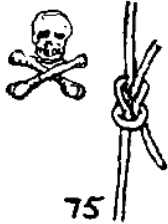


The Square Knot (Reef Knot)

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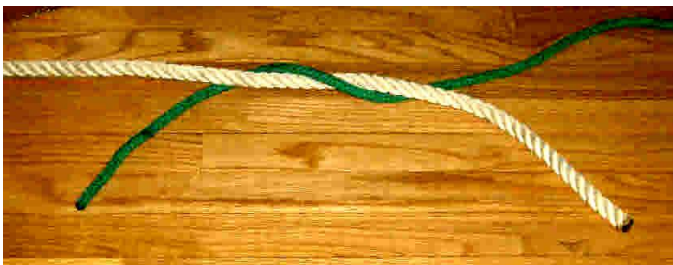
The square knot is for use with both ends of one line. *It is not a secure knot! It pulls out very easily.*



“One of the best but most-misused knots is the REEF or SQUARE KNOT. Employed as a binding knot to reef or furl sails or to tie up parcels, it is invaluable. But employed as a bend (to tie two rope ends together), the REEF KNOT is probably responsible for more deaths and injuries than have been caused by the *failure of all other knots combined.*”

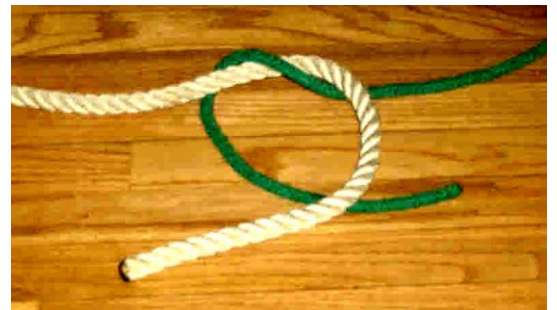
The Ashley Book of Knots, p. 18.

1. The square knot is shown here with two different lines for demonstration purposes only. It should only be used with a single line.
2. When used with lines of different sizes it is even less secure than with equal-sized lines.
3. The square knot is also useful for shoe laces. If your laces often come untied, chances are, you are using a [Granny knot](#) instead.



Start the knot by crossing the two lines one over the other twice.

4. Then form a bight (loop) in each line.
5. Keep the line that is on top, on top; the line that is on the bottom, on the bottom. In the illustration the white line stays on top, the green line stays on the bottom.



6. The lines are crossed over each other again.
7. The line that started on top, ends up on top.
8. The working ends (short parts) end up on the same side of the knot (bottom side in illustration).

If you pull both parts of the *same* side away from each other, the knot will collapse into a lark's head or cow hitch knot and can come undone rapidly. This is done when "shaking the reef."

Two less secure variations – the Granny knot and the Thief knot.

The Granny Knot – will untie itself before you blink twice!



Note that the line that starts on top ends up on the bottom and *vice versa*!

The Thief Knot – also unsecure (and difficult to tie by mistake)

The difference between a square knot and a thief's knot is not readily apparent. The difference is that the working ends come out on opposite sides of the knot. (One top, one bottom, below)



Like a Granny knot, the thief knot will shake out unintentionally very easily. It gets its name from its use by sailors to tie up their belongings in their berths. It looks like a square knot. If someone was going through their things and was not observant, they would tie a square knot when done. The sailor would know that their stuff had been messed with! This knot, unlike the Granny, is hard to tie by mistake. [Wikipedia](#)

Note that the illustrations above show two different lines. That is solely for purposes of demonstration. The Reef knot should only be used to tie a line to itself, never with two lines.

The shoelace knot is a reef knot with a bow in both working ends. A variation on the reef knot uses a bow in one end for quick release.

