



2026

Osprey Yacht Club

Optimist Sailboat Youth Training Manual

Or






How to have a lot of fun on a small sailboat!

Revision Date: November 5, 2025

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What will I learn?

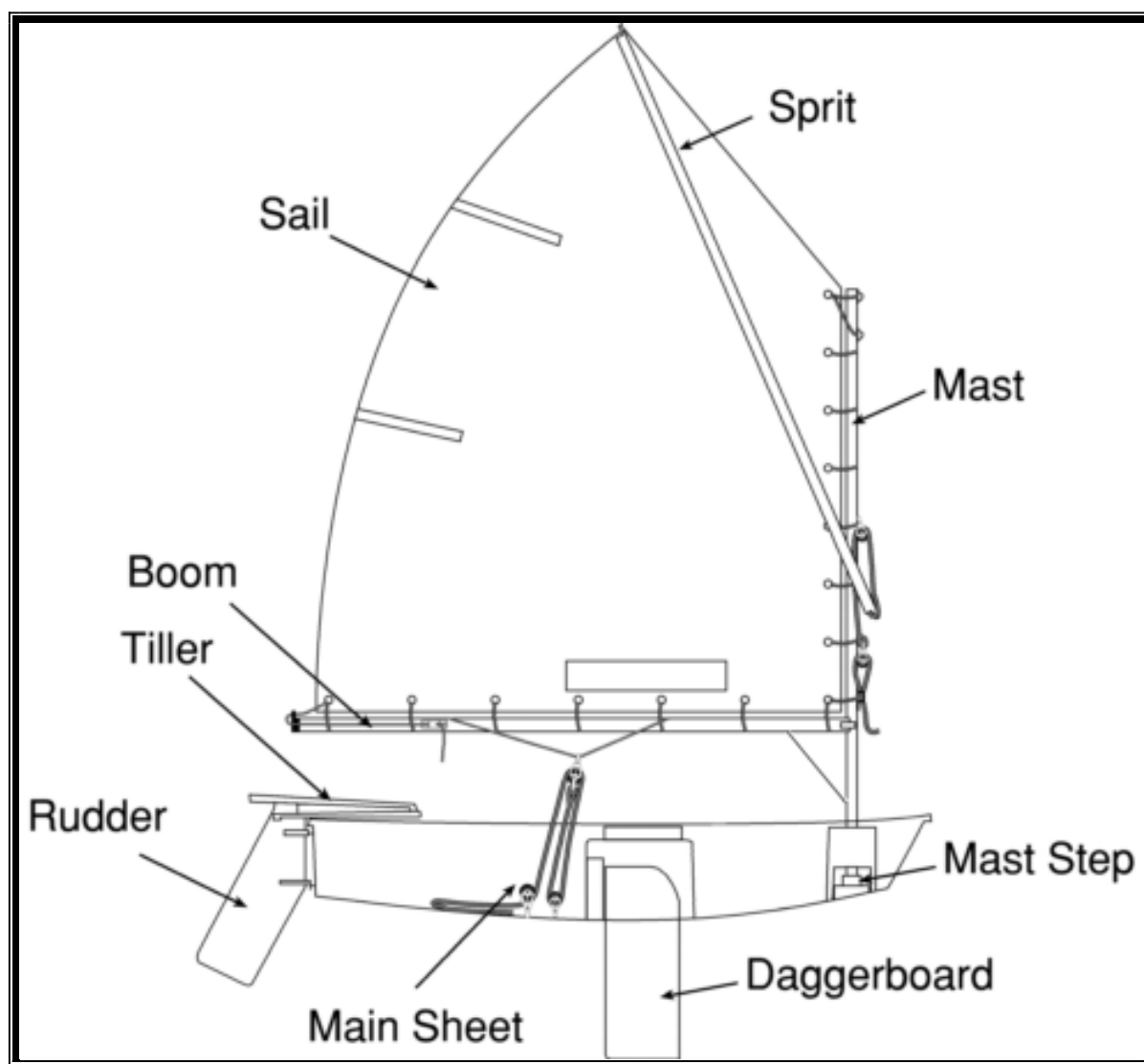
Day	What will I learn this week?
Day One	<p>[1] What is an Optimist Sailboat?</p> <p>[2] What are the parts all called?</p> <p>[3] How do all of these parts fit together?</p> <p>[3] Which way do I go?</p> <p>[4] How do I steer?</p> <p>[5] What if I tip over and fall out?</p> <p>[6] Why can't an Optimist sailboat sink?</p> <p>[7] Why can't I sink if I fall out of the sailboat?</p> <p>[8] How do I use a personal floatation device (PFD)?</p> <p>[9] When is a rope not a rope?</p> <p>[10] What are knots called and how do I use them?</p> <p>[11] What is Seamanship?</p> <p>I learned a lot today, time to rest, swim or play! Now I can teach my family all that I learned today.</p>
Day two through five	<p> On these four days I will actually sail an Optimist sailboat all by myself.</p> <p> I will have a chase boat with two adults with me at all times!</p> <p> When I'm not on a sailboat I get to ride in another boat! Cool!</p> <p>Wait until I tell my family and friends all about this!</p>
Day five	<p> Today, after my last sailing lesson, I graduate and receive my very own certification of completion.</p> <p> How learning to sail is related to my life in general.</p>

