

# KNOTS

By Oliver Cameron  
with Ole Wik

What knots do you use most often?<sup>1</sup>

I think this is all superfluous, in that there is so much material well written and illustrated about using ropes and tying knots. But there are a few very simple knots that will ordinarily get most of the work done.

## Overhand knot

The basis for a lot of knots is just a simple overhand knot.



## Slip Knot

If you double the end and tie an overhand by pulling that loop up through, you get a slip knot. If you use it as a stopper knot instead of a slip knot, it won't come out, but it will be easy to untie, like shoelace.



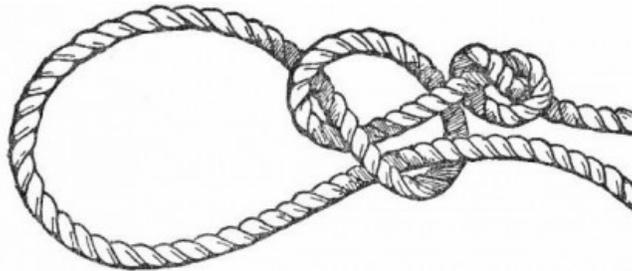
"Slippery" slip knot used as a stopper knot with a boat cleat.

<http://outdoors.stackexchange.com/questions/73/what-are-good-knots-to-know-for-camping-and-backpacking>



With the end and standing part reversed, the slip knot becomes a running noose.

<http://outdoors.stackexchange.com/questions/73/what-are-good-knots-to-know-for-camping-and-backpacking>



Addition of another overhand knot gives you a secure running noose.

<http://www.finedictionary.com/noose.html>

### Slippery Hitch

There's a hitching tie that I use all the time, but it's not a clove hitch. You pass the end of a rope around a tree or a post or whatever you want to fasten it to, and make an overhand knot around the standing line. But again, instead of passing the end of the rope through the knot, you pass a loop.



[http://www.scoopweb.com/Slippery\\_hitch](http://www.scoopweb.com/Slippery_hitch)

Again you get a slippery slip knot, and the slip part just makes the whole knot come undone real easy. The hitch itself is very secure

### Figure of Eight Knot

Then there's the figure of eight knot, which is used mostly as a stopper knot.



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Figure-eight\\_knot\\_\(ropes\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Figure-eight_knot_(ropes))

### Figure of Eight Hitch (Siberian Hitch)

There's another hitching tie that my hand will automatically do if I've got a rope in my hand. Instead of using that overhand knot, it ends up being a figure eight knot.

Suppose you've passed a rope around the left side of a tree, with the free end on the right. You reach under the standing line and get a bight of the free end, which you are still holding. You pull some slack of the free end under the standing line and give it two half twists, clockwise. You pass a bight of the free end down through that loop, and pull it up tight.

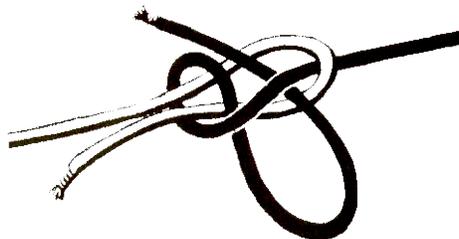
You end up with that loop in a Figure 8 knot with the standing part running through it like a slip knot. It will pull up and hold better in plastic rope. At the same time, it doesn't jam tight, and is easy to get loose.



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siberian\\_hitch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siberian_hitch)

### Slippery sheet bend

You know how to make a net. I use that knot very often, tied in such a way that it is also a slip knot, so I can pull an end and untie it. If I'm working with somebody else and I'm up on a cache and want to pull something up, that's the knot I use to wrap around it and lift it up with.

