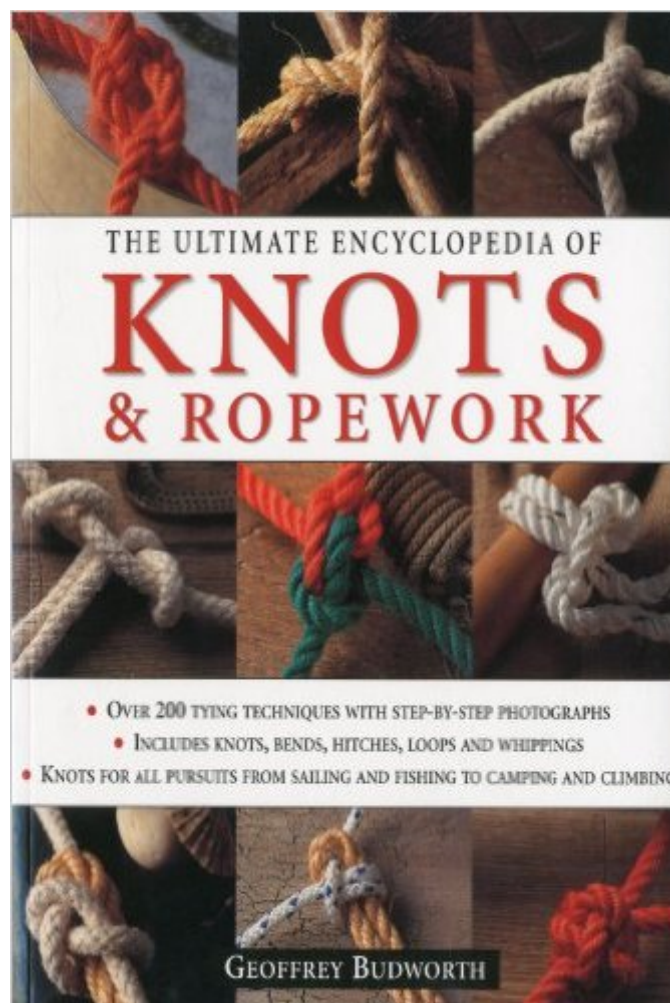


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# The Ultimate Encyclopedia Of Knots And Ropework: Over 200 Tying Techniques With Step-by-Step Photographs



## Synopsis

There are several thousand knots in existence and an almost infinite number of variations of these. This reference manual and practical handbook presents over 200 knots, illustrating how to tie them in step-by-step photographs and clear, detailed text.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Once I had opened this book I was unable to put it down. The illustrations are among the best I have ever seen on this subject, being clear, with correct lighting and delightful colours. The ordered pictures allow one to construct the knots mostly correct first time. In just one or two cases I felt that the final picture was missing (e.g. the Lighterman's Hitch). It was interesting to find that since I read the Ashley Book of Knots some thirty-five years ago, new knots have been invented, which Geoffrey Budworth includes in his book, e.g. the Albright Special Bend, the Cow Hitch Variant, Clinging Clara, the Icicle Hitch (a truly amazing knot) and others. The only criticism I can make is that the background information is, for an Encyclopaedia, rather limited. I shall certainly explore the other works of this accomplished author.

This book contains a very useful collection of knots and ropework. While it doesn't have nearly the amount of knots covered in the Ashley Encyclopedia the 200 presented in this book are practical and up to date. The color photos are excellent and very easy to follow. Geoffrey Budworth also covers rope care, types of rope and some history. The book is a large sized hardcover which makes it easy to have open and lying flat while following the instructions. If you're interested in knot tying

you can't go wrong with this book.

