

Rope Bondage 101

Overview

Bondage and restraint is a common fantasy for many people. Some prefer the struggle and potential for escape, others enjoy feeling of capturing and holding another person in captivity. Rope bondage can be used as a utilitarian restraint used for further play, or as an end unto itself with complex patterns and forms, designed to beautifully captivate a willing participant. This workshop covers safety concerns surrounding rope bondage, rope materials & selection, basic knots, and simple restraint ties. What follows from this base is a comparison between Western and Eastern rope styles along with an example of a Japanese tie. The workshop winds down with some tips and tricks for improving your bondage skills and an overview of resources available in print and on the internet.

This guide is written as instruction to the person applying the bondage, the term partner is used to indicate the person on whom the bondage is being applied.

Bio

I'm a fun-loving rope geek and sex educator who has found a home in the Midwest United States kink community. When I'm not traveling to events, I contribute to the Iowa State University CUFFS group, and serve on the board of Minneapolis TNG group Min-KY. Although I'm a relatively new member of the scene, I've presented at numerous events across the country, including Kinky Kollege, Shibaricon, Denver Bound, and Beyond Leather.

As a presenter, I aim to provide a comfortable down-to-earth learning environment for all genders, orientations, and experience levels.

My long list of presentations, events, and class materials can be found at <http://www.kinkfriendly.org>

Lastly, I am not a medical professional. Evaluate your own risks before participating in any kink activities.

Enjoy yourselves!

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History

Rope has been a tool, toy, clothing accessory, and decoration throughout human history. Its uses are many and varied, but do remember that rope has also been used as a weapon and torture device for many years as well.

What shall we do with a drunken sailor? - This old sea shanty gives us one glimpse of rope use in the past – “give him a taste of the captain’s daughter” refers not to a tasty tryst, but instead to the Cat o’ Nine Tails formed by untwisting a three-cord length of rigging rope into its constituent parts, and often knotting the ends for a little more bite.

Hanging, Drawing, and Quartering – While hanging is still used to this day as a form of execution (as recent world events remind us), far gorier punishments for high treason and regicide have been practiced in the past.

Hojujitsu - This Japanese martial art was created for the capture, transport, restraint, and torture of prisoners and was used from the 17th Century Edo period and remained in practice by Japanese police until the WWII era. Different restraints were used based on people based on their social status or method of transport. It’s also stated that prisoners were retied at various borders to keep the ties of one school secret from those of the next. Torture with rope was also practiced in Japan with restrictive ties, forced kneeling on straws tatami mats, and partial and full suspensions. The tenets of Hojojitsu are functionality, safety, secrecy, and beauty.

Safety and Negotiation

Under the “Risk Aware Consensual Kink” framework, safety considerations are important to communicate during negotiations and therefore both are presented as a single topic. The basic safety rules of kink apply to rope bondage and many volumes have been written on negotiation, safecalls, checking references, avoiding intoxicants, and generally protecting yourself. Please see the resources section at the end of this handout for further introductory material. There are, however, additional safety and negotiation considerations for rope bondage that one should be aware of. This is by no means a complete list, but instead one that has come from personal experience and learning. As I continue to play, this list continues to grow.

Consent – No, this isn’t rope specific. Yes, this is the most important element of any kink or sexual activity. Be aware of the legal definition of consent in your jurisdiction.

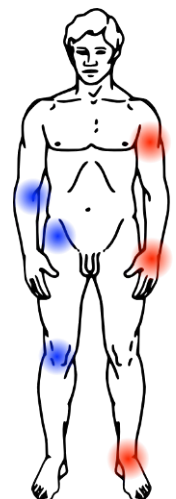
Medical Issues

Don’t Panic – Healthcare professionals are the only ones who should be diagnosing medical problems. What may look like nerve damage could in fact be a sprain whose swelling is temporarily blocking a nerve path. Physicians see all sorts of ailments and there are plenty of kink aware professionals listed by the NCSF. Remember, everyone is responsible for their own health and the health of those in their care.

Circulation – Cutting off the blood supply to a limb and its nerve endings causes numbness in that limb. In everyday life you may experience circulation loss as a limb going to sleep and is normally not an issue. Likely what has happened is the position you sat or slept in didn’t allow proper blood flow and now that you’re up and moving again, feeling will restore to normal. While it is important to restore circulation within a reasonable amount of time, there’s likely no need to worry if your partner still has control of their hands and feet. However, if the numbness is accompanied by pain or inability to move, this is a much more serious issue and must be addressed immediately.

Nerve Compression or Damage – Numbness caused by compressing or damaging nerves is a much greater concern than circulation issues. If your partner is experiencing numbness and is unable to move their extremities, remove them from the bondage immediately. Nerve paths are often exposed near joints where there is less muscle to protect them, for this reason, avoid tying or wrapping on joints, in the groin, on the outside of the upper arm. Damaging these nerve paths could result in permanent loss of feeling and movement in a limb.

Placing bondage on the insides (left) or outsides (right) of joints could lead to circulation and nerve issues.