Terms we will use:

I must learn these terms

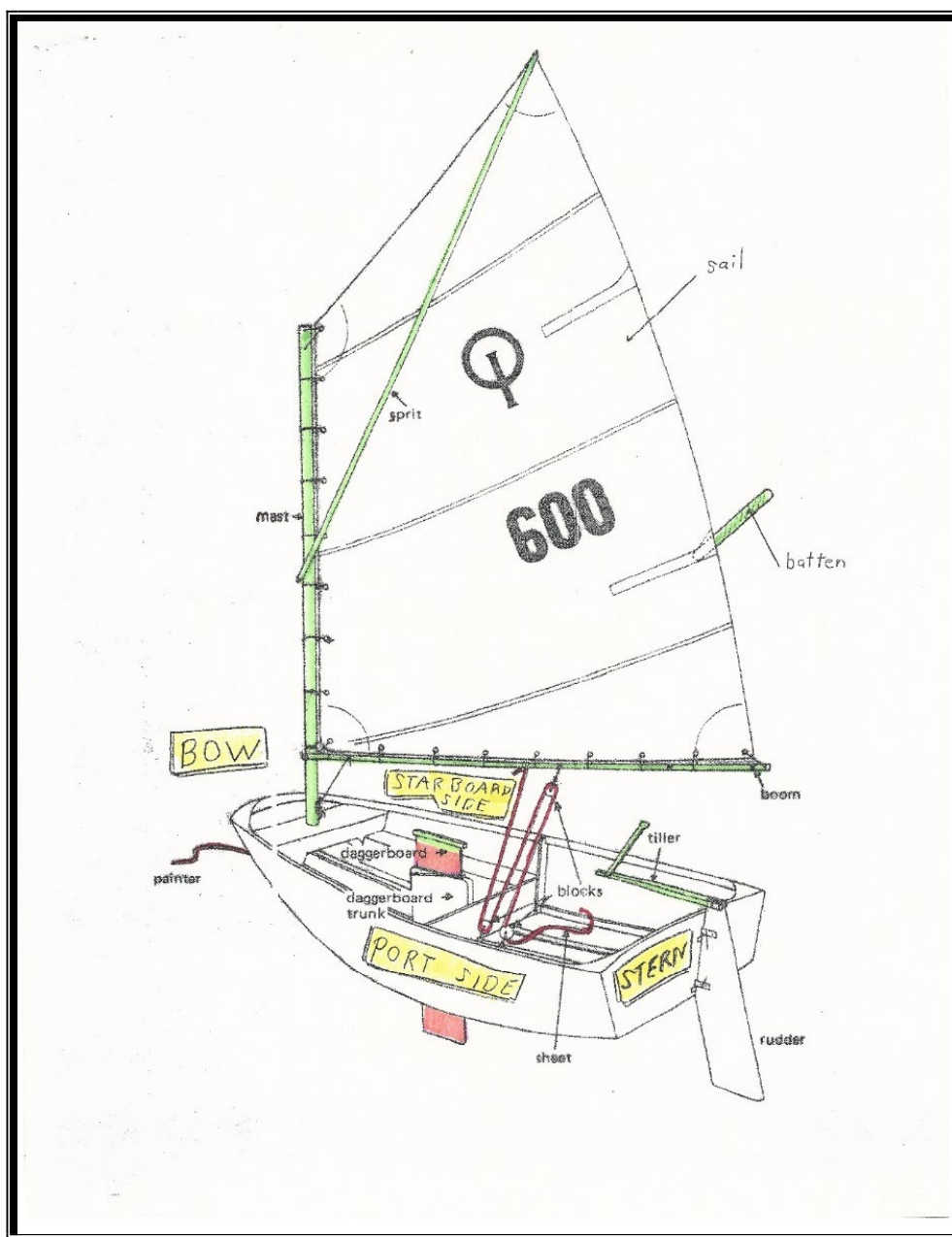
- ☐ **Backing Out of Irons:** When my sailboat is "in irons" I will use this technique to get out of irons.
- ☐ **Bow:** The front of the sailboat.
- ☐ **Coming About:** Changing directions while sailing and changing my position in the sailboat.
- ☐ **Falling Off:** Pull the tiller in toward me, pointing away from the wind, and fill the sail with wind.
- ☐ **Gybing:** Turning my sailboat while "sailing down wind"; I can control this by pulling in the mainsheet before I turn.
- ☐ **Heading Up:** I push tiller away from me, pointing the Opti toward the wind.
- ☐ **In Irons:** This is when my sailboat is dead into the wind and it will not go forward.
- ☐ **Pull in or let out the mainsheet:** This is how I get power from the wind or reduce the power of the wind.
- ☐ **Push or pull the tiller:** This is how I steer the sailboat.
- ☐ **Port:** The left side of the sailboat when I am facing forward toward the Bow.
- ☐ **Tacking:** Turning from one tack to the other tack again and again to "sail up wind" until I get to my destination.
- ☐ **Target:** Pick a landmark or object to aim for to help you keep the sailboat on course.
- ☐ **Sailing Upwind:** This is when I point my sailboat as close to the wind as possible.
- ☐ **Sailing Downwind:** This is when I sail away from the wind and the wind is coming from the stern of the sailboat.
- ☐ **Starboard:** The right side of the sailboat when I am facing forward toward the Bow.
- ☐ **Seamanship:** My knowledge and skill pertaining to the navigation, safety, and maintenance of a ship.
- ☐ **Stern:** The back of the sailboat.

