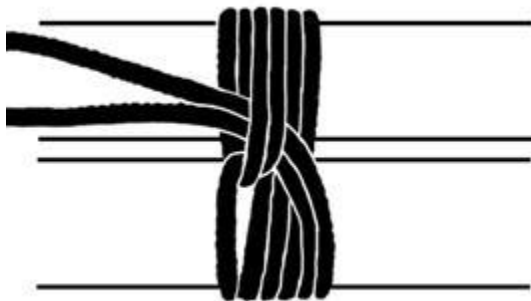
### Double-Limb Bondage: Cinches

- This type of tie is used to tie two limbs together, such as wrists, ankles, knees, or elbows, or alternatively, to tie a limb directly to a post, chair leg, or similar.

#### Lark's Head, Wrap, Cinch, and Square Knot

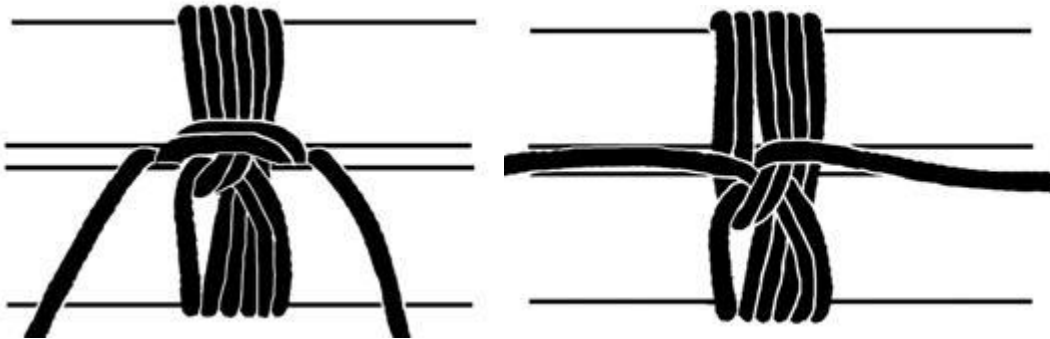
1) The first two steps are identical to the above tie: lark's head, wrap, and pass under.

This step can be tied somewhat loosely, as we'll tighten it up in a moment.

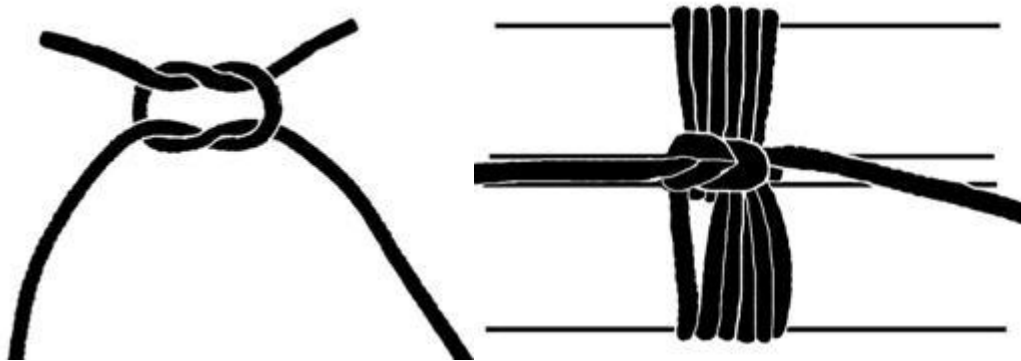


*continued on next page...*

2) Separate the two ropes. Wrap around the entire coil one or two times, in opposite directions, between the two limbs.



3) Finish with a square knot, pulling the cinch tight.



Note: consider this rope done, at this point.

If you try to use the running ends to tie off somewhere else, two things will happen:

- a) It will pull the square knot apart somewhat.
- b) It will tighten the cinch, probably to the point that circulation is cut off.

Instead:

- Use a new rope, and tie a lark's head around the whole thing. It will tighten a shade if pulled on, but it's not as bad, it will self-loosen, and you can always secure the lark's head with a half hitch.

or:

- Take a different approach: tie a fixed loop around both limbs together, leaving you a free end to work with, and use a separate short rope to do the cinch - just wrap and tie a square knot.

*Reprinted with permission for use on the Black & blue Ball website  
Found at [www.blackandblueball.ca](http://www.blackandblueball.ca)*