See the BDSM-Chicago rope safety page for more information regarding circulation and nerve damage:

http://www.bdsm-chicago.com/cram/MED_medical.html

In either case, it is important to restore circulation and nerve function as soon as you know they've been degraded. Watch for extra movement in your partner's hands or feet and when you check in, ask them to move their hands and feet and notify you of any numbness or lack of movement, another good test is to have your partner grab your hand. Numbness and restricted circulation on their own aren't too large of a concern, but when accompanied by pain, they are much more dangerous. This quote from Jay Wiseman sums things up pretty well – "Good Pain Good, Bad Pain Bad"

Asphyxiation / Positional Asphyxiation – Do not tie rope around the front of someone's neck. Ties that produce a similar effect as a halter top shirt may be okay, but never block an airway with rope. Aside from binding the neck, other asphyxiation danger occurs when someone is put in a position that makes it difficult to breathe over time. A difficult position may become fatal if unchanged for long enough. Also remember that gags combined with any play increase risks dramatically due to reduced communication and difficult breathing.

Asthma, Diabetes, Fibromyalgia, and Other Medical Conditions – Stress and excitement can trigger asthma attacks, diabetics tend to have worse peripheral circulation, people with fibromyalgia may not be able to physically bear a position that has been okay in other circumstances... we're not medical professionals and there's no way that we can be aware of everything that may be affecting a person's health. If someone with medical issues has concerns about their ability to play, it's time to consult a physician for their opinion.

Old Injuries & Surgeries – Everyone's joints have had different life experiences. When discussing a rope scene, ask your partner if they have any old injuries or if any positions are uncomfortable for them. Your partner may have slept strangely the night before or recently rolled an ankle that's now tender. Look for surgery scars on or near your partners' joints, because while sometimes they forget about a broken elbow from many years back, their body sure remembers it! Keep in mind that slight modifications to a position may be all that is necessary to continue with a great scene.

Your Partner

Monitoring and Checking In – Never leave a bound person alone. Checking in on the status of your partner regularly will keep your "tied to the cross" scene from turning into a suspension, or worse, asphyxiation, scene. Just like with any other play, someone who has drifted too far into subspace may be a very good reason for you to call your safeword. When exploring any new type of play, bondage or otherwise, set your threshold a bit lower just in case you haven't properly estimated your limits or abilities.

Movement and Escape – Many people enjoy the challenge of escaping from their bondage. Shifting loads and wriggling captives may move some wraps to bad places. So while you're taking notes on what to tie better next time, be aware of dangerous positions and be ready to put the ego aside and say "You win! You're not out yet, but I'm sure you'd make it – I just don't want you to risk your health trying."

Rope marks – The four types of marks commonly associated with ropework are compression marks created by wraps around skin, rope burn from pulling rope too quickly across skin, pinching marks caused by broken capillaries in areas where wraps weren't uniform, and bruising from poorly placed knots. Compression marks go away relatively quickly, these are the same as the pillow marks that show up on your face after a long hard sleep. Rope burn is the same as rug burn, avoid rope burn by using different rope material, slowing down your ties, or holding the rope away from the skin while pulling through loops. Pinching can be avoided by tying more loosely, or by running a finger under the wraps to pull them next to each other. Planning your scene is the best way to avoid knot bruises –create your tie so that the rope ends aren't under your partner if they lay down or are forced into a particular position. As you become more familiar with identifying the various types of rope marks, they will become a great tool in evaluating the safety and effectiveness of your ties.

The Equipment

Inspection – safe equipment is required for safe play. Take time while uncoiling your rope or before adding another length to your bondage to visually inspect your rope. Pay special attention to the center of your rope if you double it up for ties. If one or two of the strands is wearing through, the tension in your wraps might be held only by the remaining strand, effectively reducing your rope’s diameter and strength.

Safety Shears / Safety Hook – Cutting tools designed for EMT and other emergency response professionals are a must when practicing rope bondage. Play partners cost way more than rope, and if you need to get out in a hurry, only a reliable cutting tool will do the trick. EMT shears have a blunt end that can be used for getting between rope/clothing and skin without causing injury. A

good way to test your shears is to use them when cutting new rope to length or refinishing your ends – a clean snip through the full diameter of your rope is a sign of good shears. Safety hooks are another option in this situation, they work on the same principle as shears; however they use a much sharper edge and don’t rely on the scissors motion. A note on knives: Some people swear by knives, but without proper training or handling, knives might cause more harm than good. Use your judgment when choosing which tool is right for your play style.



Enhancing Safety – While there are many safety considerations surrounding rope, keep in mind that combining restraints with other types of play may improve the safety of those activities. For example, whipping requires accuracy within a very small variation of distance and a bound recipient won’t be able to move nearly as far.

The Environment

Food, Drink, and Restroom Breaks – “Sure, hurry up, and don’t pee on my rope!” A healthy equilibrium of hydration, food, and elimination is necessary for a good scene. While thoughtfully requiring your partner to drink a lot of water prior to the scene can make for some excellent humiliation, unplanned interruptions can be harder to accommodate when securely bound.