Parts of the Optimist Sailboat and how they fit together



What are the sides of the Optimist Sailboat called?

Bow Stern Port Starboard

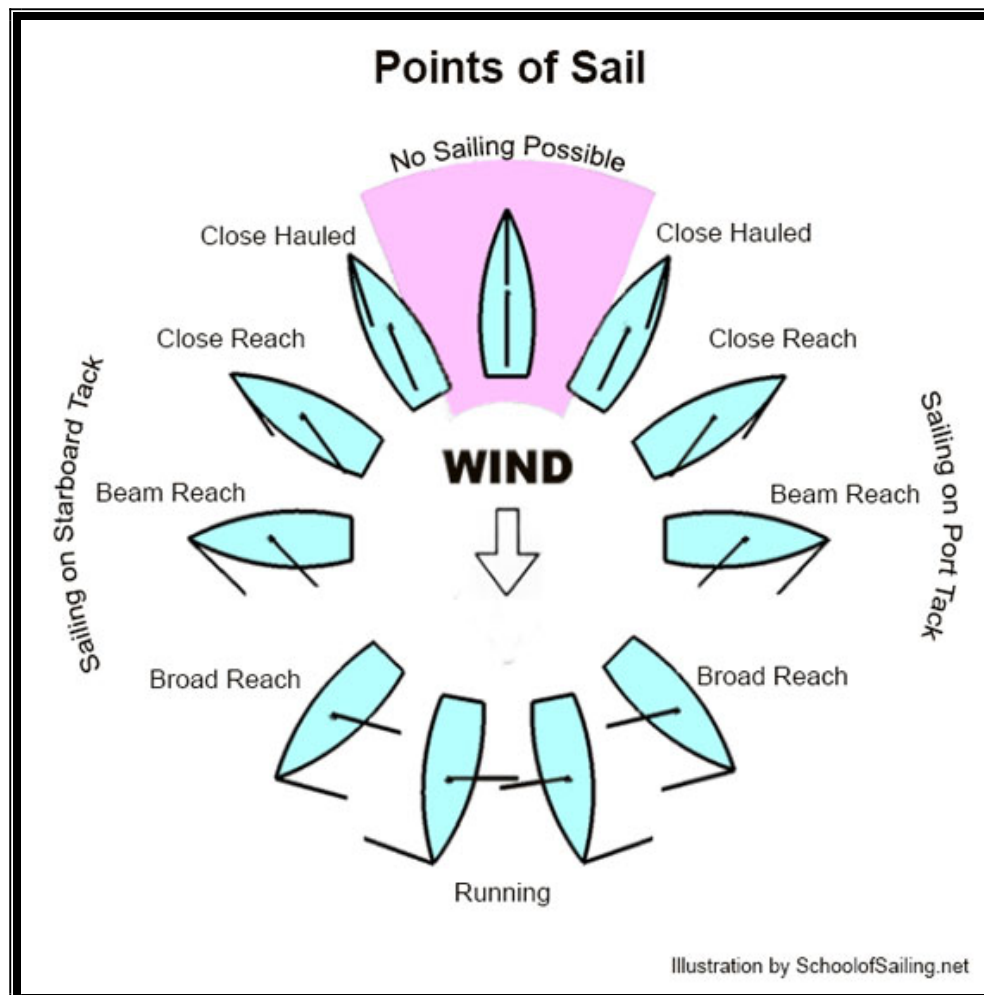


