Rope Bondage 101 (and sort of 102...)  Dominic Tiernan

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Misconceptions about rope bondage

- Rope is always slow
- “Real” riggers only use hemp rope
- You have to be an expert to get started
- Suspensions are the pinnacle of bondage
- There is only one true way
- Rope is only for thin, flexible people

Rope qualities

- Types of rope
  - Natural Fiber – Hemp, jute, sisal, cotton, coconut
  - Better “tooth”, so it grabs better and takes fewer knots to hold securely
    + Tends not to stretch as much or as inconsistently, so recommended for suspension
    + Doesn’t take dye as well
  - Synthetic Fiber – MFP (multi-fiber propylene), nylon, poly-pro, parachute cord
    + Less expensive
    + Perfectly fine for most types of bondage
    - Nylon and MFP takes dye very well, poly pro or mixed material does not

- Common thicknesses
  - 3/8, 5/16, 8mm – These heavier strands are okay for some types of ties. They distribute force across the skin so they don’t cut into flesh and can be more comfortable for some, but can be bulky when you start to knot.
  - 1/4, 6mm – Medium strands are a good general use thickness, and very versatile.
  - 3/16, 4mm, 1/8, 2mm – Light strands are good for delicate work or hojojitsu, but they can and will put much greater pressure on the skin.

- “Normal” or “good” lengths
  - 5 arm lengths (~25-30 feet), 3 arm lengths (~15-18 feet), 2 arm lengths (~10-12 feet)
  - Longer ropes can be useful for certain types of ties (rope corsets, karadas on taller/larger body types, etc.) but you might sacrifice the cool factor a bit when using them.
    ▪ We normally solve this by joining ropes to lengthen/extend them when needed.

Safety

Bondage is never risk-free.

From the Top point of view:

- You are the Top – once your partner is bound, safety is your responsibility. Period. This is a major exchange of power.
  - Never play when you are not at your best, whether from lack of sleep, drugs, alcohol, etc.
- Leave your ego at the door, and do not attempt anything complex you are not well-trained in.
  - You have no power until the Bottom grants it to you.
  - You can go from 0 to intermediate in knowledge in one weekend, but you still need practice to become competent.
  - Master the basics and then get personal training from an experienced person before you try advanced bondage techniques and suspensions, etc.
- Respect and care for your Bottom.
  - Make sure you know your Bottom’s limits, and respect them scrupulously. Nothing will damage you so much in our world as being known as someone who violates trust.
  - Never leave someone in bondage alone.
  - The scene is not over until the Bottom is completely untied – help them out of the rope slowly, carefully stretching the muscles that have been under tension.
- Aftercare – Provide it. It is a time of reconnection and a time to bring your Bottom back to themselves.
This can be critical to a person’s mental well-being. Some people really sink into a different place when in bondage and they need to be reclaimed.

**Know your Bottom**

- Communication is critical. You must enable your partner to tell you things that you cannot know yourself.
  - Have a safe word and a safe gesture set up ahead of time.
  - Lose your shyness, and talk about what you want to do. You may find that just the act of doing so can turn on your partner.
  - Ask what your partner wants, and be sure to build both of these elements into your plan.
- Know your Bottom’s physical condition and health issues:
  - Physical injuries and previous surgeries
  - Bone issues, diabetes, asthma, breathing/cardiac issues, etc.
  - Flexibility
  - Skin temperature – learn what is normal for your Bottom, so you know what is not normal.
  - Be constantly aware of the Bottom’s breathing.
  - Understand the Bottom’s related mental and emotional triggers.

**General rope safety rules**

- Before you start:
  - Check the condition of your rope before you use it. Look for frays, dirt, etc.
  - Body fluids can accumulate on rope, so wash your rope and/or have a set of rope dedicated for use on a given regular partner.
  - Food and water – Physical resources enable you to play, so don’t skimp on them.
- Never use slip knots or knots that can lock down on themselves.
- Remember that changing the Bottom’s position after the tie can change muscle tightness.
- Don’t put a big knot in middle of their spine if you’re going to lay them on their back.
- Emergencies – plan for the worst case.
  - Make sure to have something immediately within reach that will allow you to cut the ropes. EMT shears, hook blade, etc., work for this, but unless they are unusually sharp, this can take time.
  - In an emergency, don’t hesitate – your Bottom’s safety is more important than your rope.
  - Using shorter ropes gives you more options in emergencies.