Environmental Concerns – Rope ends will be flying, heat will be rising, and before you know it, furry creatures are flailing about the play space. Watch out for things in your space that can be knocked over by stray rope such as drinks and candles. As you apply even a simple tie to your partner’s body, they may get surprisingly warm, so remember, as you add rope, you may need to decrease the temperature. Cats love string and all things stringlike. While they may be content to sit on the sidelines of a flogging, many can’t resist the urge to chase your ends across the floor and bed! As always, take care in setting the space for your scene.

Objects – Just about the first idea people get when considering bondage is tying someone to the corners of the bed. This is a very difficult position to escape from and may be too restrictive for someone new to bondage. Also, securing someone to a piece of dungeon furniture or eye bolt in the wall could be asking for trouble if the person is in danger of fainting. Be sure that the furniture isn’t going to tip and that those eye bolts aren’t loose enough to drop your partner if they put too much weight on them. Initial negotiations might require that shears are placed within your partner’s reach or avoiding fixed points and furniture. Suspension bondage is beyond the scope of this document, but be aware that eye bolts typically aren’t installed securely enough or designed to hold the weight required for this activity.

The Tie

Tension – distributing the tension of a tie over a larger surface area significantly reduces the risk of nerve damage and circulation issues. Non-tightening ties incorporating multiple wraps of rope are the easiest way to cover more surface area without increasing the diameter of your rope. Remember, though, that more wraps of smaller diameter rope do nothing to distribute weight or pressure if the tension on the wraps is different. Most rope expands when it’s wet, turning a loose cuff into a vice grip with an extra-tight knot. If you’re working with rope that will become wet (yes this includes sweat), leave additional slack and looser knots to head issues off early.

Blindfolds – Rope blindfolds may put more pressure on a person’s eyes than desired, consider a traditional blindfold instead.

Pinching – while not a tremendous safety concern, pinching can be painful and a real turnoff during a rope scene and may leave more marks than desired. When performing bondage with multiple wraps, be sure not to twist the rope or leave spaces between the wraps.

Plan Quick Releases/Work In Stages – While it’s good to have a cutting tool on hand, it’s also important to know how to quickly release different parts of the bondage. Wrapping someone in 100’ of rope and having to adjust the tension in a particular spot on a tie can become impossible if the bondage were performed with a single piece of rope. Work in stages and add ropes to existing portions of your bondage rather than extend a single piece of rope for an entire tie. This allows for specific sections to be modified without removing everything, and from a play perspective, it allows you to reuse portions of the bondage for additional positions.

Advanced Bondage Topics

The following topics are beyond the scope of this document and are included for reader awareness. Before undertaking any of these activities, seek out instruction and resources that apply to your further interests. All participants are responsible for their own safety, play within your abilities.

Strenuous or Tight Bondage – Some people particularly enjoy using or receiving very tight bondage or being placed in particularly difficult positions while tied. Due to the nerve and circulation issues involved in such ties, it is recommended that extra care be taken and additional references be taken into account when exploring this type of play.

Long-Term Restraint – People’s bodies have different limits. The duration of basic bondage is generally no more than two hours, but some enjoy being tied for longer lengths of time. Joints and muscles can cramp over time and may need special attention when being untied. Refer to Jay Wiseman’s Erotic Bondage Handbook for information on monitoring these situations.

Self Bondage – Many people enjoy binding themselves or may not have a partner to participate in bondage with. While there are many resources for ties available online, be aware that things can go very wrong in isolation. When playing alone please consider setting up a safecall for yourself.

Suspension – While some ties in this document can be load bearing, far more secure ties and additional knowledge are required before anyone should engage in suspension bondage. *I cannot responsibly teach suspension bondage on paper or in a large group, nor do I feel comfortable instructing individuals in suspension as I’ve still got plenty to learn myself! Incorrectly performed suspension runs the risk of failing every one of the above safety concerns and is considered edge play. Please seek individual or small group instruction from an experienced bondage practitioner before attempting to recreate or invent any suspension scenarios, this instruction can be obtained at many of the events and workshops listed in the events section of this handout.*

Know Your Rope

Rope comes in many different shapes, sizes, and materials – here are some basics.

Anatomy – Unless you’re a magician, your rope has two ends and a middle. If you fold your rope over so that both ends are touching, the loop made at the middle of the rope is called the bight.

Material – Over time, rope has been made of many different materials including fibrous plants (hemp, jute, sisal, cotton), plastics (MFP - multifilament polypropylene, nylon), and even metal (for industrial uses like suspension bridge supports). Synthetic materials are hypoallergenic, very easy to clean, and don’t need special conditioning before their use. Nylon rope from the hardware store is the cheapest and easiest rope to come by. Nylon is white and is usually sold in bulk lengths as well as in packages of 50’ and 100’. While nylon can be dyed a variety of colors, MFP rope can be obtained in a wide variety of bright and deep colors and is great for the color enthusiast. Natural Fiber ropes start life

with a rough and unyielding texture and may require conditioning prior to use in bondage. Some natural fibers such as Jute are adversely affected by water and therefore shouldn't be exposed to bodily fluids with multiple partners. Another consideration with natural fiber ropes is that they may trigger grass allergies with some people. Hemp is a good natural fiber to use as it has high strength and low stretch, and it can also be softened by treatment and cleaned in a washing machine. Some people enjoy the feeling of rough rope, notably sisal rope found in most hardware stores. Be aware that the sisal fibers are stiff and brittle, creating a tendency to leave splinters in the skin.

