

# Knots

Knots are frequently a foreign subject for new leaders. However, taking the time to learn them will serve you and your Scouts as well on campouts and other occasions.

Knots are a skill taught at every level of Scouting from Cub to Boy Scout. The Wolf Cub will find them in Elective 17 - Tie It Right. The Bear will encounter them in Achievement 22 - Tying It All Up. Webelos will have a chance in the Outdoorsman requirements.

Why is it important to learn to tie knots? There are a few people in each generation that just get a kick out of seeing how many of the approximately 4,000 different knots they can learn to tie. For most people knots keep your shoes from falling off, tie up bundles of limbs and twigs for trash pickup, fly a kite or tie a fly on a fishing line and all those other things that involve string, cord, line or rope.

Each of the 4,000 or so knots has an application for which it is best but we really don't expect Cub Leaders to teach all 4,000 knots to the Cubs. The Boy Scouts have selected five knots that will fill most of the Cub's needs. These knots are Square Knot, Sheet Bend, Bowline, Two Half Hitches and Slipknot. Instructions for tying these knots are in the Bear Cub Scout book, The Scouting Book of Knots and the Boy Scout handbook as well as numerous non-Boy Scout publications. The uses of these basic knots are:

**Square Knot** - tie two ropes of the same size and material together.

**Sheet Bend** - tie two ropes of different sizes and/or materials together.

**Bowline** - tie a fixed non slipping loop in a rope.

**Two Half Hitches** - all purpose hitch for attaching rope to an uneven shape.

**Slip Knot** - can be used in place of two half hitches where it can be slipped over the end of an object to which it is to be attached.

## **Teaching Knots**

Try to teach Cub Scout's basic knots over an extended period. Do not try to teach them more than two knots in any given session.

Most boys will start to get confused after the second knot.

Repetition is the key to teaching knots. Once you have introduced them, keep including the skills in various games and other activities. Using rope of two different colors helps some boys see more clearly how knots are correctly tied and lessens confusion. Boys will need your individual attention in learning and demonstrating these knots, so try to get some help in watching them tie them. Your Den Chief would be good at this.

You might ask him to bring a fellow Boy Scout along who has earned the Pioneering merit badge to help out when you are teaching the boys knots.

### **Rope Care**

The ends of a rope should be whipped or taped to hold the fibers in place. Instructions for this are in the Bear book. The rope should be stored dry. A natural fiber rope will rot if put away wet and manufactured fiber will mildew. The rope should be clean. Dirt in the rope will damage the fibers and weaken the rope. Remove all knots and kinks. Knots or kinks in a rope for a long period of time will damage the fibers and weaken the rope.

Coil the rope as described in the Bear book.

## **CUB SCOUT KNOTS**

### **SQUARE KNOT or REEF KNOT also called THEIF'S KNOT**



A common knot made with two overhand knots. Square knots are used in first aid to tie bandages and to join two pieces of rope of the same thickness. A common chant to learn this knot is "Left over Right and Under, Right over Left and Under"

### **SHEET BEND**



This knot looks like a bowline, but instead of making a loop, it joins ropes of different sizes. It is also often referred to as the "reef knot", because it was originally used to tie reefing lines. The knot should be tied with both ends coming off the same side of the bend.

## **BOWLINE or RESCUE KNOT**



A knot to make a nonslip loop at the end of a rope. Form a small loop (the direction is important), and pass the free end of the knot up through the loop, around behind the standing part of the rope, and back down through the loop. This knot is probably the most popular knot in the sailing world. A chant to remember this knot is "The rabbit comes out of the hole, round the tree, and back down the hole again", where the hole is the small loop, and the rabbit is the running end of the rope.

## **TWO HALF HITCHES**



This knot is used to tie a rope to a post, a tree, or a ring. Pass the running end of the rope over the pole twice. Then pass the running end of the rope over the standing part of rope, and tuck it back up and under itself, forming a half hitch. Repeat this for a second half hitch.

## **RUNNING KNOT or SLIP KNOT**



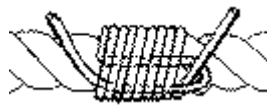
This knot easily slips along the rope around which it is made. The knot itself is a simple overhand knot. It can be used to tie a rope to a post.

### WHIPING STEP 1



Start with a 2-foot length of twine or cotton fishing line. Form it into a loop and place it at one end of the rope.