Just as there is no perfect knot, there is no perfect knot book. All have deficiencies of one sort or another. One common deficiency seems to be misleading or just plain wrong directions for tying a knot. Another deficiency is a failure to tell the reader when to use a particular, or more important, when not to use it. All the books suffer these deficiencies to one degree or another. Another deficiency is too many knots! But how could this be a deficiency, one might ask. Isn't more better? The answer is that the beginner needs to know the most useful knots that have the widest application. If the book contains knots that don't have wide application but doesn't tell the reader which ones are widely used and which ones aren't, how is the reader to know which ones to learn? Therefore, for a beginner, careful selection by the author is essential. Budworth, *The Complete Book of Knots* Of all the books, this is my pick as the best for a beginner. What I like about this book is that it contains large, clear line drawings, and for the most part, the layout is pleasing to the eye. Drawings are superior, in my opinion, to photographs. One drawback of drawings is that the cordage you're trying to knot never lies as smoothly and gracefully as the one in the drawings. (This tends to be true of photographs, too, however.) But if you view the drawings more as a blueprint, then you get a conceptual understanding of how the knot is to be tied, and drawings allow a clearer conceptual understanding than photographs in most cases. Another plus to this book is that most of the knots Budworth picked for inclusion are useful and often "best of breed" knots. On pages 6 and 7, there is a "directory of knots" that shows the best or most popular use of each knot. In addition, for each knot, there is a summary called "applications," and occasionally a warning when not to use a knot. A minus is that some of the drawings are wrong or misleading. For example, in the drawing for the double bowline (figure 8 on page 37), the arrow to show how the working end is rove (threaded) through the loops would have the working end going from the top of the loops to the bottom when it should be the reverse. After some frustration and referring to other sources, I was able to tie the knot. (Google is your friend.) A bigger minus is the terseness of the descriptions. In a number of instances, the author assumes you should be able to figure out the process from fewer drawings than I think necessary. I would like it if each and every step in tying the knots were shown. With some effort, I was able to figure out each knot that I tried to tie even though some drawings included several steps in one drawing. But why make the reader work? A book for beginners should make it easy. When I was starting with this book, I thought that it would be helpful if the author included pictures of the finished knot. After about a week, I realized that he did! But they are murky pictures that are either in a small space at the top of the page, above the name of the knot, or serve

as a background for the entire page. There is no excuse for such bad pictures, which mar an otherwise excellent layout. Instead of putting some trivia about the history of the knot in a circle on each page, a clear monochromatic photo in the circle would serve the reader better. The book does not include decorative knots (Budworth having written a separate book on decorative knots). Because of the terseness of the descriptions, the lack of clear photographs of the finished knots, and the occasional errors, I downgraded this book from five stars to four.

**Pawson, Handbook of Knots (expanded edition)** This book contains very clear color photographs, and the layout is quite pleasing to the eye. The problem with photographs is that it can be hard sometimes to discern when one cord is on top of another or below, and sometimes the hand can be hiding some important information. Compounding this is the fact that the book is small in format, and when you have four or five photographs on one page, each photograph ends up being small (say, 1.5" by 2.5"), too small sometimes. Although the book is soft-cover, the binding is stitched, and the book can be opened flat without breaking the binding. I found that it would stay open without much difficulty.

**Pawson**, like Budworth, is a founding member of the International Guild of Knot Tyers. But his choice of knots puzzles me. For example, he has a number of stopper knots but does not include Ashley's stopper knot, which many consider the most important stopper knot. He also does not include any grip-and-hold knot (such as the midshipman's hitch, taut-line hitch, or the Tarbuck knot). This is peculiar in that a grip-and-hold knot can be quite useful. I almost had the feeling that Pawson had decided that he would avoid (when he could) duplicating what Budworth had done. Quite gentlemanly, but not what I want in a book for beginners.

On the plus side, Pawson includes a number of lashings, plaits and sennits, and splices, which Budworth does not. For what it's worth, I was unable to tie the Turquoise Turtle knot following Pawson's description until I watched a video on the internet. Based on the fact that this book uses photographs instead of drawings (particularly in a small format book), the sometimes odd choice of knots, and lack of warnings about certain knot uses, I downgraded this book from five stars to three.

**The Morrow Guide to Knots** This book contains very clear color photographs, and the pictures are larger than in the Pawson book which is helpful. But layout is off-putting. There are typically several pictures on a page, but the picture on the top of the page is not the starting picture; it's the one on the bottom of the page to the left. Like the Pawson book, the book is soft-cover, the binding is stitched, and the book can be opened flat without breaking the binding. I found that it would stay open without much difficulty. I found the choice of knots to be satisfactory in that most of the basic knots are covered. A plus is that several ways of tying a knot is shown for several of the knots. That is always helpful. Another plus is that it covers decorative knots, such as plaits and sennits. This book's depiction of the climber's method of tying

the bowline knot took me an hour to figure out because two steps were (inexcusably) combined into one picture without an explanation. A minus is that the book is outdated. This comment would have come as a surprise to me before I started studying knots inasmuch as many knots are hundreds, if not thousands, of years old. But a number of improvements in knots have been made in the last twenty years, and these improved knots can't be found in a book published in 1981. Moreover, for the Tarbuck knot, the book states that the knot is used by climbers, but climbers have avoided this knot for decades because it tends to damage the kernmantel type of rope used in climbing. Another minus is the paucity of information about the use and misuse of knots. Based on the fact that this book uses photographs instead of drawings (particularly in a small format book), the odd layout, the lack of warnings about knot uses, and the dated nature of the information, I downgraded this book from five stars to three.