Length – Aside from diameter, length is the other top question for those new to rope bondage. Much effort has been put toward maintaining different lengths of rope such as color coded whipping or rope and special markings near each end. If you mainly use rope to restrain your partner's hands to the corners of your bed or onto a St. Andrew's cross you can use much shorter lengths than if you enjoy creating rope corsets without adding new lengths every couple wraps. Some will recommend using lengths based on the size of your partner's body, but if you play with many partners or you're not always tying the same part of your partner, you may not have a convenient length. Common lengths for Japanese style ropework are 7m, 8m, and 30 ft. Another rule of thumb is to base the length off of your armspan, thus dictating how many pulls you need to make to pull an entire rope through a loop or tie. (When folded in half, 30' is slightly longer than 2 arm spans of a 6' tall person)

Diameter – The diameter of your rope determines many of its properties, including strength, ability to hold knots, weight, and wrap width. Thinner cord makes for a much smaller rope bag and allows tying of more delicate areas, including genital and head bondage, while thicker rope is reminiscent of damsel in distress "tied to the railroad tracks" bondage. Thicker rope also provides more surface area when wrapping body parts and is less likely to cause nerve compression. Most bondage rope is between ¼ to ½ inch (or 6 to 8 mm) in diameter.

Braided or Twisted – Historically, rope was made with natural fibers twisted into cords, and those cords were twisted together in the opposite direction to make a rope. Most twisted rope uses three strands, and will contain 100% of their constituent material. Braided ropes, on the other hand, are much smoother and have a few different designs whose most notable difference is the presence of a core. Bear in mind that the core of a braided rope may be comprised of unknown materials (identified on the bag or spool as "100% mixed fibers") which can have a different elasticity of the sheath. This can be dangerous as the elasticity difference may affect the tension of your ties. Some people purchase cored rope and pull out the core once the rope has been cut to length, creating a much softer rope that lays flatter on one's skin. Solid braid rope has the same outward appearance as cored rope but is much denser and is made from 100% of their constituent material.

Stretch – Nylon and Polypropylene ropes have a high stretch amount, which means that the restrictive bondage might be slipping and sliding 20 minutes later. On the other hand, natural fiber rope has very little stretch and will maintain its tension for much longer. Climbing ropes vary based on their design and use. are rated for their stretch rate, with some being designed to absorb the shock of a fall (high static elongation) and other designed for lifting a static load (low static elongation).

Burn Rate – Pulling rope through wraps against the skin or around body parts can quickly turn from a sensual slither to a searing showstopper! Natural fibrous materials tend to chafe or abrade when pulled across skin; however, smooth synthetic materials will burn far more quickly and thus are said to have a high burn rate. Run your rope through your fingers when using unfamiliar or new rope – while you're evaluating the burn rate, your partner is squirming in their seat wondering what's going to come next.

Still wondering what to use? Choose toys that you can connect with – Do you love the utility of the nylon you found in the garage? Are you a climber who likes the strength of climbing line? Do you love the earthy smell of natural fibers? Do you prefer rope marks caused by twisted rope? Do heavier density materials (like hemp) feel more powerful than synthetic materials?

Rope Ends

While the bight is pretty straight-forward, people's rope ends are as varied as the people using them. One problem with cutting a rope is that the ends tend to fray if not properly finished and many ways to finish rope have been used over time. Often it is easier to finish your ends prior to cutting your rope, this way the material doesn't fray after cutting.

Knotting – by far the quickest way to finish a rope is putting a tight overhand knot in the end and trimming the excess. This creates small knots on the end of your rope which become very useful in extending your rope.

Whipping – Whipping rope involves wrapping the rope in some type of thread, often embroidery floss to keep the end from fraying. There exist many methods of whipping rope, from very simple wrapping and tucking to “bombproof” methods used by sailors of old. Below is one example of such whipping, many more are available on the internet.

Taping – Wrapping your ends with electrical tape is another quick and simple method to reduce fraying and produces very clean ends, and since multiple colors of electrical tape now exist, you can coordinate various lengths or match your favorite toys. Prior to cutting a new length of rope, wrap about 1” of electrical tape around your rope and cut in the center of the tape – this will result in neatly taped ends with very little waste.

Melting – Melting the ends of synthetic rope creates a solid mass of plastic at the end of your rope which cannot unravel. Often when purchasing bulk rope, an electric “knife” is used to melt through the rope, but you can achieve the same effect by briefly passing your ends over a flame until they start to melt together.

Dipping – Tool dip is a common item on many kinky workbenches and it can also be used to finish ropes. You can dip a U shaped piece of rope into the tool dip, let it dry, and then cut to make your ends.

Material and Finishing Examples



Whipped 6mm Twisted Hemp



Knotted 6mm Twisted Jute



Braided ¼" Cotton With Core



Taped ¾ " Solid Braid MFP



Melted 4mm Braided Nylon w/Core

Knots

If you thought boating school or that pesky merit badge was hard, you're in for a treat! One of the common laments surrounding rope bondage is "I don't know any knots." The bad news is that it can be difficult to tie without knots, but the good news is that very few knots are required for effective bondage. The following four knots will get you very far and you probably know a few of them!

