

Sailing Knots

Since rope is a vital part of a boat's equipment, a good sailor should be familiar with how to handle rope and how to tie a few basic knots.

Rope is used for controlling the sails, docking, mooring, and anchoring. Knots are needed to control all of the various lines, painters, halyards, and sheets on a sailboat.

Rope used to be made only from natural fibers, but now there are many types of synthetic rope. Synthetic rope is used on sailboats because it is durable, even though it sometimes gets slippery when wet.

There are two different types of rope construction:

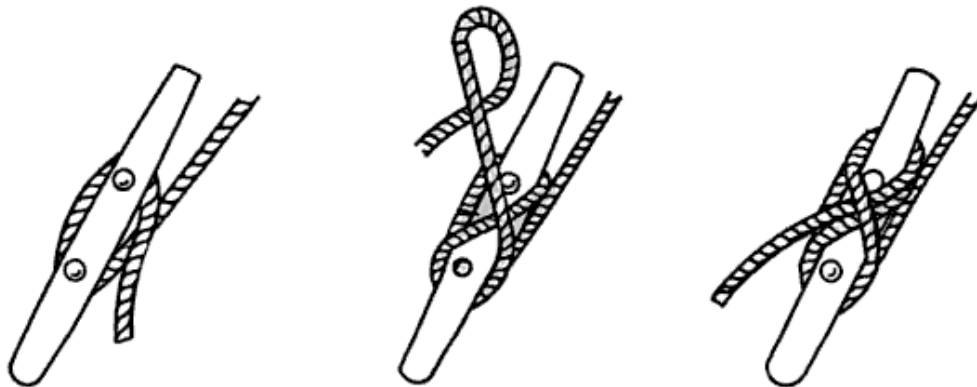
laid - where the strands are twisted together (mooring and anchor lines are usually three-strand)

braided - where the strands are interwoven (sheets and halyards)

A knot is usually found at the end of a rope, but the term is also used to describe a hitch (which is used to secure a rope to another object), and a bend which is used to tie two ropes together.

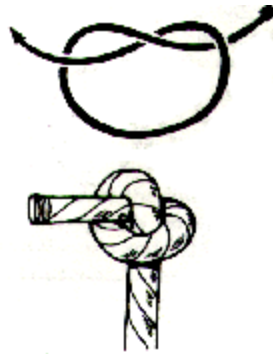
Just like sailing, knotting has its own terminology. The running end of the rope is the part used in making the knot. The standing part is not used in forming the knot (it is the part under strain). The bight is the bend in the rope between the two ends.

Belaying a Line to a Cleat



Cleats have been used for centuries by seamen to secure boats to a dock, as well as securing halyards and other running rigging on the boat.

Overhand or thumb knot

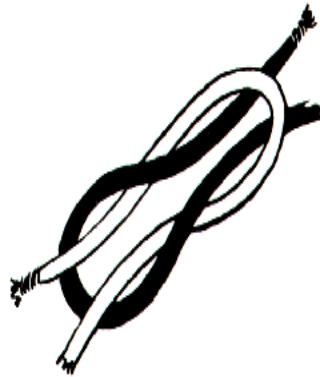


Overhand or thumb knot, is the simplest knot. It is used to stop the end of a rope from running through a block or up the mast.

It is difficult to untie, and should only be used on lines that are not re-rigged frequently (such as jib sheets).

To tie an overhand knot, form an overhand loop by crossing the running end over the standing part. Then cross the running end behind the standing part, and through the loop.

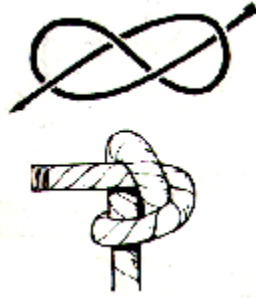
Square knot



The square knot is the best known sailors' knot. It is really just two overhand knots. It is useful for joining small ropes together, tying sail covers, reefing, lashing, and for tying in battens.

It is very easy to tie a square knot, you just have to remember one rule: right over left, then left over right. If you don't do this correctly, you have a granny knot, which slips easily.

Figure Eight



A figure eight knot is very quick and easy to tie. It is used like the overhand knot, as a stopper knot in the end of a line, or sheet, to prevent ropes from escaping. It can also be used to attach rope halyards, to the sails. It never jams, however much pressure is applied, and can be untied easily, even if wet.

To tie a figure-8, start with an underhand loop by crossing the running end behind the standing part. Then take the running end and bring it over the standing part and back around through the loop from beneath. Draw the end up snugly.

Bowline



The bowline, sometimes called the "king of knots", is one of the most useful knots to a sailor. It is multi-purpose, and can be used to secure a line to a bollard, or to a ring, or to make a loop at the end of a line. It can be made quickly and easily and will never jam, even after under strain.

To tie a bowline, put the line around the object to which it is to be tied and make a simple overhand loop, by crossing the running end over the standing part. Then put the running end through the loop, from underneath. Then wrap the running end around the back of the standing part. To finish, put the running end back down through the loop in the same way it came out.

Many children are taught to do the bowline by following these simple instructions: "The rabbit comes out of the hole, runs around the tree, and goes back down the hole."