

Quick Release Knots for Tent and Tarp Setup

When I go camping, I often find small lengths of rope or paracord tied tightly around a tree trunk. (See Backyard Bushcraft issue # 5 for information about paracord.) What happened is that a previous camper did not know how to tie good knots when setting up their tent or tarp. Their knots were so bad that they could not get them undone --- so they just cut their cords when they left the campsite. This careless action wastes rope and leaves litter in the woods. In addition, these abandoned ropes tied around trunks eventually will kill the tree because they will slowly strangle the tree as it grows. (I always remove them when I find them for these reasons.)

Even when they are tied well, knots used for setting up a tent or tarp sometimes can be difficult to undo. This problem is especially common when the knot has become wet from rain or frozen in cold weather. To solve this problem, here are two easy-to-untie knots you can learn and use in your campsite:

Option 1: Easy-release taut line hitch: In the photo below on the left, all Scouts should recognize that it shows a standard taut line hitch. But in the photo on the right, I tucked the running end of the paracord back into the knot when I first tied it. To quickly undo the knot on the right, all I need to do is pull on the tucked running end.



Option 2: Overhand loop knot and stick toggle: In situations where you do not need a taut line hitch, you might consider using a simple overhand loop and stick toggle.

- Step 1: The photo below on the left shows the first step: tie a simple overhand knot loop on the end of your rope. (Note: You also can tie these loops anywhere in the middle of the rope, if desired.)
- Step 2: After you bring the rope around a tree, tuck the rope back up through your tied loop. Insert a sturdy stick as shown in the photo below on the right. When you need to undo this knot, just pull out the toggle stick.