Square Knot – The classic "right over left, left over right" square knot is a really handy non-slipping knot that can be used to tie a cuff that doesn't restrict under strain. Also known as a reef knot.

Overhand Knot – This is the easiest knot to tie and only requires the end of one piece of rope. Overhand knots are the ones that show up in your shoelaces and can be quite difficult to remove. The overhand knot is a small knot that can be used at the end of your rope instead of whipping the ends. Aside from being easy to tie, the small knot is perfect for attaching additional pieces of rope as you get further in your bondage and the slight popping sound of the knot passing under a wrap when you pull the ends of your rope through adds to the fun!



Lark's Head – Never to be used alone as a cuff, this constricting knot is used to attach rope to existing bondage, create rope corsets, and can be used to wrap limbs in such a way as to create many attachment points for further use. If you use knotted ends on your rope, one of the coolest uses of the lark's head is to attach a new rope to the end of another segment.

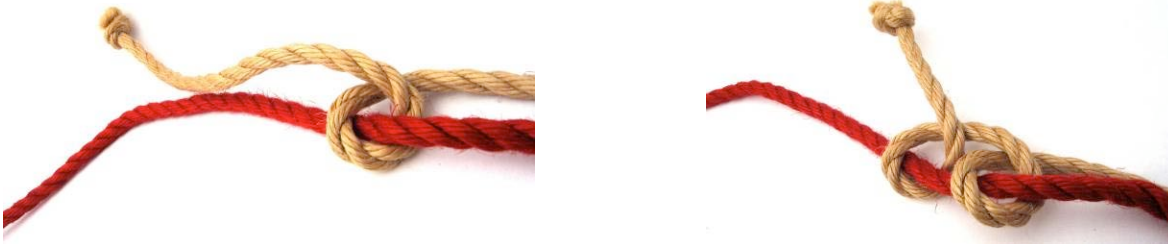


Place the bight behind an object and pull the ends through to create a lark's head.



Create an empty lark's head by folding the bight down and pulling the tails slightly through the bight, then place your additional piece of rope in the lark's head loop and pull tight.

Half-Hitch – used on its own, the half hitch is a quick way to use up extra rope in a tie, and once doubled or tripled, it can be used to hold any rope under tension while still allowing a certain amount of slip for tension adjustment. If you find that two half-hitches are slipping too easily, add a 3rd or 4th since different materials have different amounts of friction.



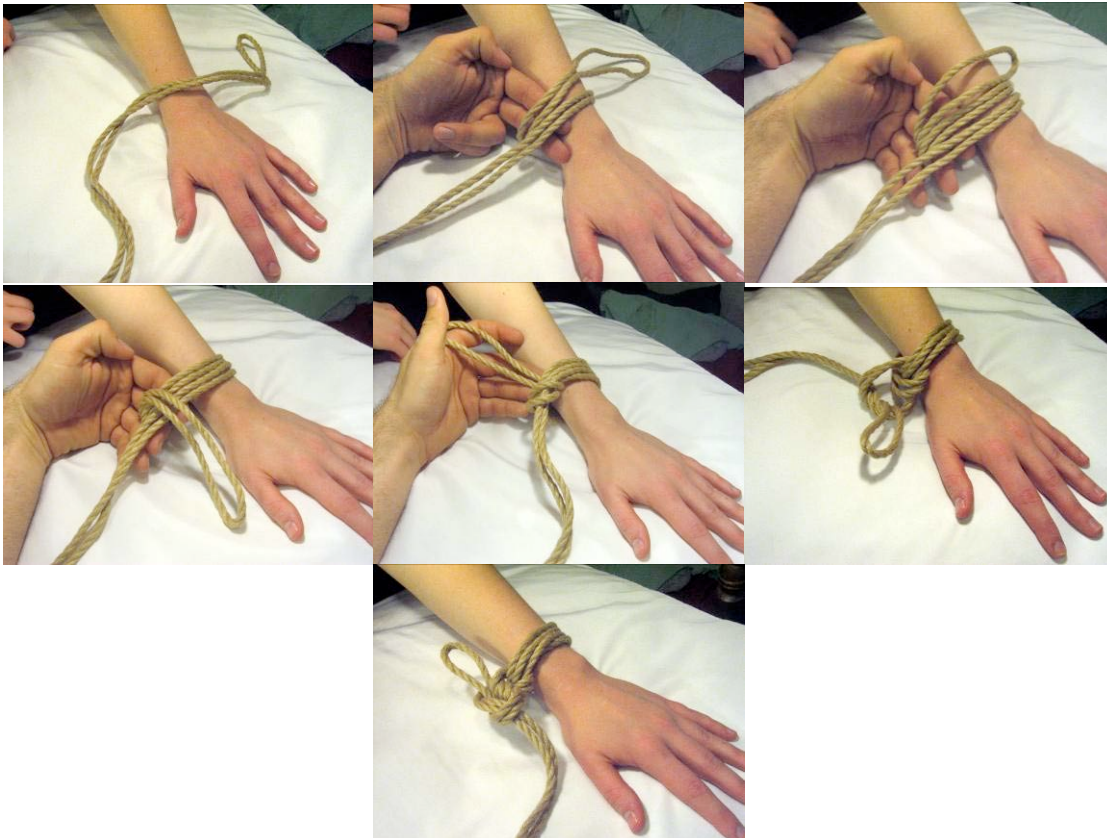
Used singly, a half hitch isn't very effective, but adding another half hitch or two creates a knot that can be used to adjust tension in a line.

