

# Teaching Knots

The basic characteristics of a useful knot are generally considered to be:

- a. Easy to Tie
- b. Easy to untie
- c. Secure under load

## I. General

- a. Most knots can be tied in more than one way. Therefore one method is no more right than the other as long as the end results are the same.
- b. Most symmetrical knots have merit.
- c. Left-hand or Right -hand knots (i.e. mirror image) are usually equally strong versions of the same knot. Use the one that is easiest for you to tie.
- d. Many knots are relatives to each other. For example the bowline is a loop version of the sheet bend. Considering that, we can derive many loops from bends and vice versa.
- e. Extra half hitches or turns help in many cases. For example, three inside hitches (instead of two) help to secure a tautline in slippery material.
- f. A library of 10 or so knots will serve most purposes if you are creative in their use. Add others as need arises.
- g. A knot is most useful when it can be tied easily and without much effort. The only way to achieve this result is practice, practice, and more practice. Can you do them with your eyes closed?
- h. Knowledge of strength of ropes is essential where safety is a consideration. Add at least one book that addresses this subject to your library.

## II. Teaching

- a. Competence by the teacher inspires student confidence that it can be done.
- b. Knots are best observed if the student can observe from the tier's perspective. Therefore, is best for the student to look over the teachers shoulder or some similar perspective rather than straight on.
- c. When possible using two cords different colors helps the student see the structure of the knot.
- d. If teaching a group, use the largest rope practical in order to be easily seen.
- e. A small piece of cord in the pocket can provides the opportunity for learning and teaching. It can also provide entertainment in slow moments. I call it a "pet rope".
- f. Spaghetti. I know you are not supposed to play with your food but this is an interesting media for knot cards and boards. There are competitive possibilities as well.
- g. Think of brief verbal clues that aid in remembering the knot. For example, for the bowline, " The rabbit comes out of the hole, around the tree, and back into the hole." Silly but memorable.
- h. Use your knots in the outdoor program. Example is the best incentive and teacher for the girls. Emphasize practical uses.
- i The more you know, the better teacher you can be.

# Knots - Clever ways to teach

## **Big Beetle** (A fun way to practice knot tying)

One beetle needs....

8 short pieces of rope (string)

1 beetle head (cardboard with hole for attaching to body)

2 eyes-2 large circles

Players need a bucket, large dice, tape and glue, long pieces of rope, short rope.

Provide all items for each patrol, each girl throws a dice in turn.

A 6 must be thrown first to get the body

5-head to be attached with a reef knot

4-legs attached with a reef knot

3- tail, short rope with a reef knot

2- antennae, stick to head with tape

1- eye-glue into place.

When the beetle is complete, a long rope is tied around the neck with a bowline and the beetle is dragged across the finishing line some distance away.

**Practice with licorice strings, then eat knots** My Brownies really liked was that after I had taught them the two

knots we were learning, and they practiced them on rope, I gave them several pieces of the Twizzlers Licorice Peelers (I think that is what they are called - my daughter knows but she is asleep right now). For each piece of licorice they got, they had to tie one of the knots in it before they could eat the candy! This was our bedtime snack at our last Troop camp!

We played a **fire rescue relay game** with one kid about 20' from the remaining 3-4-5 kids on the team. The remaining team had a bunch (4-5) of pieces of rope that had to be tied together with a square knot into one length then thrown to the one who caught the end and then was pulled to "safety" from the fire. It was fun because if you didn't pay attention to pieces you were tying you ended up with a circle of rope!

**Keep bag of rope handy, do a knot, put it away.** We have a "knot bag" for my troop. That is a small mesh bag filled with yard-long lengths of rope -- different kinds, cotton, climbing, etc. We pull out the bag and do a knot or two, then put it away and move on to something else. I also have a set of tent stakes that we use for half hitches & such.

**Macrame** Remember macrame? It uses several basic knots, and you have something useful when you're done!

The GuideZone has a great site for knots and games.

<http://www.guidezone.sk1.com/knots.htm>

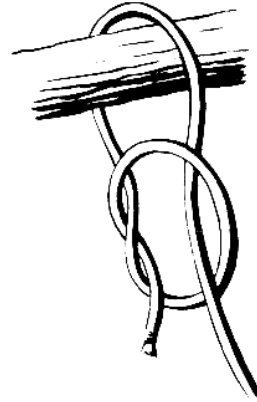
The other website that is a great resource is Becky's Guiding Resource Centre. Click on the Camping link and then look for "Knot Games" and "Knotty People":

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Acres/6690/>

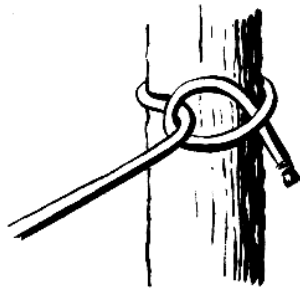
# Girl Scout Knots



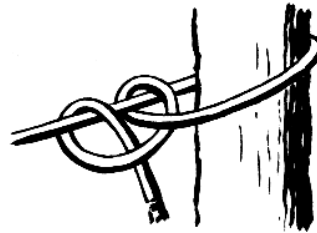
**Square Knot**



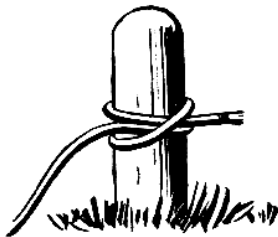
**Slip Knot**



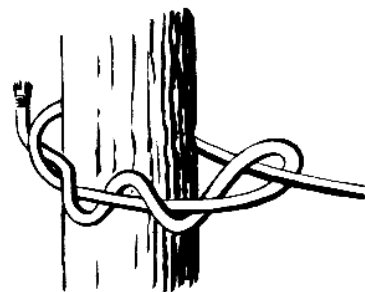
**Single Half Hitch**



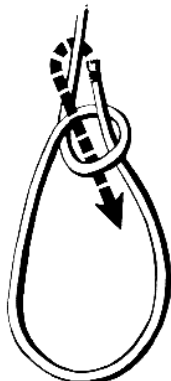
**Double Half Hitch**



**Clove Hitch**



**Timber Hitch**



**Bowline**



**Sheet Bend**