Why I can't sail directly into the wind no matter how hard I try?

“No Sailing Possible” means I am “In Irons”

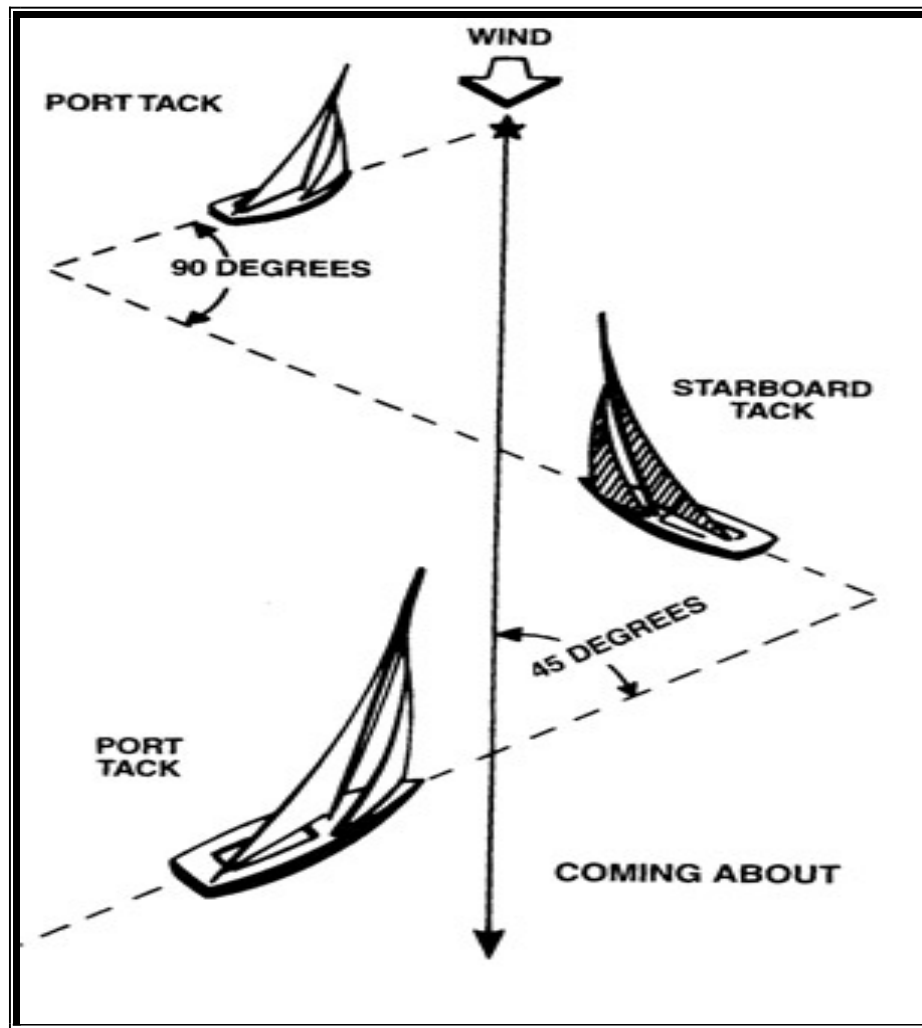
In Irons: when my boat is dead into the wind

I CANNOT SAIL DIRECTLY INTO THE WIND!



