



### 5 Knots Frequently Used in the Woods

Knowing a few knots and what purpose they each fulfil can save hours of faffing around with ropes and tarps. Here Ellie demonstrates 5 knots that we commonly use in the woods: Timber Hitch, Taut Line Hitch, Taut Tarp Knot, Bowline and Clove hitch. As some of the names suggest they can be very useful for putting up tarps but equally useful for setting low ropes courses and rope bridges among other applications.

#### Rope Terminology:

Line - another word for rope

Standing end - the one that is static or being held in place

Working end - usually the shorter end that is being threaded in a specific place to form a knot

Bight - a short pinch, loop or fold of rope

#### Timber Hitch

An excellent knot for being quick and easy to do and release that tightens and is secure under load. As soon as you release the load, the knot loosens easily.

- Wrap the end of your rope around the tree or log you're attaching it to with about 1-2 feet of length extra in the working end.
- Take the working end around the standing end and then thread back around and around the rope that was placed around the tree or log. You need to wrap it at least three times and ideally get to the back of the tree
- Cinch tight

As its name suggests, the timber hitch is great for dragging logs or timber but is also really effective for the first knot on the ridge line of a tarp



#### Taut Tarp Knot

This is really useful for when one end of a rope is secured (for example with a timber hitch) and you want to tie the other end in such a way that the rope gets taut in the process. This is

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especially helpful for the second knot on a ridgeline of a tarp or for a low-ropes course or rope bridge.

- Take the working end around the tree and loop it back around the line you want to tighten
- Pull it tight to the side and then wrap around the back of the tree
- Loop the working end around the line you want to tighten again from the other side now, pull tight to the side and then wrap around the back of the tree



- You could repeat this 'switch back' again as each time it can tighten the line, but two is usually enough
- To finish the knot:
  - bring the working end up to the line making a sort of triangle



- Take a bight of rope and put this through the triangle



- Put your end through the loop and cinch it tight leaving a safe end that if it's pulled it won't undo the whole ridgeline. It is easy to undo as there is no substantial load on the knot.



Alternatively you can do a quick release by ending the knot slightly differently. Instead of putting the end through the loop, you put another bight of rope through the loop and then cinch tight. You can put a short stick in the remaining loop to prevent it coming undone if accidentally pulled and make a quick release knot for when you're ready to take it down.



### **Bowline**

This is a useful knot to attach two lines together for example attaching a guyline onto a tarp tab. Again, this knot is easy to undo even after it has been under load.

- Take your working end through the loop you want to attach the line onto
- Make a loop in your standing end - sometimes referred to as the rabbit hole
- Take your working end down through the loop (the rabbit goes down the hole)
- Take the working end around the back of the lower standing end (the rabbit goes around the back of the tree)
- Take the working end back up through the loop (the rabbit comes back out the hole)
- Cinch tight



### Taut Line Hitch - also known as a channel 4 knot

This knot is a useful adjustable knot for something like a guyline that's anchored by a tent peg. The knot allows you to slide the rope up or down to adjust how tight it is.

- Take the working end around your tent peg
- Hold a portion of the working end still close to the standing end



- Take the working end around the standing end twice travelling down toward the peg end of the standing end, so you have two turns around.



- Then take the working end around the standing end again but this time above the other two turns. Cinch tight.



- This is now adjustable by holding the standing line and pulling the knot up or down

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### Clove hitch

This knot is another useful adjustable knot.

- Make bunny ears or two loops next to each other with a consistent direction (so if you go right over left, do this twice)



- Take the most recent one or the one on top behind the other one (if you do it the other way around it will simply come apart)
- You can then thread a stick through and adjust it



The rope coming out on each side of the knot acts as independent lines, so if one failed or was cut, the other would remain secure.

### Equipment Needed

- Rope
- Trees to practise or tie onto
- Pegs or sticks to act as pegs for guylines / taut line knot

### Invisible Learning

- Specific knots for different purposes

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### Hazards to Highlight

- Standing dead wood when practicing knots and using ropes in trees
- It can be hazardous to leave a rope up in the woods

### Risk Assessment Considerations

These are the risk assessment consideration documents to be referred to for this activity.

- Site risk assessment (specific to your site)

### Links

- [4 Really Useful Knots](#)
- [Rope Bridge Challenge](#)
- [Timed Tarp Challenge](#)
- [Tarp Shelters - putting up and taking down](#)

### Tags

- Timber Hitch, Taut Line Hitch, Bowline, Taut Tarp Knot, Clove hitch, Tarp shelter, coiling rope, guy ropes, knots

