

## Knowing your ropes and Knots

### Purpose

Meaningful activity  
 Problem solving skills, spatial awareness,  
 Focus on task for a period of time  
 Dexterity

**Time:** Approximately 30 – 60 minutes,  
 one to one

**Resources suggested** you will need:  
 Short pieces of rope or strips of woven  
 cloth

### Craft

### Knots



Marine. Diagrams on ship construction,  
 parts of ships, knots, tools, flags,  
 a diving suit, etc RMG ID ZBA5163



Bellrope. A decorative bellrope with a loop at  
 each end, worked in crown seppit and  
 square knotting, with Matthew Walker knots,  
 diamond knots and Turk's heads. Early 20<sup>th</sup>  
 Century. RMG ID AAA0099

*To know/ learn the ropes = understanding how to do something*

*At a loose end = being unoccupied. When Loose ends are unattached they are not doing their job.*

*Tying up loose ends"= finalising details. The sailor ties the loose ends fast to make the boat shipshape.*

Knowing your knots is a key aspect of seamanship.

### Activity:

**Step 1:** Tie some knots following the instructions on the next page

**Step 2:** Ask the person with you to untie the knots

**Step 3:** Experiment with tying knots tighter together and looser to see how they hold and what they look like

**Step 4:** Tie multiple knots to create a decorative piece

### Figure of eight knot

The most common Stopper knot of choice for sailors, and the simplest in our knot line-up, is the Figure of Eight.

Originating at sea in the 19th century, the Figure of Eight was first identified as a method to hold down sheet sails. A simple, multi-purpose and efficient knot to prevent lines from slipping through small spaces. The Figure of Eight is a good place to start if you're a beginner, so let's give it a go!

#### Step 1



Pinch the rope so that you have one long around 'standing end' and one shorter 'working end'. The working end is the part of the rope you will be using to tie the knot and the standing end remains in place...

#### Step 2



Take the working end and wrap it one full turn. The working end will be back on the side it started on...

**Step 3**



Take the working end through the back of the top loop...

**Step 4**



Pull tight and...voila, Figure of Eight achieved!

**Reef Knot**

The Reef Knot is an ancient knot that goes back at least 10,000 years. It is a binding knot, to secure a line around an object. It's not generally used for joining two separate lines together, as it's not stable enough under strain. The Reef Knot was most commonly used to 'reef' sails, that is to reduce the surface area of a sail by tying a part of it down. Join us in tying the Reef Knot with our six step guide!

**Step 1:**



Lay out your length of rope...

**Step 2:**



Pass the working end over the standing end to create a loop, right over left...

**Step 3:**



Wrap the working end once around the standing end...

**Step 4:**



Bring the working end over the standing end, left over right...

**Step 5:**



Tuck the working end under the standing end...

**Step 6:**



Pull together, leaving the bottom loop and there you have it!

**Bowline knot**

The 'King of the Knots' is a Loop which made its first appearance during the 'Age of Sail' in 1627, labelled in the book 'Seaman's Grammar' as the 'Boling knot'. It is also believed to date back to Ancient Egypt! During an excavation of the Giza Pyramid Complex in 1954, a similar knot was discovered on the rigging of a Solar Ship belonging to Pharaoh Khufu. The Bowline was traditionally used to prevent square sail from being 'taken aback'. This means stopping the sail from accidentally going backwards, in the direction of the masts, by holding the edge of the square sail towards the bow (front) of the ship and into the wind. The Bowline is a strong and secure general purpose knot, which doesn't jam under load and is easy to tie and untie.



**Step 1:**



Create a 'bight', a loop of rope...

**Step 2:**



Create a loop inside the bight.  
The top part of the loop will be your working end and for the following mnemonic the working end will be a rabbit...

**Step 3:**



The rabbit comes out of the rabbit hole (loop)...

**Step 4:**



The rabbit goes around the back of the tree (standing end)...

**Step 5:**



The rabbit sees a fox and goes back into the rabbit hole...

**Step 6:**



Pull through, only passing through the small loop we created in the bight...  
And there we have it, the Bowline!