Sailing close to the wind (Tacking)

I CANNOT SAIL DIRECTLY INTO THE WIND!



But...

I can get to a point that is upwind if I tack!

So this is how a sailboat works!

Coming About and Changing Sides

When I "Come About" I must change my position in the sailboat.

Here are the steps that I must take to get from one side of the sailboat to the other.

[1] When I start this maneuver, I will be sailing along sitting with my back to the side of the boat and my head is facing toward the bow watching where I am going. My one hand is on the tiller and my other hand is holding the mainsheet. I should be aiming toward a target.

[2] Before I come about, I will look for a new target to aim for.

[3] To come about, I will push the tiller away from me to make the sailboat start to turn.

[4] As the sailboat goes through the turn, **I will wait until the boom comes over my head** before I move.

[5] Still holding the tiller in the turn position and my other hand holding the mainsheet, my first move is to turn my body toward the bow.

[6] I will then be placing **both of my hands behind my back** bringing the tiller in one hand and the mainsheet in the other hand together behind my back. *(Never in front of me)*

[7] I will momentarily transfer the mainsheet to the hand that is still on the tiller while behind my back.

[8] Holding both the mainsheet and the tiller in one hand, I will switch sides.

[9] I will now reverse my hands so that again one hand is on the tiller while the other is holding the mainsheet.

[10] I will pull the tiller to the center and my sailboat will now be heading in a new direction toward that new target.

[11] The tricky part of this is to do the maneuver while facing forward, watching where I am going and selecting a new target.

Wow, this seems difficult! I will practice this maneuver each day.

I can learn.

HOW?

This is how. Memorize these:



Coming About

Pick a new target

Push the tiller

Let the boom go over my head

Turn my body with my hands behind my back

Switch hands

Follow my new target



Pulling in the Sheet

Reach down

Pull the sheet

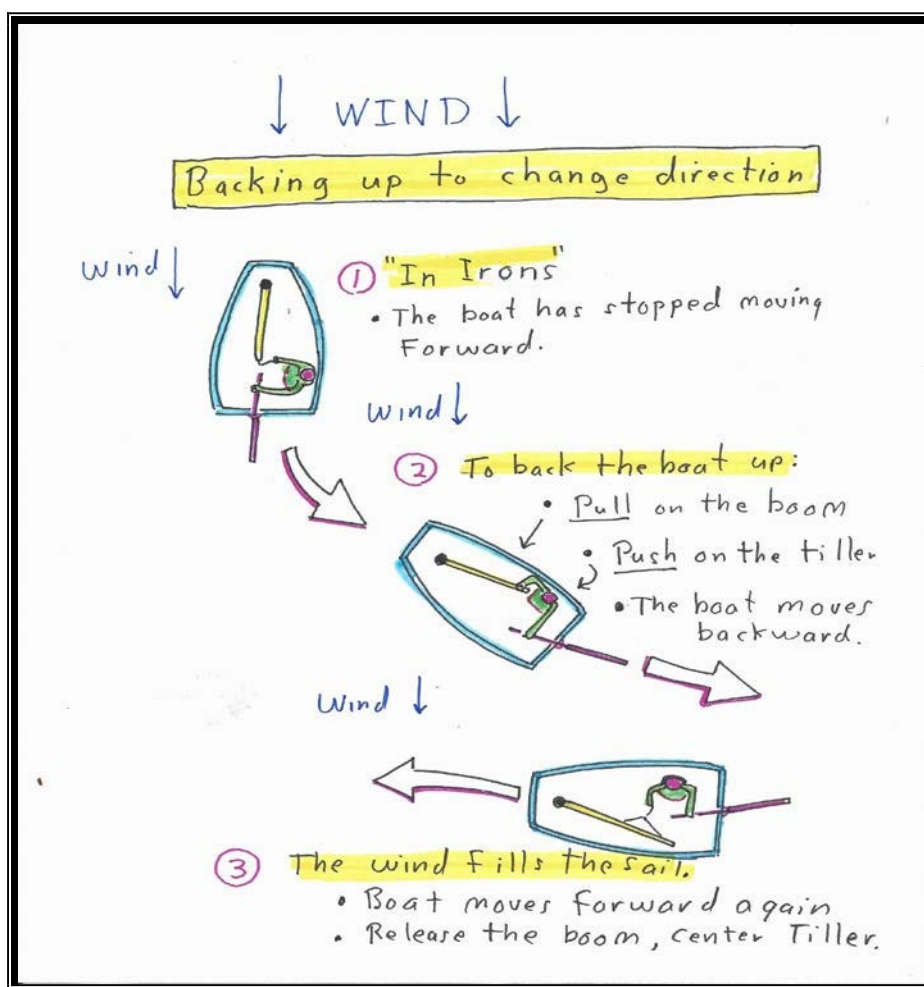
Thumb the sheet

Backing out of Irons.

