

Ready to Tie the Knot?

February 9, 2025

8 Essential Survival Knots to Master

In the wilderness, knots are more than just a way to tie things together – they're a crucial survival skill. Knowing how to tie the right knot can mean the difference between a secure shelter and a night exposed to the elements.

Here we are going to cover some of the most essential survival knots, detailing how to tie them and their common uses.

1. Square Knot: The square knot is one of the simplest and most reliable knots for joining two ropes of equal thickness. Its simplicity and strength make it a staple in both everyday and survival scenarios. It is commonly used in first aid to secure bandages, in camping to tie packages, and in securing bundles.

- To tie a square knot, hold one end of each rope in each hand, pass the right end over and under the left end, then pull tight. Pass the left end over and under the right end, then pull tight.

- Cautions: The square knot is notoriously unreliable under fluctuating loads or if the ropes are of different diameters. It can capsize (come undone) easily. Never use it for critical applications like climbing, rescuing, or securing heavy loads. It's best for light-duty tasks.

2. Bowline Knot (The King of Knots): The bowline knot forms a loop that won't slip or bind, making it a go-to knot for securing a rope to a fixed object. It is essential for rescue operations, climbing, sailing, and creating loops that are easy to untie even after bearing a heavy load.

- To tie a bowline knot, make a small loop in the rope, with the end of the rope on top. Pass the end of the rope through the loop from the underside (the rabbit comes out of the hole), wrap the end around the standing part of the rope (the rabbit goes around the tree), and pass the end back down through the loop (the rabbit goes back into the hole) and pull tight.

- Cautions: While reliable, the bowline can be difficult to untie after being heavily loaded. Practice untying it as well. Also, ensure the loop is the correct size for its intended purpose.

3. Clove Hitch: The clove hitch is highly effective for securing a rope temporarily to a post, tree, or another anchor. It is used for tying off the end of a rope, setting up tarps, and securing temporary shelters.

- To tie a clove hitch, wrap the rope around the object, cross the end over itself and wrap it around the object again, then tuck the end under the last wrap and pull tight.

- Cautions: The clove hitch can slip under heavy or variable loads. It's best used for non-critical applications or when a quick release is needed. It's not recommended for climbing or rescue.

4. Figure Eight Knot: The figure eight knot is a strong, secure knot used to prevent ropes from slipping through holes and pulleys. It is frequently used in climbing, caving, and sailing to prevent ropes from fraying and slipping.



- To tie a figure eight knot, make a loop in the rope, pass the end of the rope through the loop, creating a figure-eight shape, and tighten the knot by pulling on both ends.

- Cautions: Ensure Proper Tightening. Make sure the knot is properly tightened by pulling on both ends. Suitable for lighter applications, A loosely tied figure eight knot can slip and fail under load.

5. **Sheet Bend:** The sheet bend is ideal for joining two ropes of different diameters or materials, making it versatile for various survival needs. It is useful in creating makeshift ropes, extending ropes, and joining different types of materials.

- To tie a sheet bend, make a loop in the thicker rope, pass the thinner rope through the loop from the bottom, wrap the thinner rope around the back of the loop, tuck the end of the thinner rope under itself, and pull tight.

- Cautions: Sheet Bend knots have a tendency to loosen when not under a load. Always ensure the knot is tight before using it.

6. **Taut-Line Hitch:** The taut-line hitch is an adjustable knot, perfect for creating tension in a line or rope. It is commonly used to secure tents, tarps, and loads by creating adjustable tension.

- To tie a taut-line hitch, wrap the rope around the object, make two turns inside the loop formed around the standing part of the rope, make an additional turn outside the loop, then pull tight.

- Cautions: Practice adjusting and tightening the knot to get a feel for how it works. Ensure it is properly set to prevent slippage.

7. **Prusik Knot:** The prusik knot creates a secure loop that can slide along a rope but will hold firmly under load, making it essential for climbing and rescue operations. It is used in climbing, rescue operations, and creating adjustable safety loops.

- To tie a prusik knot, wrap a smaller rope around a larger rope two or three times, ensuring the wraps are neat and tight, pass the end of the smaller rope through the loops created, and pull tight, ensuring the knot grips the larger rope securely.

- Cautions: The Prusik cord should be significantly thinner than the main rope to ensure proper grip and always double-check that the Prusik knot is properly tied and positioned before applying weight.

8. **Trucker's Hitch:** The trucker's hitch is essential for securing heavy loads tightly, providing mechanical advantage for tightening ropes. It is commonly used to tie down gear, secure heavy loads, and create tight and secure knots.

- To tie a trucker's hitch, create a loop in the middle of the rope, pass the end of the rope through the loop, creating a pulley system, tighten the line using the mechanical advantage created by the loop, and secure the end of the rope to prevent slipping.

- Cautions: Ensure the half hitch is tied securely to prevent slippage.

Obviously not an all-inclusive list of knots but by mastering these knots, you can significantly enhance your ability to handle various survival scenarios and ensure you are well-prepared for any situation.

Remember to practice regularly to maintain your skills and confidence in tying these essential knots.

Happy knotting! 😊