

Knot Terminology

Terminology for ropes and knots is confusing. Knots are divided into broad categories such as *hitches* and *bends*. If you are trying to learn what we have presented here then you may be perfectly happy to call them all *knots*. However, the correct terminology is useful and worth learning:

- **Bend:** Joins two ropes or fishing lines, e.g., [Sheet Bend](#), [Alpine Butterfly Bend](#), [Figure 8 Bend](#), [Ashley Bend](#), [Hunter's Bend](#), [Zeppelin Bend](#).
- **Bight:** Made by folding a piece of rope so that the two parts lie alongside each other. When tied near the rope's end, the parts will be the Tail lying beside the Standing End. A bight can be used to finish many knots - making them easy to untie by just pulling the tail. The term "Bight" does not imply a "Loop" and does not mean the same.
- **Breaking Strain:** The theoretical strength of a rope - derived by averaging many tests of a rope tested under optimal conditions, i.e., when stretched slowly while wound many times round a smooth, large diameter drum. The theoretical breaking strain is rarely (if ever) achieved in practice despite claims made by enthusiastic knot proponents.
- **Dressing a Knot:** Arranging the components of the knot to optimize security and/or strength.
- **Hitch:** Attaches a rope to something, e.g., a **Hitching Post**, dock pole, mooring buoy, anchor, or cleat. Such knots include the [Rolling Hitch](#), [Cleat Hitch](#), [Buntline Hitch](#), [Icicle Hitch](#), [Distel Hitch](#), and [Lighterman's Hitch](#).
- **Kernmantle:** A type of rope construction with a Kern (interior core) protected by a Mantle (woven exterior sheath) – a design that achieves abrasion resistance and strength.
- **Lay:** The direction in which the strands of a rope twist. As the strands progress away from the viewer, if they rotate clockwise like a right hand thread, it is a **Right Hand Lay** – typically used for most three-strand rope. Steel cables are usually laid with a Left Hand Lay - hence the term **Cable Laid**, which is used when rope has a Left Hand Lay. If you have become accustomed to splicing three-stranded rope, splicing a piece of cabled-laid rope feels very awkward.
- **Loop:** Made when a rope forms a partial circle with the ends crossing each other.
- **Round Turn:** Two passes of a rope round an object – to completely

encircle it.

- **Splice:** A knot made using the strands of a rope rather than the whole rope – stronger than ordinary knots and intended to be permanent.
- **Standing End:** The long end - the part not knotted. The standing part lies between the standing end and the knot.
- **Stopper Knot:** A knot in the end of a rope – used to prevent fraying or to prevent the end passing through a hole.
- **Strands:** The major components of a rope – three in a three-strand rope. Each "Strand" is made up of many separate fibers.
- **Tail;** The short end – the part getting knotted.
- **Turn:** One pass of the rope round or through an object.
- **Whipping:** A binding knot used to prevent a rope's end fraying.