**Budworth, The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Knots & Ropework** This book contains very clear color photographs, and the layout is quite pleasing to the eye. Of all the books that use photographs to depict the tying of knots, this is my pick as the best. Although the pictures are small, it's much more step-by-step than the others. In particular, it doesn't suffer from the terseness of Budworth's *The Complete Book of Knots*, and it shows a large picture of the finished knot. (It also correctly depicts the double bowline.) An important plus of this book, given its claim to encyclopedic coverage, is the inclusion of decorative knots. There are far more knots in this book than any beginner would need, and there is a paucity of information about the use and misuse of knots. My copy has an update date of 2002, making it the most recent edition of all my knot books. This book coupled with Budworth's *The Complete Book of Knots* would make a complete library for any beginner. But this book is too much, in my opinion, for the ordinary reader who just wants to learn a few useful knots. The fact that this book uses photographs would normally make me downgrade it, but number of step-by-step pictures for each knot offset that. Based on the fact that this book is intended as an encyclopedia and it fulfills that function very well, I give this book five stars. If this book were intended for a beginner, however, I would downgrade it to four stars because of the sheer number of knots, the lack of guidance to beginners as to which ones to learn, and the lack of warnings about knot uses (and misuses). The number of step-by-step pictures keeps it from going to three stars.

**The Ashley Book of Knots** As an encyclopedic work, *The Ashley Book of Knots* is not suitable for beginners. For knot aficionados, it's a must-have. Based on the fact that this book is intended as an encyclopedia and it is in fact the standard reference work for knots, I give it five stars. If this book were intended for a beginner, however, I would downgrade it to three stars because of the sheer number of knots and the fact that it was published in 1944, which means that it does not satisfactorily address modern synthetic ropes.

**Conclusion** For the beginner, that is, for the

reader who simply wants to learn a few of the most useful knots, my pick is Budworth, The Complete Book of Knots. For an encyclopedia of knots, my pick is Budworth, The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Knots & Ropework. For the knot hobbyist or public library, The Ashley Book of Knots is a must-have.

I've look at a half dozen other knot books over the years, and this is the best one I've seen. Very clear photos of the tying procedures, along with the use of differently colored ropes when more than two ropes are being used, and nice, glossy paper so the photos look great, make this a very visually appealing knot book to just browse, or to seriously learn from. Also the author includes some interesting history when that is known. For example, the prusik knot, now used in mountain climbing, was originally invented by a Dr. Prusik, an Austrian music professor, before World War I for tying broken musical strings together. The book covers 200 different knots. There are knots for every practical need, as well as mainly aesthetic ones such as the "lucky knot" or four-leaf clover knot, which could be used for a keychain fob. For a knot enthusiast, Budworth has an interesting bio. He's appeared on TV and radio, was president of the International Knot Guild, which he founded, and is a consultant on forensic matters relating to knots in Great Britain. Overall, an attractive and well done book on an obscure but interesting craft and specialty.

If it weren't for the good selection of alternative knots and bends that you'd ordinarily need several books to find, I would only give this book one or two stars. He often neglects to state the limitations and general properties of the knot at hand. Also, the photographs are poor instruction with the hands of the tier getting in the way, and the ends of the rope left out of the picture. The author should have stuck with drawings using neat and clean arrows to instruct. Some of the instructions teach the hard way to tie several of the knots. Also, the author seems to be preoccupied with bulky and unnecessarily complex knots that are impractical. Perhaps the author is pandering to a certain breed of mountaineer who doesn't feel safe with their knot-tying unless they use half of the coil of rope in their knot. If you are a reader, I suggest you test each knot with both slippery and regular, wet and dry, and small and large line. Jerk them, and wiggle them, and make sure they're safe and won't jam. The author leaves you unaware.

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