**Medical concerns**

- Certain nerves and blood vessels need special consideration in bondage:
  - Radial nerve – on the outside of the arm in the valley between the triceps and the deltoid
    - No rope in or just below this valley.
  - Brachial plexus – in the armpit
    - No knots, bulges or joins in the armpit.
    - This area can be impacted by rope OR mere positioning (holding the arm back awkwardly can pinch it over time).
  - Wrists
    - To avoid neuropathy, don’t pinch the nerves in the wrist.
  - Femoral artery – about 4 inches below the groin
    - Do not restrict the flow of blood to the legs.
  - All nerves and veins in the neck
    - Never put rope across the front of the neck.
- Regularly test for restricted blood flow or nerve pinches:
  - Check the Bottom’s skin temperature before and during the scene.
  - Have the bottom squeeze two of your fingers together and monitor the strength of their grip periodically.
If you tie the wrists and ankles last, you can adjust more easily. These areas are most prone to having issues, and prolonged compression can cause nerve damage or numbness.

As with any scene, be aware of STDs and use barrier methods.
- Have a variety for different kinds of contact.
- You can make a dental dam out of a condom.

When doing impact play:
- Only strike big muscles and big muscle groups.
- Never strike the kidneys.
  - Strong blows to the kidney will be painful and may result in serious injury.

From the Bottom point of view:
- Make sure you have a connection with your Top and feel you can trust them; by giving them this control, you are trusting them with a lot.
- To maximize your safety and comfort, work on strength and flexibility training.
  - Warm up before a scene – stretch.
- Be aware of less experienced Tops who do not control trailing rope ends – guard your face!
- You are a person with your own mind and body, your own physical, emotional, and mental needs and limitations. It is crucial that you learn yourself and be able to talk about these things, to give appropriate input to your Top. Be very honest about everything:
  - What you want to do
  - What you are willing to do
  - What you prefer not to do (but might be willing to try)
  - What you do not want to do under any circumstances
  - Your physical capabilities and or limitations
  - Any medical issues that may impact what you want to do
  - Communication is absolutely key.
    - If you do not communicate the relevant details about your medical, physical, emotional and mental state before you begin, your Top will be unable to properly plan for your safety.
    - If you do not communicate issues that are occurring while in scene, your Top will be unable to react and fix those issues. You need to tell your Top if things are feeling numb/tingling/cold.
    - Don’t be afraid to speak up when you think something “off” is happening. Warning your Top before something becomes a real problem will allow him or her to react smoothly to fix the issue before it becomes so intolerable that the scene must be stopped.

- Aftercare – Accept it, but be respectful of your Top as well, and let them know when you are back to being yourself.

R.A.C.K.
- Risk Aware Consensual Kink
- Once you gain experience and understand more about your skills, your reactions, your condition, and how your Bottom reacts, you may – WITH NEGOTIATION – choose to take part in more risky activities … even some of those things that I have said in this class that you should not do (a common example is putting rope around someone’s neck).

Be realistic. We are still part of the real, big, bad world
- There are people who hear about our world and try to join it because they think things will be easier for them or they are real predators.
- For both Top and Bottom: Check references and don’t accept a person’s word without the corroboration of someone you trust, preferably more than one person.
  - Bottoms: There are dangerous Tops, people who play outside their ability, who don’t respect boundaries or are just careless. It is a good idea to get the opinion of another Bottom if possible.
• **Tops**: There are also dangerous Bottoms, people who are not honest about their abilities or what they want and can thus contribute to getting physically or emotionally hurt. If this happens, it can backlash on you.

• Use all of the “keep me safe” skills you have learned as part of a wired world:
  1. Checking references
  2. Meeting in public
  3. Playing at parties or events first, establishing trust before ever meeting alone
  4. Safe calls

**Negotiation**

Items to discuss:

• What medical issues might be relevant to the scene? Flexibility?
• What level of sexual activity are you each looking for?
• How does the Bottom feel about rope marks, and their location (do they need to be able to cover them for work?)
• Are you looking for a very personal interaction, or a distant one?
• Does the Bottom enjoy objectification? Humiliation?
• Does the Bottom enjoy multiple orgasms? What should happen after orgasm?
• How does the Bottom prefer to be untied – emphasize sensuality or speed?
• What level of aftercare is sought? For how long?

**Style and skill**

• PULL rope, don’t push it
• Be purposeful in how you move and place rope:
  o Avoid rope burn
  o Avoid whiplash (the bad kind) – unintentionally hitting the Bottom with flailing rope ends
  o Avoid rope pinches (especially with collars) unless negotiated
• In the scene itself:
  o Have a plan, but allow yourself to modify it (don’t just have a checklist).
  o Connect with your partner whenever possible, physically and emotionally.
  o Find ways to check in with the Bottom that don’t disrupt the scene.

