

Paracord: A Useful and Versatile Camping Resource

During World War II, the U.S. military needed to develop a lightweight and very strong type of rope to use with parachutes. This led to the invention of "paracord" (a short-hand word for "parachute cord"). Paracord has multiple strands of interior nylon yarns which are wrapped with a woven exterior sheath. The military still uses different thicknesses of paracord for various needs, which they label as Type I, IA, II, IIA, III, and IV.

Today, people all over the world use paracord in their homes, gardens, and businesses. Two types (generally called "550 paracord" or military Type II; and "450 paracord" or military Type III) are especially popular among bushcrafters when they go camping. The 550 and 450 numbers refer to the number of pounds the cord can hold before it breaks. For example, 550 paracord is great for setting up tents and tarps, lashing logs together, clotheslines, and numerous other uses at your campsite. Paracord also is used by artists for making many types of creative crafts!

Paracord is available in many different colors. Here are a few examples of my 550 paracord:



Bushcraft tip to practice and learn: When it is not in use, paracord may become tangled and knotted. Instead of storing it in a messy disorganized jumble, try this cool technique. It also works well for storing conventional string or other types of cordage.....

Step 1: If you are right-handed, lay out one end of the cord along your left wrist. Begin coiling the rest of the rope around your left thumb and little finger in a "figure-8" pattern, as shown in the picture below (reverse all this if you are left-handed):



Step 2: Continue making "figure 8s" around your thumb and little finger....



Step 3: Finish the bundle by tying 1 or 2 half hitches. It will look like this. If you pull on the original starting end of the rope, it will uncoil without any tangles. Magic! 😊



Another Bushcraft tip: If you cut the cord, the ends will start to fray. To stop this problem, slowly and carefully melt the ends with a match or lighter flame. Do this outdoors, and do not breath the fumes!

Where to buy it: Here in our area, you can buy 550 paracord at the Tucker Ace Hardware store on Lawrenceville Highway, or at the Intown Hardware store on Scott Blvd. in Decatur. Of course, you also can buy it from online vendors (Amazon, etc.).

Finally, to learn more about using paracord for artistic craft projects, here are a couple of good books. You might like to try these projects at home or while you are at your campsite??? Have fun! 😊

- Lenzen, J.D. (2015) Paracord Critters: Animal Shaped Knots and Ties. BPR Book Group.
- Lenzen, J.D. (2011) Decorative Fusion Knots: A Step-by-step Illustrated Guide to New and Unusual Ornamental Knots. Green Candy Press.