I CANNOT SAIL DIRECTLY INTO THE WIND!

When my sailboat is “in irons” I will use this technique to get out of irons.

1. I will hold onto the tiller.
2. I will let go of the main sheet.
3. Then, I hold on to the boom and I pull it toward me.
4. At the same time, I will push on the tiller (The sailboat will back up and turn away from the wind).
5. I release the boom from my hand and pull in the main sheet.
6. I center the tiller back toward me as the sail fills with air.
7. The sailboat has turned and I can continue sailing.



But How?

This is how. Memorize this:



Get out of Irons

Push the boom

Pull the tiller

Pick a new target

Knots I need to learn

Square Knot or Reef Knot

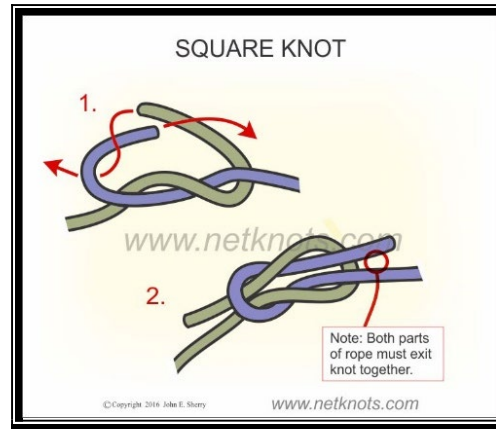
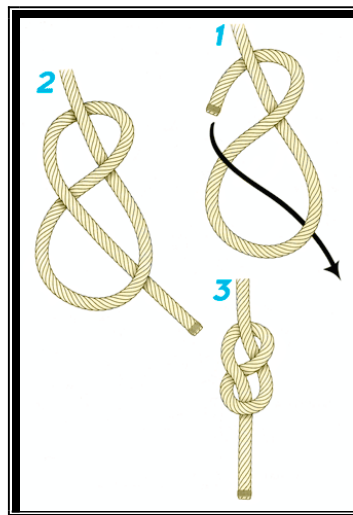


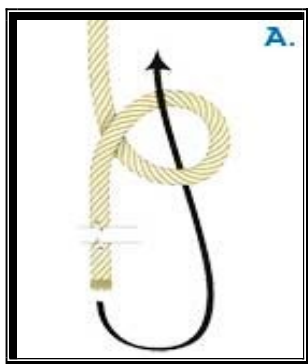
Figure-Eight

To cast a figure-eight knot, make an overhand loop and pass the bitter end under and up through the loop as in an overhand knot, but go 180 degrees farther in the last tuck as shown in the illustration.

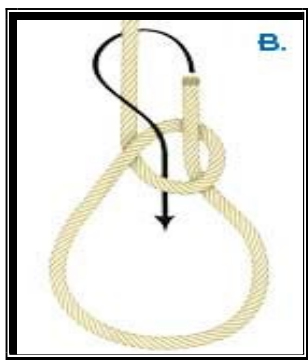


Bowline

One of the most useful knots aboard a boat, the bowline, pronounced “bowlin,” can be used to make a temporary loop anywhere in a line. Used on rings, spars or cleats, a properly formed bowline is strong, resists slipping and is easily untied.



Form an overhand loop, and take the line's bitter end through the loop from the back.



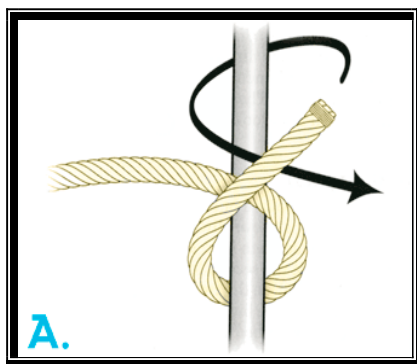
Bring the bitter end around the line's working part and back down through the formed loop.



