

What Type of Rope is Best for You?

Type	Popularity ¹	Cost ²	Breaking Strength ³ (lbs)	Roughness ⁴	Water Scenes ⁵	Suspension ⁶	Comments		
Natural Fiber	Hemp	★★★★	\$\$\$	600	★★★★		✓	Very popular with riggers worldwide. Has a classic look. Moves more heavily than Jute, something some prefer. Can be dyed, but the colors will be rich vs bright.	
	Jute	★★★★	\$\$\$	200	★★★★		✓ ⁷	Not as strong as hemp but also very popular with riggers worldwide. Lighter and supple than hemp, moves in a nice springy way some prefer.	
	Cotton	★★★	\$	350	★★		✓	Common, inexpensive, light, soft, but still holds knots well. Look for “3-strand twisted”. Avoid “solid core” versions. Takes dye well.	
	Linen/Flax	★★	\$\$	400	★★★★			Very similar to hemp, but softer. It tends to have fewer loose fibers and to be more consistent in appearance.	
	Coconut	★★	\$	80	★★★★★			Extremely Rough. More for torment than confinement. Most people just stop struggling altogether after a little time in coconut rope.	
Synthetic Fiber	Nylon	★★★★	\$	1450	★		✓	✓ ⁸	A very popular synthetic available in many colors. Versions offered by bondage rope suppliers. They have much better tying characteristics than nylon or nylon/poly blends found in hardware stores.
	MFP	★★★★	\$\$	1100	★		✓	✓ ⁸	Very similar to nylon, but Comes in lots of colors. Can’t be dyed at home.
	POSH	★★	\$\$\$	1200	★★		✓	✓	Looks and handles similarly to hemp. Popular for suspension up lines as it is so much stronger than natural hemp.
	Hempex	★	\$	1100	★★★★		✓	✓	Another synthetic hemp substitute. Not as popular as POSH, as it tends to shed.

footnotes on next page

Updates to *Foundations of Rope Bondage*

Continue your rope education by connecting with your local community and by going to TheDuchy.com for updated information.

Footnotes

- 1 Popularity**— This is just general guidance and is a snapshot in time and geographical location. Depending on where and when you read this, things may be different.
- 2 Cost**— The higher cost shown for hemp and jute is if you buy it from a rope bondage supplier and it has already been processed with oils and had excess fibers removed, etc. If you buy it raw and process it yourself, the cost is much lower. The relative values shown are subject to change with time and market forces.
- 3 Breaking Strength**— These numbers (rounded down) are guidelines only and assume lab conditions with new 6mm (¼") rope. There is tremendous variation in these numbers from different manufacturers, so always check the specs from the source you are considering. Note: For liability reasons, it is quite common for bondage rope producers to not publish breaking strength numbers for natural fiber ropes. Sources for the numbers above: rwrope.com, ropeandcord.com, engineeringtoolbox.com.
- 4 Roughness**— This is a proxy for how it will feel on the skin and for how well knots will hold. Rope that is more rough (has more “tooth”) will tend to hold knots better. But if it is too rough, knots will tend to jamb. (Which is why manila rope is not on this list.)
- 5 Water Scene**— AKA “Is this rope a good choice for scenes with water where it might get wet?” When natural fiber rope gets wet under tension, the knots can quite easily jam – work themselves so tight that they become very difficult, perhaps impossible, to untie. For that reason, people normally choose synthetics when water will be involved. Cotton rope however can be relatively inexpensive, so if you want to use natural fiber for a scene involving water, cotton can be a good choice; it is relatively inexpensive. If it gets jammed, just cut it at the knot ... using EMT scissors or other methods that reduce risk when used on a person.
- 6 Suspension**— As printed in the book, this column meant “Does Lazarus personally recommend this type of rope to people who are first learning to suspend?” Meaning my personal views and what I recommend to people when they ask, which is not quite the same as common practice in the community. In the table in this printout, it has been updated to mean “Is this kind of rope commonly used in suspensions?”, subject to the footnotes below.
- 7 Jute**— Routinely used for suspension by experienced riggers around the world, particularly for harness, less commonly for up lines, but you still see it done. That said, Jute has lower strength characteristics, so I personally prefer and recommend posh or hemp, especially for uplines, when someone is first learning to suspend. But this is just a personal choice based on my personal risk profile. Others view it differently and are not wrong for doing so.
- 8 Nylon and MPF**— Routinely used in suspension by experienced riggers around the world for both harnesses and up lines. I use it myself. That said, when learning to suspend, I personally recommend that people choose a rope with higher tooth (posh is my preferred), then, after they practiced and built skill in suspending itself, expand their practice to include more slippery rope. That way they are learning one set of new variables at a time. But it is quite true that many riggers learn suspension with nylon or MFP and continue to use it throughout their life. There is nothing wrong with that.