When all else fails, wrap and tuck! One of the greatest ways to finish a tie in a pleasing manner is to wrap the remaining rope around some element of the bondage and tuck the ends below the last wrap. Not only does this save the bulk and complexity of added knots, it also adds a nice visual element to the work.

Classic Restraint Replacements

Most rope is cheaper than leather cuffs, and many other restraints are even pricier. Many of the classic restraints used in kinky play can be reproduced with quick and effective ties. Each of these ties starts at the bight and creates a great pulley system to move knots out of reach and provide easy length adjustment once tied. Bodies can be conceptually reduced to a composition of columns. Arms, legs, and torsos are individual columns.

Single Column Tie – Starting with the bight, wrap twice around your partner's arm just above the wrist (1-3). After the second wrap, pass the bight across the wraps (4) and then under the cuff (5). Tie a square knot using the remainder of the bight and the standing line to complete the cuff (6 & 7). Add additional wraps if you'd like depending on your rope's thickness, but remember, steps 4 and 5 ensure that each of the wraps exerts the same amount of force if pulled.



Two-Column Tie – Place two arms parallel to each other and wrap the bight around both limbs twice, leaving generous room between the wrists (1 & 2). After the second wrap, cross the bight with the remaining rope so that they're parallel to the arms (3). Pass the ends of the rope to the other side of the tie and complete with a square knot (4 & 5 – These photographs were taken from below the arms).



Arm Binder – Starting with a two column tie as described above. Wrap the remaining rope around both limbs and pull the ends back through the wrap in the center of the arms (2) cinch the wrap by passing the ends between the arms toward the hands, and pull the end back to the front of the tie to wrap again (3). Repeat steps 2 and 3 with the remainder of the rope and then secure the ends behind the neck with a square knot (6).



Get creative with the two column tie! Imagine various positions possible by aligning different columns. Upper arm to lower arm, upper leg to lower leg, arm to leg, arm to torso, lower left arm to upper right arm... include a second partner and the possibilities start seeming endless!

Style & Approach

For some, the bondage ends here. It's a means to an end – namely, restraint to prepare for additional play. Whether it's waxing, spanking, cutting, caning, whipping, or flogging, many kink activities benefit from physical restraint. This pragmatic form of bondage is enough for most. Further bondage, for the sole sake of bondage can also be an end unto itself.

Eastern and Western cultural imagery have influenced the classic bondage styles practiced in those regions.

Western Bondage – Houdini, Rodeos, Damsels in Distress, Detective Interrogations, Bettie Page, Wonder Woman... these are the bondage images that have infused the United States culture. Classic Western bondage uses single strands of large diameter, white, cotton rope of varying lengths and often involves predicaments, such as being tied to the railroad tracks, drug behind a horse, tied to a log at a sawmill. These images appear in the first movies, early fetish photography, cartoons, and even modern pop culture. Western bondage covers many styles - clean, messy, minimalist, and exaggerated – but the goal is often firmly rooted in functionality.

Japanese Style Bondage – Bondage and waxplay is as prevalent in Japan as whips and chains are in Western kink. With its Hojijitsu roots, Japanese style bondage patterns echo elements of the martial art. Box ties, body harnesses, and full/partial suspensions are common sights in pornography, manga, and hentai. The positions seen commonly in Japanese rope are those of submission and humiliation rather than struggling captives. Exposure and shame are played upon heavily also, as Japanese rope models show faces of sadness and introspection as they're tied, fully dressed, and then uncovered slowly in a shameful manner. Japanese style rope bondage generally uses 7-8m Jute or Hemp rope, often naturally colored, rather than dyed. With presentation and visual style being so important to Japanese culture, even a securely bound body is considered to be a canvas where simplicity or patterns of intricate knots, wraps, and twists form an artistic compliment to an otherwise straightforward activity.

Shibari– Just as paper folding and serving tea have become highly ritualized crafts, so too has rope bondage. This style of formalized bondage is known as Shibari and is practiced and taught in Japan by a number of masters. Shibari ties are thoughtfully designed and executed with beauty, functionality, safety, and a host of additional criteria in mind – reminiscent of Hojojutsu. These patterns are meant to be repeatable and are taught to students with the intent of practice and mastery. While this all seems shrouded in mystery, it's very clear that the concept of Shibari in Japan has a very strict definition that need not be co-opted or updated so that it can include people who have learned their style based on images or videos leaving Japan, or from people who don't have formal training themselves.