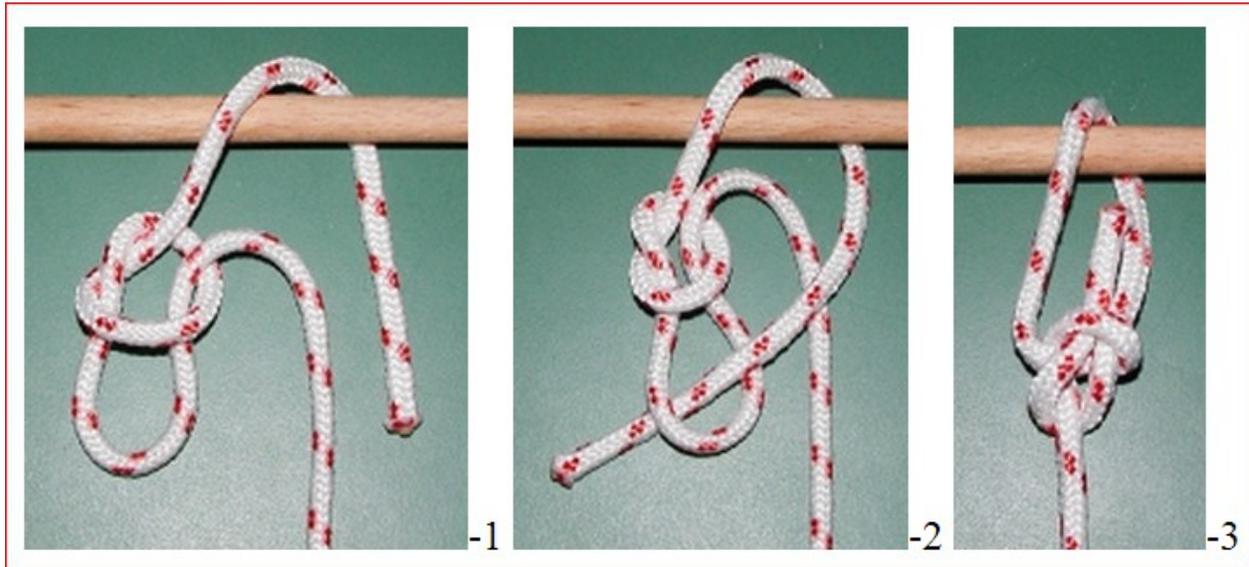


[http://www.retiredscouter.com/gifs/sl/slippy\\_sheet\\_bend.gif](http://www.retiredscouter.com/gifs/sl/slippy_sheet_bend.gif)

## Bowline (capsize method)

You can use any of these knots to tie a rope around a stake, but it's something else again to tie a rope around a dog's neck so it won't pull up and choke him. I use a bowline for that.

It's not easy to tie a bowline in the ordinary way so that you can adjust it up snug enough so that the dog won't get it off over his head. There is a way to do that. I've never seen it used by others unless I have taught it to them. Here's how:



"Capsize" method of tying a bowline around an object.  
Image source: [http://www.southee.com/Knots/Knots\\_SingleLoops.htm](http://www.southee.com/Knots/Knots_SingleLoops.htm)

- 1) In the standing line, make a slip knot. (Form the loop with part of the standing part of the rope, not with the free end.) Pass the free end around the dog's neck.
- 2) Pass the free end back through the slip knot. (You have to go through the bight in the right direction--take note of image 2 above.) Push the part of the knot in the standing line right up against the dog's neck, leaving a little room for breathing.
- 3) Now pull the free end back toward the dog's neck until that bight draws through the knot. The whole thing capsizes, and you'll have a bowline there. (If it doesn't look like a bowline, turn it over and look from the other side.)

## Square Knot

Finally, there's a square knot, which is a package knot.



## Overhand Loop Knot

There is another very simple knot that is based on overhand knot but depends on melted plastic for its grip.



Oliver's melted plastic stopper knot.

### Will it take a lot of tension?

The more tension, the more it will tend to hold. It's important that the knot will lay open, because when you're throwing a noose, it has to draw up freely.

With an ordinary lariat, most people just throw the loop. You'll have the rope coiled loosely in your left hand, and you have the loop hanging open in your right hand. The standing line follows around the edge of your loop about a third of the diameter of the loop. That's what pulls the coils that you are holding in your left hand.

The Sami people, or Laplanders, have a whole different system. They hang onto the end of the rope, but when they throw the noose, they throw the whole rope out. They're working with reindeer that have quite extensive antlers, not cattle with short horns, so they have to have a much bigger loop. I suspect they have to work at a longer range, so they also need a longer rope. Having it uncoil itself in the air is probably a help.<sup>2</sup>

### Do they use the same kind of lariat knot?

I don't know. I've never watched it done. I suspect that they may have a different knot.

Since it's a specialized tool, they may have a lining for the eye that the rope feeds through to make the noose. It's a piece of metal that is grooved all the around, called a honda. Your rope doesn't just keep itself open by itself.



Grooved honda of the type Oliver describes.<sup>3</sup>

<http://www.capitalpunishmentuk.org/wands%20noose.jpg>



Commercial metal Hondas.

<http://www.customcowboyshop.com/ranch%20ropes.html>

How is it shaped?

Like a pear.

Could it be carved out of horn or ivory or wood or anything?

Yes.



Sami lasso slide made from reindeer antler.

[http://www.ice-raven.co.uk/html/saami\\_handicrafts.html](http://www.ice-raven.co.uk/html/saami_handicrafts.html)

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- 1) This essay stems from a series of telephone conversations that Ole Wik had with Oliver between December 2007 and February 2008. Highlighted text indicates remarks made by Ole.
  - 2) Sami-style lasso made of tarred marlin with reindeer horn fitting:



<http://www.tentipi.com/products/activities-equipment/lasso/>

3) This noose was part of a hangman's box at the HM Prison Museum, Rugby, Warwickshire, England. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/nottinghamshire/3596271.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/nottinghamshire/3596271.stm)