### WHIPING STEP 2



Wrap the twine tightly around the rope, starting 1/4 inch from the rope end.

### WHIPING STEP 3



When the whipping is as wide as the rope is thick, pull out the ends hard and trim off the twine or fishing line.

# KNOT GAMES

Look at these carefully. Some of these games are better suited to Boy Scouts, while others are perfect for Cub Scouts just learning knots.

## **Friendship Circle Closing**

Each den member is given a 3-foot length of rope which he ties to his neighbor's with a square knot so that a circle is made. Boys pull back on the line with their left hands and make the Cub Scout Sign with their right. The Den Leader says, "This circle shows the bond of friendship we have in Cub Scouting. Now please join me in the Cub Scout Promise."

## **The Rope Pyramid**

We had a pyramid shaped board with a tag for each scout. Any scout could challenge a scout on the line above him and if they tied all the eight knots correctly, first, the tags were switched. You could only challenge once a week. The top three could be challenged by anyone. The top three got to be so good that they could tie the knots behind their back.

## **Knots Galore**

Give the team captains a 24-inch length of rope. At the signal, the captains tie a knot in one end of the rope, the second player ties one near the first, and so on down the line. There should be one knot for each player on the team. After all the knots are tied and the number checked, it goes down the line again with each player untying a knot. First team to finish wins.

## **Rope Throw Rescue**

Each den (or team) has a coil of rope. Adults representing drowning victims are in the water. Each Webelos in turn throws the rope to the drowning person who grabs it and then lets it go. The player recoils the rope and hands it to the next player. Repeat until all den members have cast successfully. Can be played on land, too.

## **Save My Child**

You will need 6 pieces of 4-foot long rope per team, a blanket (for indoor game) or a wagon (for outdoor game), and a broom handle or stout stick. The object of the game is to tie the ropes together to have a rope long enough to throw to someone out about 15 feet away and pull them to safety. One boy sits on the blanket or in the wagon and waits for his team to tie the ropes together using square knots or sheet bends. Once the rope is thrown to the waiting boy, he must

tie a bowline in the end while the other boys tie a clove hitch around the stick. All pulling must be done on the stick and not the rope. The first team to pull the boy to safety with all the knots properly tied wins.

### **Human Knot**

Up to twelve people stand in a circle. Each would first put in their right hand and hold with another one (not adjacent to you). Then put in the left hand hold with another one (not adjacent to you). You must get the group untied without letting go of hands.

### **Knot Step Contest**

Line up the Webelos at one end of the room. Each is given a 6-foot length of rope. Call out the name of a knot. Each Webelos ties the knot. Judges check the knot. Each Webelos who tied the knot correctly can take one step forward. The process is repeated until a Webelos is across the finish line.

### **Square Knot Relay**

Divide the den into two teams. Give each boy a piece of rope. At the signal, the first boy runs down to a rope lying on the ground, ties his piece to the end using a square knot or sheet bend, and returns. Each boy repeats in turn. The first team to successfully tie all pieces of rope together using correct knots wins.

### **Drop the Knot**

The group sits in a circle with their hands behind their back. One person walks around the outside with a piece of rope. They select someone, place the rope in their hands and say a knot. They then continue around the circle. The challenge is for the knot to be completed correctly before they return to the same place. If the knot is not finished or not correct, the person tying it changes place with them and goes around the circle with the rope. The game can be adjusted according to the knotting skills of participants - either by the range of knots that may be specified or if they are more competent with their knots by requiring the knot to be tied with hands kept behind the back.

### **Round-Robin Knots**

Take the basic eight knots (overhand, square, clove hitch, two-half hitch, bowline, taut-line hitch, sheet bend, and timber hitch) and see who can tie them in 60 seconds or less. Good game that enforces the ability to tie knots.

### **"Champ-Not"**

All the boys form a circle, each with a length of rope. The instructor calls out a knot, and the boys tie it, then drop the rope at their feet when finished. The first one to correctly tie the knot drops out, and then the remaining boys go for it again on signal. This process continues, using the same knot, until only one boy is left, who is then declared the "champ-not" for that knot. (The beauty of this game is that the boy who needs the most practice gets the most practice.)

**Giant Clove Hitch**

Put a pole in a ten foot circle. (In a gym, a volley ball net pole in the middle of the Center basket ball circle works fine.) Hand each end of a thirty foot plus rope to two scouts, and tell them to tie a clove hitch on the pole, without stepping into the circle, and without letting go of the rope.