



a Ryan Brady Photo

From

A Simple Rope System for Tying Down Canoes and Pre-Rigging a Stirrup Rescue

Ralphie G. Schwartz, Esq.
www.northland.edu/oe

Tying down canoes to trailers and vehicles is surprisingly problematic, and one hears horror stories of boats blowing off of these various conveyances as they move along at highway speeds. This is, obviously, a situation with the potential to produce tragic results. We, at Northland College, have come up with a simple method of tying down canoes which prevents them from moving fore and aft, as well as side to side. As an added benefit, the system serves as a pre-rig for a canoe based stirrup rescue system used to assist weakened swimmers into the boat.

It is the purpose of this writing project to take the reader through these simple systems. The author would like to thank Amanda Bartlett for taking the digital photos that accompany the text, and Mary Silver, Jami Turner, Angela Vlies, and Joel Light for demonstrating the techniques described.

Part 1, The Tie down System

(Throughout this writing, I am assuming that the reader can either tie basic knots, or can find out how to do so from another source.)



We use 15' of 5/16" braided nylon, purchased in a local hardware store. We start by forming a loop in one end, sized to easily accommodate a large foot. We use a standard Bowline, finished with a Yosemite tie-off (as described by Setnicka, and Padgett & Smith). In this rope, with its fairly firm hand, this knot and tie-off offer outstanding stability. Any knot which forms a *'permanent'* loop, such as a figure of 8 on a bight, would work equally well.



The lines are attached to the bow and stern grab thwarts with a simple Girth Hitch. Simply pass the loop around the thwart, pass the other end through that loop, and dress it down. The finished knot should look like the one pictured here. Be sure to perform a visual check to ensure that the loop does not hang up on the Bowline and fail to seat properly.



Beginning at the bow, pass the rope back to the cross-tree as shown, and work it snug. Two wraps (a 'round turn') are better than one, and they should be as close as possible to the gunwale (this one could be a little closer). Finish by passing the line over the hull.



Like most boaters who tie down with rope, we use the 'Trucker's Hitch.' Start by forming a Slip Figure of 8 knot to render a loop, as shown. We prefer the Figure of 8 version over the Overhand knot version because it doesn't take such a hard 'set' in wet rope. A Butterfly is probably the knot of choice here, but it is harder to teach, and the difference in performance probably doesn't justify the time spent, when the goal is to get to the water. Experience will show that this knot should be placed either on the chine, or just inboard of it toward the keel-line.





To form the Trucker's Hitch, the rope is passed under the cross tree, as close as possible to the Gunwale, and back up through the loop. The set-up shown here is perfect.



We finish with 2 Half Hitches, the first of which is shown here. While forming the Half Hitches under tension, pinch its parts together as they pass through the slippery Figure of 8 loop, and hold until the hitch is tightened down. We feel that this knot represents a considerable increase in security over the Taut-Line Hitch which is sometimes used. The Taut-Line has a tendency to vibrate loose.



When the bow is tied off, push the boats forward from the rear to remove all slack from the system. Finish by tying off the stern in the manner described for the bow.



Here they are, ready to go, with the tails tucked in and secured.

[Follow this link to part 2: The Stirrup Rescue](#)

© 2003,
Ralphie G. Schwartz