

Knot tying is an underrated skill

For most of us, the first knot we learned how to tie was in our shoelaces. And that is where is stopped for a large portion of the human population. Generally, people can't tie knots for anything.

I had a tough time with the shoelace thing. After a session of attempting to tie my shoelaces, usually my feet were tied together, and the laces were one big ball that my grandmother had to attack with scissors and a pocket knife.

My next brush with knot tying skills came when I was in the cub scouts. We had a book, that showed in black and white diagrams, all kinds of fancy knots. If you ever had one of those books, you know what I mean. A kid that still had trouble with shoelaces was never going to master the Prusik Bend or the Sheet Knot from one of those books.

The Cub Scout book did not tell me how to tie a really important knot, like the hangman's knot. I thought that was a really important knot to know because you never know when you might run into something that needs hanging. Our Den Mother, Mrs. Tolan, always got one of her "sick headaches" and ended the meeting early, whenever us boys would practice the hangman.

I believed that granny knots would hold anything, if you used enough of them. Seven or eight grannies could be used as a



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

tow rope for a semi-truck, and I was secure in that knowledge until I got into fishing.

Anyone person who fishes know the importance of properly tied fishing knots. A bad knot in monofilament line means a lost fish. I can't tell you how many times a knot has failed and lost a fish because of it.

Perhaps knot tying has become overwhelming to us as a society. Face it, for most of us with office jobs, or even jobs in most of the trades, knot tying is not something we have to do very often. It is sad really, because knowing the right knot is an important skill to have, for that very moment you need it.

If you want to add a little bit of insult to injury, scientists believe the first knot was not even a human invention. Apes and gorillas are most likely the first knot tyers. I guess even a baby ape knew how to tie his shoes. The knot has been around long before the invention of the wheel.



Knot tying is a skill that must be practiced, and has an important role in an outdoor persons life. (Mark Rackay/Special to the MDP)

It can be very overwhelming to someone like me. A mathematician in Stockholm by the name of Mikael Vejdemo-Johansson led a team of folks to determine how many tie knots are possible.

Their results say there are 177,147 different ways to tie the knot of a necktie. I never could figure out one, the Windsor, so I quit wearing ties unless they had that little plastic clip on them to hold the tie to my shirt.

Tying knots in rope gets a little bit easier. There are only about 4,000 known knots for rope, ranging

from simple to unbelievable. To put this into some easier perspective, knots can be divided into three different categories by their uses.

The first is knots. Basically, a knot is used to tie two pieces of rope or cordage together. Simple as that. Wrap a rope around something carried on the roof of your car, and a knot keeps the two ends together securely.

The second its hitches. Hitches are used to tie a rope around something. Tying up your boat to a mooring at the dock is a good example. You can

also use a hitch to secure a bundle of things, such as a pile of firewood.

The third category would be lashings. Lashings are knots used to tie two objects together, like poles for a shelter or fixing up a broken fence post. You can also lash tarps to a pole when you need a roof from the elements.

Start out by learning a few of the basics and you will be ahead of the game. Learn the overhand knot and the square knot, which you probably already know. Jump into the sheet bend and the bowline and you will have a good selection of knots.

Two half hitches and the taut line hitch will fill most of your need in the hitch department. When it comes to lashings, the round and diagonal lashing will get you through most any situation.

I won't even try to make this a "how-to" column as there is not room, nor do I have the skill set. There are many books with black and white diagrams available to further confuse the would-be student of knots. Ah but we are in modern times and there are resources available to us.

There are scores of videos on the internet but if you have a cell phone, you are in business. Download the free app called Useful Knots-Tying Guide, by Neptune apps. With this app, and a couple of 4- foot sections of rope, you can learn all the basic knots,

hitches and lashings, plus dozens of others you probably did not know even existed.

Countless other free apps are available, but this one gives really clear directions, history of the knot, and its many uses. You can practice these knots at home, in your easy chair, or at your desk at work when the boss isn't around.

For you folks who fish, there are dozens of apps teaching fishing knots as well. Years ago, when I lived in the Florida Keys, I was pretty good at about 30 different knots for fishing and ropes on the boat. I had to learn all of them from black and white diagrams or other people.

This app really makes it easy. I might even finally learn how to tie my shoes correctly, so I don't need scissors and a pocketknife anymore to get them untied.

Mark Rackay is a columnist for the Montrose Daily Press, Delta County Independent, and several other newspapers, as well as a feature writer for several saltwater fishing magazines. He is an avid hunter and world class saltwater angler, who travels around the world in search of adventure and serves as a director and public information officer for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the posse call 970-765-7033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.

TRIATHLON

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lon, which provides national athlete rankings and regulates the distances of each race. Slusarski said the distinction is important, because many athletes who compete in multiple races will only do certified triathlons.

Membership to USAT is \$50 per adult and \$10 per child for the year, or \$15 for a one-day adult pass, and is required to participate this year.

The foundation lowered most race fees this year to help offset the membership cost. Entry fees are \$75 for an individual adult or \$20 for an individual child, \$140 for a regular team or family and \$30 for a youth team.

Race routes differ depending on age. Participants ages 15 and up will perform a 500-yard swim, 22k bike and 5k run. Kids ages 6-14 will have shorter races based on their age group, and mixed youth teams will compete in the age group of the oldest participant.

Family teams are a little different, and allow participants to complete the distance assigned to their age category. For example, the parents would complete adult distances for their events while a 7-year-old would complete the adequate distance for their age.

Swim races will take place at the Montrose Community Rec



A young runner crosses the finish line at last year's race. (Courtesy photo/Montrose Recreation Foundation)

Center, while the bike and run routes travel through neighborhoods nearby.

Slusarski said this creates a fun atmosphere, and "people come out of their houses and have little cheering parties."

She said the event is a great first triathlon for kids, which is fitting as its purpose is raising money to help everyone access recreational opportunities.

The foundation offers multiple scholarship and fee assistance

programs to families and individuals receiving any sort of government aid, such as Medicaid or WIC. Some scholarships cover half the cost of swim lessons or special programs, while others offer discounted family mem-

berships and individual punch passes.

Visit bctri.com to register for the race, and montroserec.com/fee-assistance-program-information for more information about fee assistance and scholarships.



10 SOUTH SELIG AVE MONTROSE, COLORADO 81401 970-249-4226