Common woes related to rope bondage are “It takes too long!” and “I don't know what to do next!” While great ability in any pursuit takes time and practice, greatness isn't required for to have fun. Remember that you're tying a thing of beauty and desire. Just like the macaroni art you made for your parents back in grade school, any attempt will be noticed. With all of the variations in ropes, bodies, skill, and so forth, it's to be expected that your bondage won't look exactly like the example you've based it on or the idea in your mind's eye. Being flexible, relaxing, and enjoying yourself are very useful in getting the most from your explorations!

Untying and Aftercare

Untying gets its own section since many people enjoy being untied just as much if not more than being tied in the first place! Depending on the material of your rope, the mood of the scene, and tastes of those involved, coming out of the bondage can take many forms. It could be a lingering sensual process, a rough burning one, a methodical examination, an excruciating challenge (have your partner hold the position they were bound in), a rediscovery of one's freedom, an escape artist's trial, or a transition to yet another bound position. Keep burn rate and pinching in mind when untying too, that can definitely diminish the erotic suspense! Limbs and joints that have been involved in bondage can take a minute to recover from positions. Either help your partner slowly return their limbs to a normal position, or let them move at their own pace. This is also an excellent time to massage any stressed muscles or joints as part of aftercare. When coming out of bondage, be prepared for your partner to cool down significantly. It may not seem like clothing, but removing the ropes almost invariably lowers their body temperature.

Storing Rope

Once you're done with your rope for a while, it's very useful to spend a little time keeping it organized for the next time you want to pull it out. Not only does this make life easier for the next play session, but handling your rope can help you build familiarity with how it feels and moves in your hands. Every profession that uses rope or cabling of any sort seems to have its own method for rope storage with strengths that benefit its users – rope bondage is no different. Many people double up their rope and use a chain stitch, this method is outlined on many websites, so I'll skip it here. Two other useful storage methods are:

Tie a slip knot at the bight of your rope and then fold the rope in half until there's just enough length to easily tie another slip knot using the entirety of the rope. This method can be theatrically untied with two snapping motions; however, it's not stable enough to travel well in a toybag without falling apart.



Starting with the ends, wrap the rope in a figure 8 between your thumbs, leaving enough remaining rope to circle your bundle a few times. Tuck the bight under the final wrap to create a quick way to unwrap your rope and get to business! These bundles are useful for storage and general use since they don't easily fall apart.



Tips & Tricks

Pulling rope is much easier than pushing it!

Instead of fishing the rope through a wrap, put a finger through and hook it onto the rope and then pull it through.

Use the big hole – if there's a hole to use, then use it instead of pushing a rope through a cramped space.

Surface tension is awesome, try pouring liquid down a rope.

Create a nice knot by only pulling a small amount of rope through a wrap, then twist the newly created small bight and feed the rest of the rope through it.

Think before adding on – when adding a rope, ask yourself if you'll save a complete pull through if you add after the next wrap, or pass the bight of the new rope through the opposite direction.

If the ends of your rope don't land in a convenient space to add another piece (such as the armpit area), add an additional wrap or two to get your ends to move.

Don't always add to the end of your rope, instead hook into preexisting bondage by knotting on a small loop and fill empty canvas.

When crossing over another rope, add a twist or knot instead of letting the opportunity to embellish and stabilize go by.

“Make a stick” – when pulling rope through a joint or other sensitive area, pull the rope taught between your hands to help it pass more easily.

Portions of the bondage don't have to stand alone, create a body harness and attach an ankle to it with a single column tie, use your imagination to reuse existing pieces.

Start with ideas of where you'd like to take the bondage, rather than feeling like you have to ad-lib each time.

Go GoGo! Yes you want your ties to look good, but spending 50 years wondering what to do next won't help you improve. Try things! It's okay if it fails, you're learning!

Hands are the first thing to go when in bondage, be prepared to perform a temporary tie or find some other way to occupy your partner's hands and tie them last!

Apply constant tension to the rope when tying so that the bondage doesn't fall apart on you.

Remove your shoes so you can feel your ropes under you.

There's no “one true way” for rope bondage. Be safe and responsible, and have fun doing your own thing. Don't limit yourself to someone else's ideas of style or quality.

Rope Resources

The center of the Japanese rope world in the US is DS-Arts - This site is maintained by JimiTatu, educator, lifestyler, etc - his leather resume is impressive and he's been a rope fetishist for a very long time. He's the founder of the AdultRopeARts yahoo group which is frequented by the top internationally known riggers. The list is moderated very well and the conversation stays on topic. The AdultRopeARts group homepage has a great gallery and an EXTENSIVE links section. Most of the following information is available through links listed on the group. <http://www.ds-arts.com>

Books

“Rope, Bondage, and Power” is the first book I’ve been published in! My essay “The Power Of Fluency” explores how one’s familiarity with rope evolves from a toy, into a tool, and ultimately an extension of their will, along with the effects this has on their scenes. The book is edited by Lee Harrington and contains additional works by some of the greatest riggers around the world. While the other books listed here present great technical information, this book explores the personal side of bondage. (ISBN: 1935509020)

Jay Wiseman’s Erotic Bondage Handbook - this book goes over the basics of safety, rope selection, and basic ties. You’ll be exposed to quite a few different knots, but remember that you can get by with a lark’s head and a square knot! I’ve seen copies of this book at numerous Borders’ Stores, otherwise you can get it online at amazon, or directly from Greenery Press, the book’s publisher (Quick plug, Greenery Press has a ton of great books! Jay Wiseman founded the press which also prints SM101, The Ethical Slut, The Topping & Bottoming Books, and many more!) (ISBN: 1890159131)