**Your Toy Bag**

• Your collection should include:
  o Rope
  o Safety gear – shears, cutting hook, phone, inhaler, small first aid kit
  o Safer sex gear – barriers, hand sanitizer
  o Non-rope accessories – Carabineers, two-ring device, figure nine ring, panic snaps
  o Comfort gear – Towels, blankets
• The world can be your toy bag…
• Suggestions for rope storage:
  o Rope-wrapping (mark the middle clearly)
  o Chain stitch
  o Roll them up in fabric

**Bondage Styles**

• Western (steel culture) – Usually starts at one end, usually symmetric, has fewer diagonal lines
• Eastern (rope culture) – Usually starts at the middle, may be symmetric or asymmetric, makes more use of oppositional forces
**Some Popular Bondage Positions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box tie (with incorrect wrist position) and Frog tie (the leg position)</th>
<th>Hogtie – wrists tied behind back, ankles tied, both tied together</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Box tie" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Hogtie" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spread eagle – tied to four points</th>
<th>Strappado – arms tied behind back then raised.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Spread eagle" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Strappado" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[leg position (sitting, kneeling, standing, etc) is irrelevant...]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reverse Prayer - for most people, just ...ouch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Reverse Prayer" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ebi (shrimp) – arms tied behind back, ankles crossed then tied together, rope run from ankles around back of neck forcing the body to be bent over (like a shrimp)</th>
<th>Over-arm – arms extended over shoulders or behind the head</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Ebi" /></td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Over-arm" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Double Overhand Knot

One twist... Then a second... ...Tightened

### Lark’s head

Note that both strands on one side are on the same side of the loop containing them

### Square knot

"right over left" "left over right"

Note that both strands on one side are on the same side of the loop containing them

This is just like a square knot... ...but with an extra twist

Unlike the square knot, This knot does not slip or bind badly

### Surgeons knot

"right over left" "left over right"

Note that both strands on one side are on the same side of the loop containing them

This is just like a square knot... ...but with an extra twist

Unlike the square knot, This knot does not slip or bind badly

### Single column – Classic

A cuff of rope...

Wrap the rope around the wrist, ankle, waist, etc, forming a Lark’s head at the front and wrap around the again

Reverse the direction of the lead and wrap around the again

Pull the lead through the bight you formed in step 2

Hook your finger under the band...

and pull the lead up, under the band...

...leaving some space as shown. “Form a figure 4”

Pull the lead down through that open space

Tighten.

Attach to something...
**Somerville Bowline**

A very useful single column that can be untied even if the lead is still tied to something (useful safety feature)

1. Place the bight against the thing to be tied, leaving about 4-5 inches free.
2. Wrap the lead around 2 or 3 times.
3. Cross the lead end with the bight end...
4. ...and then continue wrapping the lead around the bight, once, forming a loop.
5. Pull the bight end under all the ropes of the cuff...
6. ...and up through the loop made by the lead end.
7. Tighten.
8. The lead end can now be used to continue the tie and this cuff can be untied if needed.

**The single column on a running line**

This is great when combined with another single column or Somerville bowline, so that both wrists can be in their own cuffs. This is helpful because most people have different flexibility levels in each arm...

1. Bring the lead up from where it is already tied to something else and lay it on top of the next thing to be tied.
2. Make a loop. In this shot, the line below is coming from something that has already been tied and the line above is the working lead.
3. Wrap the lead around the target once, pulling it through the loop you formed. Keep things a bit loose at this stage.
4. Add a second wrap, again going through the loop.
5. Now take the lead and wrap it around the anchored end and go back up through the loop.
6. Put two fingers between the limb and work the rope loops and tighten things up a bit.
7. Keeping your fingers in place, pull the free lead end to lock things.
8. Completed.
**Double Column**

Wrists to wrist, wrist to ankle, ankle to ankle, ankle to thigh, anything to pretty much anything else...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Start with standard length of rope (about 6-7 feet for wrists). Form a Lark's Head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Place the Lark's Head over the wrists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>You now have a small measure of control over your subject while you finish up. Wrap the double strand around the wrists once or twice. This distributes the pressure across the wrists and helps prevent loss of circulation. Pull the double strand through the loop created in the previous step.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Separate the double strand into 2 individual strands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wrap the individual strands between the wrists and around the other ropes. (Another shot of the same step) Pull them up and around again and pull them tight. This cinches the ropes that go around the wrist, making them snug. Secure your tie by the use of a surgeon's knot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The finished tie... But on upside down... …Put the knot on the pinky side.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7    | ...as far from the fingers as possible. Makes it much more difficult to escape... ;)

**Extended double column**

Good between elbows that can’t touch (which is pretty much most of the time) or ankles (as a hobble)

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Start with the elbows / wrists / ankles / whatever farther apart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do the same thing as above up through the fifth step, placing the knot near one side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>But this time wrap both strands around the rope in the same direction...and keep on wrapping around and around until you get close to the other end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Separate the strands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Run one inside the cuff and one outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tie off with a surgeon’s knot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Load-bearing double column

This one builds on the double column in such a way that the wrists can be tied overhead and tension added without things cinching down.