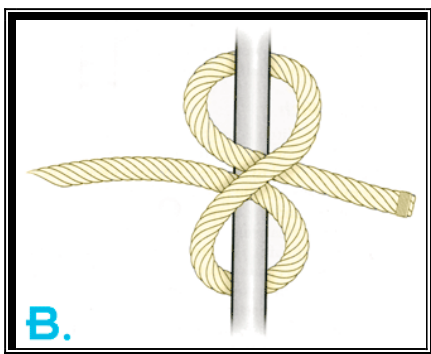
Shape and tighten the knot firmly.

Clove Hitch

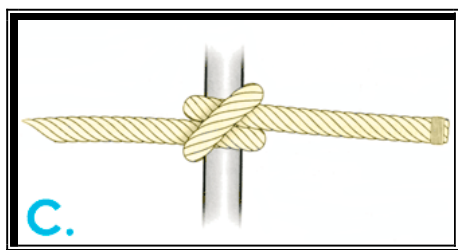
When tied around a wooden pile, it won't slip even if the pile is tapered. It's also easy to tie and untie under a strain.



Practice tying this knot around a vertical cylinder. Start with a bitter end long enough to wrap around the post twice with 2 feet of line left over for the half hitches. Wrap the bitter end around the post. When you come back to the working part, pass under it and immediately cross over the wrap you just made so the second wrap is on top of the first.

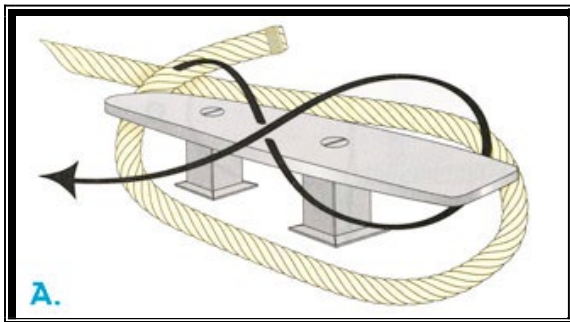


Make the second wrap in the same direction as the first. When you come to the crossing, pass the bitter end under and pull tight.

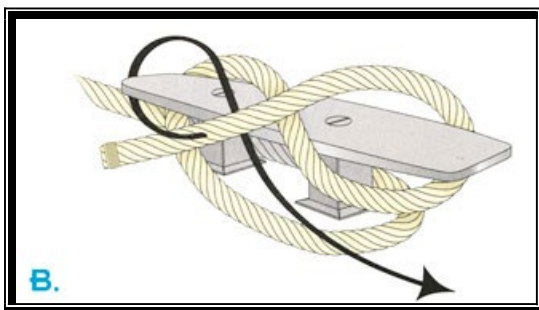


Cleat Hitch

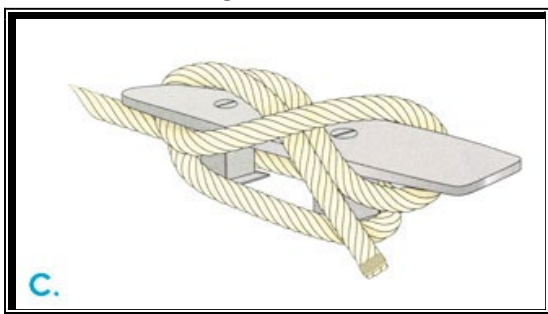
A secure and reliable knot, the cleat hitch can be untied under load and is used to secure a line to a cleat.



On most smooth, polished cleats with round bases, you must secure the line by wrapping it three full times around the base.



For the final weave, bring the bitter end out from under one cleat horn, diagonally across the top of the cleat, under the other cleat horn, and diagonally across the first diagonal line.



Continue under and around the starting horn, and bring the line parallel to the first diagonal and under the second diagonal.

Seamanship

My knowledge and skill pertaining to the navigation, safety, and maintenance of a ship

- A. Who has the right of way?
- B. Who goes first?
- C. What do I do when a boat is coming right at me?
- D. What does "port to port" mean?
- E. Where is the wind?
- F. Which direction am I going to go? (Points of Sail)
- G. How do the parts of the boat work for me?
- H. Why do I need a dagger board?
- I. When do I need to raise or lower the dagger board?
- J. How do some of the other parts of the boat work for me?