The Seductive Art of Japanese Bondage - Midori’s book illustrates step-by-step methods for creating some very complex-looking ties. It’s a great confidence builder and will help get ideas flowing for additional ties! (ISBN: 1890159387)

Lee “Bridgett” Harrington’s “Shibari You Can Use” and **Chanta Rose’s “Bondage for Sex”** are great companion books - Lee is very artistic and explains the concepts behind the human macramé harnesses and decorative/clothing aspects of rope, whereas Chanta’s talks about bondage positions for sex and functional ties. Bridgett was featured recently on Rope Weekly and Chanta has been making the podcast rounds as well - check out Rope Weekly and Fetish Flame for the interviews. (Harrington ISBN: 097787270X, Rose ISBN: 0977723801)

“Showing You the Ropes” and the follow-up book **“Back on the Ropes”** by the Two Knotty Boys has a ton of step-by-step ties that are well laid out and easy to follow. Aside from being an informative source, this book is also very reasonably priced. (ISBN’s: 193116049X, 1931160694)

Tutorial Sites

Twistedmonk’s video tutorials cover the single and double cuffs presented in this workshop:

<http://www.twistedmonk.com/video.htm>

Ropofashions has many step-by-step Japanese and Western tutorials: <http://www.ropefashions.com>

Japanrope has lots of beautiful photo-based tutorials: <http://www.japanrope.com>

Kinkyropes.com has many Western style cuff and knot examples: <http://www.kinkyropes.com>

MorTis (the founder of Shibaricon who created Chicago’s rope scene) has plenty of great Japanese style tutorials on his site: <http://www.bdsm-chicago.com>

Vendors

Twisted Monk’s staple is organic hemp rope, but stop by to find a few exotic goodies, books, and hardware as well! <http://www.twistedmonk.com>

Jack Elfrink sells center-marked rope made from many different natural fibers. He’ll happily send you a sample of his rope to use for allergy testing. <http://www.kinkyropes.com>

Rawganique is the importer used by many rope vendors for their untread hemp stock, a minimum order is required though the first-time sample order price threshold is relatively low. <http://www.rawganique.com>

Rainbowrope sells all varieties of hardware, MFP, and Hemp ropes. <http://www.rainbowrope.com>

Boss Bondage is another fine retailer of Hemp ropes. <http://www.bossbondage.com>

Vintage Rope has Jute, Hemp, and a variety of synthetics as well. <http://www.vintagerope.com>

Home Depot, Lowes, Menards - any home improvement store is a kinky person's best friend. You can pick up 200' of 100% nylon twisted rope and cut it into whatever lengths you'd like at a very low cost.

Events

Shibaricon - This annual Chicago event occurs over Memorial Day and was the first large-scale event of it's type. Not to be missed, this is one of the greatest rope events in the US! <http://www.shibaricon.com>

Midori travels all over the US and Canada for her rope dojos which sell out very quickly. Check her site for upcoming events. <http://www.ropedojo.com>

JimiTatu, founder of the Adult Rope Arts yahoo group attends many regional BDSM events and is a great teacher. <http://ds-arts.com/>

Max's workshops are held in Seattle on a semi-monthly basis, he walked me through my first suspension and is great at what he does! <http://www.bondagelessons.com>

Lee "Bridgett" Harrington is a prolific rope artist, educator, writer... He can be found at many events and is definitely worth meeting! <http://www.passionandsoul.com>

Denver Bound Workshop – Organized by Robert and Lilly in Denver, CO, this local group meets monthly and hosts a larger event each Fall with presenters from across the US. <http://www.denverbound.com>

MN_Rope – Minnesota Rope meets monthly and has grown considerably since their inception. Their yahoo group is at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/mn_rope

Other Resources

The Ropecast is a semi-weekly podcast on all things related to rope bondage. <http://rope.podshow.com>

Here's an article by Angelene Black on treating rope, this process is well known for creating very nice finished hemp rope. <http://ds-arts.com/RopeArt/FinishingHemp.html>

Fetish images by Lochai: <http://www.kirianwa.com>

Graydancer's Gallery: <http://www.graydancer.com/gallery>

The National Coalition for Sexual Freedom's Kink Aware Professionals List: <http://www.ncsfreedom.org/kap/index.htm>

The following Wikipedia articles are very useful for further background information on many of the historical and general topics introduced above:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whipping_knot

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drunken_Sailor

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rope>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drawing_and_quartering

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hojujitsu>

Conclusion

If you've made it this far, you're well on your way to a lot more fun in the world of rope. Use the resources above to find more information, attend an event, or get some inspiration. The most important thing to remember is that reading is no substitute for doing, so get out there and start tying! Practice makes perfect!

Thanks for reading and have fun!

LqqkOut

lqqkout@kinkfriendly.org

PS: As I attend events, I often point people toward this guide. If you found this information useful or would like to provide input, please send me an email, I'd love to hear from you!