



# ROPE CARE GUIDE

Prepared by Rope Rituals

## Introduction And Disclaimer

A rigger's toolset consists of very little: hands, ropes, and the occasional attachments and accessories. Care for your tools and they will not fail you.

Looking after your ropes isn't just about cleanliness and hygiene, it's also about keeping them supple and strong. *Paradoxically, regular use makes ropes softer, but washing shortens their life. It's a balancing act.*

In this guide, we'll share the methods for maintaining, cleaning, disinfecting, and conditioning your ropes.

*Note: natural fiber rope (hemp/jute) is far more fragile and sensitive than cotton, synthetic, nylon, polypropylene...etc. If you know you're headed for messy play, grab a set of cheap synthetics and save your natural fibre ropes for less punishing adventures.*



### Why do we care for our ropes?

- Natural-fiber ropes (jute, hemp) are more vulnerable to moisture, abrasion, UV, and chemical damage than synthetics.
- Wear and unseen internal damage accumulate over time. Thoughtful care extends safe life and reliability.
- Poor care can lead to rope failure in use (especially suspension) or cause discomfort (stiffness, rough fibers).

### Core principles to keep in mind

1. **Minimize exposure to damaging agents:** moisture, dirt, chemicals, high heat, UV.
2. **Gentle handling:** avoid sharp bends, excessive abrasion, pushing fibers.
3. **Balance “use vs rest”:** rope that’s in constant stress or never given recovery time will degrade faster.
4. **Redundancy & safety margin:** even well-cared ropes must be regularly retired; always build in safety factors.

### How often should we practice rope care?

That depends. First, let’s separate the four categories of rope care:

1. **Inspection:** regular inspections to monitor condition of rope.
2. **Cleaning:** removing dirt, dust, and body oils.
3. **Disinfection/sterilization:** eliminating biohazards (blood, saliva, sexual fluids, etc).
4. **Conditioning:** to keep the ropes soft, supple, and protected.

Let’s tackle them one by one.



## 1. Inspection

**Frequency:** Inspect ropes before and after each use.

### **Check for:**

- a. **Frayed or popped fibers (“hairs”):** these are loose strands coming out of the rope structure.
- b. **Hard or stiff spots / localized “dead zones”:** may indicate internal damage or crushing, fraying, or broken fibers.
- c. Hard spots or kinks.
- d. Discoloration or stains.
- e. Unusual odors (indicative of mildew or contamination).

### **Actions:**

- Retire any rope showing severe damage or structural weakness.
- When possible, you can cut the damaged sections and make shorter ropes.

## 2. Cleaning

Your ropes will undoubtedly get dirty. They get dragged on the floor, collect dust and dirt, soak up oil and dead skin from body contact...etc. These are common aspects of rope play and can be dealt with easily.

*WARNING: every wash slightly weakens natural fibres. Only clean when absolutely necessary, and always with the gentlest method first.*

### Option 1: For light dirt and dust

Step 1: Hold a lightly dampened cloth in one hand and run the rope through it with the other. Do not let the rope soak up water. Some use wet wipes or alcohol wipes instead of cloth. Check for chemicals or added fragrances in the wet wipes if you choose this method.

Step 2: Hang for air drying.



### Option 2: Very dirty ropes

**Step 1:** Put your rope in the dishwasher or washing machine on delicate cycle.

**Step 2:** Hang under stress using weights or weighted bags until dry.

**Step 3:** Condition your ropes using our Rope Wax or your own wax or oils (avoid any oils that turn rancid).

*WARNING: cleaning is NOT the same as sanitizing. If your ropes have come into contact with blood or sexual/body fluids, the above options are NOT fixes. See section 3 "Disinfection/sterilization" below.*

### Option 3: Wax or oil contamination:

If your rope has come into contact with oils or wax during play, don't fight it, embrace it.

**Fix 1:** Bake the rope in the oven at a very low temperature (100 – 160c) and let the wax/oil seep into the fibers for 5 – 10 mins.

**Fix 2:** Freeze or chill the rope; this makes the wax easier to pick off.

**Fix 3:** Other methods that use heat (hair dryer, flat iron over baking paper... get creative) to melt the wax and remove it.



### 3. Disinfection/sterilization

Now we're in BIOHAZARD territory: blood, saliva, sexual fluids. Once contaminated, rope must be sanitized before reuse. Never share contaminated rope between partners.

*WARNING: Isolate the contaminated rope from the rest of them to avoid cross contamination. Dropping it back in your rope bag means you now need sanitize all of your ropes.*

#### Option 1: Bleach bath

- In a large bucket of water, add a few drops of bleach and let your rope soak for 30 to 60 minutes. Ideally, you only need to soak the contaminated part if isolated.
- Rinse your rope through regular water to remove any excess bleach.
- Hang the rope under tension to dry. Ideally, hang the rope with exposure to full sunlight (UV is great for killing germs and viruses).
- Wait. Make sure you don't use that particular piece of rope for a few weeks:

#### Option 2: Plan ahead

Not exactly a sanitizing option, but it is, you know?

Don't risk your good jute. Keep a separate set of cheap synthetics or cotton for messy play. Synthetic rope will not get damaged with regular sanitizing and washing, while cheaper ropes, you may not be so sad about having to retire so soon.

Sanitize it in bleach (as above) then clean that rope in the dishwasher or washing machine (delicate cycle). Hang to dry in the sun, and don't use it for a few weeks.



#### 4. Conditioning

Your rope will get dry with use, and the outer fibers will likely become fuzzy. Conditioning restores softness and helps keep your ropes pliable while protecting and waterproofing all of its layers. Having said that, using rope on bare skin also helps preserve it – natural sebum from your skin works just as well as the oil treatments outlined below.

##### Optional: Singeing

Got fuzzy ropes? Time to flirt with fire.

- Use a low/medium gas flame. A kitchen or camping stove works well.
- Starting at one end, hold a section of rope and pass it quickly through the flame at varying angles, two or three times. Repeat this action along the entire length working in short, manageable sections.
- Wipe down afterward with a lightly damp cloth or alcohol wipe to remove soot and then oil your ropes following the below instructions.

*WARNING: make sure to run the rope through the flame quickly to avoid excessive heating. Burnt fibres = weak and brittle rope. If you scorch a section, it must be cut out.*

##### Oiling and waxing

After singeing your ropes or if your ropes are feeling dry or less mailable, consider treating them with your Rope Rituals Rope Wax. Our beeswax/jojoba blend is a classic, but other light, stable oils work too. Use sparingly, a little goes a long way. Rub a small amount into your palm and run the rope through, reapplying when most of the wax is used up. Some also choose to run the rope straight over the puck – its personal preference, but we find this makes our ropes too oily.

*WARNING: Do not use oils that will become rancid with time, or too viscous that it doesn't penetrate the fibers (eg. olive/cooking oils).*



## Additional Tips

### Damaged rope

Even with care, ropes don't last forever. Heavy use (especially as uplines) will eventually wear them down. The important thing is spotting damage before it becomes dangerous.

First off, check your ropes regularly – after every scene while coiling your ropes is the perfect time to do this. Look out for:

- Unraveling or sections of the rope becoming very loose
- Fraying or broken fibers
- Discoloration
- Thinning or flattening areas

If you find damage, cut out the weak spot. Short lengths are still handy for finishing ties or improvising.

*Tip: do not waste your safety shears on this, they're for emergencies only. Remember they are limited to two or three uses at best before they become too blunt.*

### Energized rope

If your rope is twisted and tight – it won't stop coiling itself up or has kinks, this is known as being "energized". This often occurs when your ropes have been tightly coiled or knotted for long durations. It's not dangerous but it is very annoying.

To de-energize:

- Hold rope between thumb and index finger.
- Run along its length with light pressure, letting it spin out naturally.
- Work from the middle outward, repeating in both directions.
- Hang ropes from a height for a few days with enough height to allow the full length to hang. Add a small weight to the ends if necessary. Many riggers store their ropes hung up to keep them de-energized between uses.



## FINAL SUGGESTIONS AND TAKEAWAYS

- Plan your rope play. Think ahead and be mindful about which ropes get the dirtiest. Synthetic ropes make excellent “biohazard” backups and can withstand harsher cleaning. Save your prized jute for the ritual of tying, not for blood or wax splatter.
- Less is more. Avoid cleaning unless absolutely necessary. Use machines and chemicals in extreme cases only (such as sanitization).
- Condition regularly. Think of it as skincare for your ropes. Light singeing removes fuzz, while oils and waxes restore softness and protect fibres.
- Don't over-treat. Your body's natural oils actually help preserve rope. Too much oil will make your rope greasy.
- Inspect your ropes regularly. After or before every use. If in doubt, cut out damaged sections or retire the rope altogether. A dropped model is far more costly than a replaced rope.
- De-energize often. Ropes that coil, kink, or misbehave are harder to work with.
- Always ALWAYS use the least damaging option for cleaning your ropes.
- Store them well. Sunlight, dust, and tight coils are rope's enemies. Keep them in a breathable bag or box, away from direct heat and light, and coil loosely if storing long-term (or even better, hang them).

*Care for your ropes and they will serve you faithfully for many years.*



## ROPE CARE AT A GLANCE – YOUR QUICK CHECKLIST

### