Proper Naming

There are actually three distinct methods of tying ropes. A “knot” is a formation of rope around itself. A formation of rope used to join two separate ones together, is called a “bend”, and, a formation of rope used to attach rope to another object such as a cleat, mooring, or pole, is a “hitch”. However, in general conversation, it is common to reference all three simply as knots.

“Line” versus “Rope”

In boating, what are colloquially known as ropes are referred to as lines with very few exceptions. While working near or operating boats, you should typically avoid the use of the word rope and substitute line instead. The difference between the two terms is subtle, but the word rope, refers to the general, manufactured material. Whereas line refers to a piece of rope purposefully sized, cut, spliced, or simply assigned a function; making line a marginally more specific term.

Essential Sailing Knots

**FIGURE 8 STOPPER KNOT**

The figure-eight stopper knot is an easy and quick to tie knot used to prevent a line from sliding through a fitting. It is a good knot which is easy to untie, even after being jammed up tight. However, the figure-eight stopper knot can fall undone with ease if not cinched up tightly, and is a relatively small stopper knot compared to some others.

1. Pass the working end of your line over the standing end.
2. Pass the working end under the standing end.
3. Insert the working end into the formed loop and pull tight.
The square knot is an easy to tie knot used to join two ends of a line, or two lines together. It is useful for tying down non-critical items that do not experience heavy loads, such as sails around a boom. However, the square knot can easily jam or come undone, and as such should NOT be depended upon for important tasks.

1. Tie an overhand knot with the right end on top of the left.
2. Tie another overhand knot; this time with the left end on top of the right.
3. Pull the ends of the line away from each other to tighten the knot.

The bowline is used to make a secure, non-slip loop in the end of a line. Its principle advantages are its resistance to slipping and binding, and its ability to be untied easily, even after heavy loads. Its primary shortcoming is that it cannot be tied and untied when a load is present on the standing end.

1. Make a counter-clockwise loop in the standing end. Pass the working end up through the loop.
2. Pass the working end behind the standing end, and back down through the counter-clockwise loop.
3. Snug the knot together by grabbing the working end in one hand and the standing end in the other and pulling them apart.
The clove hitch is an easily tied and easily adjustable hitch. However, the clove hitch, is prone to slipping under heavy loads when used alone. It should not be used when safety or holding strength is paramount.

1. Wrap the working end around the object.
2. Cross the working end over the standing end, and wrap the working end around the object again.
3. Tuck the working end under the crossing you just made.

The rolling hitch is used to secure a line to another line or a pole. There are two common variations of this knot. Shown below is most secure version.

1. Make 2 loops around the object with the working end while crossing over the standing end.
2. Pass the working end underneath the second crossing made.
3. To tighten, pull the standing end of the line towards the first 2 loops made (down in case shown above).
The round turn and two half-hitches is a very secure hitch which is easily untied, even after holding very heavy loads.

1. Wrap the working end of the line around the object 2 times.
2. Cross the working end over the standing end. Tuck into the opening made (forms 1 half-hitch).
3. Cross the working end over the standing end again. Tuck into the opening made (forms a 2nd half-hitch).