Start a double column with wrists about 3 inches apart

Once you get to step 5 under “Double Column”...

...wrap both strands around the rope in the same direction

Tighten this so that the center ropes touch each other.

You now have should have two rope cuffs with a little space between the wrist and center lump of rope

Starting from the finger side, thread the lead through this space, on one side, then back up the other side

Run the lead under the top strand

Now, any tension added to the lead will cinch down on the center lump and not on the wrists

Crotch rope

This is just a “single column” around the waist with the trailing end used in an interesting way.

Wrap the rope around the waist, forming a Lark’s head at the front

Reverse the direction of the lead and wrap around the waist again, above the previous wrap

Pull the lead through the bight you formed in step 2

Hook your finger under the waist band from the top and pull the lead, under the band, leaving some space as shown. “Form a figure 4”

Pull the lead down through that open space.

(By the way, up until this point, you have just been doing the standard single-column, but just around the waist...)

Put in a “Happy Knot” if you like. This is just a few overhand knots that will rub against the clit or perineum when your partner struggles

Pull the lead between the legs. This should be a bit tight, but some people like it quite tight.

...up to the back and thread under the waist band

Tie off with a surgeon’s knot or something similar.
**Bikini Harness**

1. **Start with a 30-50 foot length of rope.** Form a Lark’s Head and loop it over the shoulders ...

2. ...above the breasts.

3. Pull the loop out a bit...

4. ...so that you can lift it up and over the shoulders again.

5. This time you settle the loop under the breasts.

6. Tighten both loops until they are snug. There is room for plenty of variation here. You could go for 2 more loops so that you have 4 strands above and below the breasts.

7. Pull the rope through the bend as shown. The whole rope this time, not just a loop.

8. Double back to maintain the tightness of the harness while you go over the shoulder.

9. Place the rope over the top breast cross...

10. ...and then thread it under the lower cross rope. Again, there is plenty of room for variation here - weave it how you will.

11. Then place the rope over the other shoulder.

12. Come around to the anchor point in the back.

13. **You can now pull the rope all the way through and tie off the ends of these ropes to finish the harness OR you can continue so that you also catch the wrists, making this challenging bondage to escape when properly tightened...**

14. Instead of pulling the rope through and tying it off, just pull a loop through to add a wrist catch

15. Place the wrists through the loops.

16. Pull the leading rope around the other rope that are coming from the anchor point down to the wrists, this will cinch those ropes together and make the tie more secure.

17. Pull the ropes all the way through

18. Cross into the bend on the opposite side and pull tight.

19. Then under the wrists again so that they are supported by at least 4 strands of rope. This lowers the stress on the skin so that the Bottom can safely stay in it longer.

20. Pull the rope up to the anchor point and thread through as shown.

21. At this point you may opt to install the 2 ring device (see www.theduchy.com) if you choose not to include the 2 rings, then just separate the strands of the rope...

22. ...and thread them around and behind the anchor point

23. Secure with a Surgeon’s Knot.

24. The finished tie.

**Front shot. Sort of a “lift and separate” kind of effect. :)**
**Handcuff knot (One of several types)**

Pretty much the same as the above, but with more loops...

Start the first loop by pushing the loose end through with your thumb

Pull loop through

With the other trailing strand, form a second loop

Feed the second loop through behind your fingers

Pull loop through

Grab both loops and slowly pull apart. Work the knot

When tight, you have the completed handcuff knot

(The knots need to apply as a belly chain)

To apply the knot you can use it sort of like handcuffs on a belly chain. This is pretty effective.

1. The handcuff knot
2. An overhand knot
3. A surgeon’s knot

The application is shown below with the numbers of the knots as shown.

1. Applying the loops to wrist.
2. Tighten the loops so that one finger can just barely be slipped under the rope
3. Use an overhand knot to “Lock” the cuffs
4. Pull the loose ends very tightly around the waist and
5. Secure the “belly chain” with a Surgeon’s Knot

**Lengthening rope**

Joining one rope to another

Make a larks head on the new piece of rope

Put the ends of the previous rope through the lark’s head

Tighten partially, but not firmly

“Capsize” the larks head to make a square knot

Tighten and continue

**Other great resources**

- [www.theduchy.com](http://www.theduchy.com)
- [http://rhapsodyinrope.com/2012/05/24/curves-ahead-pictures/](http://rhapsodyinrope.com/2012/05/24/curves-ahead-pictures/)
- [http://rhapsodyinrope.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/curves-ahead-pictures1.pdf](http://rhapsodyinrope.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/curves-ahead-pictures1.pdf)
- [http://rhapsodyinrope.com/2010/10/05/all-you-need-is-robe/](http://rhapsodyinrope.com/2010/10/05/all-you-need-is-robe/)