

Privateer Knot

by [TimAnderson](#) on March 17, 2008

Table of Contents

intro: Privateer Knot	2
step 1: Get Leather	2
step 2: Grommet the Sail- first punch holes	3
step 3: Set the Grommet	3
step 4: Cut Some Straps	5
step 5: Start the Knot - twice around the tree	5
step 6: It gets Tricky	6
step 7: The Other Side	7
Related Instructables	8
Advertisements	8
Make Magazine Special Offer	8
Comments	8

intro: Privateer Knot

The privateer knot is the quickest way to tie d-rings or other attachments to a sail.

Zan Armstrong demonstrates how to put grommets on the edge of a sail and tie on cars for a mast track. She uses straps of scrap leather to do the job.

Here's the finished knot, front and back views.

It took us a couple of hours to grommet the sail and tie the cars on this way. The other methods would have probably taken a couple of days. It looks complicated, but after you've done a couple the rest go on really quick.

In his book "*Sailmaker's Apprentice*", Emeliano Marino says: "Use heavy, well-oiled latigo leather, cutting an experimental piece to determine the length you need. No not make the slit too close to the end of the leather, and finish all slides equidistant from the sail edge. This is a salty and durable method." This is the best sailmaking book I know of.



step 1: Get Leather

Zan skins a leather car seat she found in a dumpster.

The leather is good quality, and it's free!



step 2: Grommet the Sail- first punch holes

This sail doesn't have grommets where we want them.
It was made to slide by it's boltrope in a mast slot.

We're putting grommets every 18" or so.

First put a piece of wood under the sail and use a punch to make a clean hole.
The punch is basically just a pipe with a sharp edge, if you'd like to make one.



step 3: Set the Grommet

Put the base of the grommet setting die on something solid.

Put the bottom part of the grommet on top of it. It will fit perfectly in the depression in the top of the die.

Pull the hole in the sail over the grommet and push it down around the grommet.

Put the grommet's toothed washer over the protruding part of the grommet.

insert the grommet setting die into the grommet.

Whack it with a mallet until the grommet is perfect.

Repeat on all the other holes you need to grommet.

If the grommet splits or gets a sharp crease in it, either you're wacking it too hard, things aren't lined up right, or your cloth isn't thick enough for the grommets you're using.





step 4: Cut Some Straps

Using scissors and a knife, cut a bunch of straps that look like this. The wide part of the strap is about 3/4" wide, and it tapers at one end to a tip. The slot is a little under an inch long. Put the straps through the cars as shown.



step 5: Start the Knot - twice around the tree

Start as shown, then insert the pointed end through the car again, going over the strap already there and around through the grommet again.





step 6: It gets Tricky

Insert the pointy end through the slot in the tail as shown.
Poke it back under both layers of strap.
Pull it around and poke it under the top layer of strap as shown.
Pull it tight.

You're done!





step 7: The Other Side

Here's what the other side of the knot looks like.

Congratulations, you've got a nice-looking privateer knot. Now do the rest of them!



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Comments

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oceannavigator says:

Jun 7, 2008. 10:27 AM [REPLY](#)

I'm a sailor, and your explanation was great and salty. Any "sailor that doesn't know about external sail cars or slides needs a power boat. Now, about my mast hoops?



jkyas says:

May 22, 2008. 3:10 PM [REPLY](#)

I'm kind of surprised that you didn't avoid the stitching when punching the grommet holes.

Then again, I'm not a sailor.



Poppa Chubby says:

Apr 17, 2008. 7:27 PM [REPLY](#)

Cool! It took me a couple of times through, but I think I've got it down. Now I'll try to find some non-sail boat applications for this knot (I haven't owned one for years).



wombat7 says:

Apr 1, 2008. 6:46 AM [REPLY](#)

have you actually put that into the mast track? looks like it may go up but not come down. looks like a lot of friction.



TimAnderson says:

Apr 1, 2008. 8:36 AM [REPLY](#)

They work great. These cars slide on the outside of a 'T' section track.

It's a whole lot more convenient than a boltrope in a slot, you can leave the cars on the track when you flake the main down on the boom. And there's a whole lot less friction when raising and lowering the sail.



dchall8 says:

Mar 31, 2008. 5:25 PM [REPLY](#)

Huh? I'm a sailor and you lost me at the word 'car' in the intro. I know what a car is on a boat, but when I saw it in the intro, and then D-rings, I was expecting a cool knot to tie my car keys to the boat. When I got to the end and there was no car keys, I had to start all over again. It wasn't until the third read that I slowed down enough that the light bulb went on.

On my boat the sail goes up inside the mast so the concept of external cars is foreign to me. But even knowing what you were trying to do, I cannot follow the technique from your pictures.



GorillazMiko says:

Mar 31, 2008. 3:48 PM [REPLY](#)

Coolio! That looks hard to master.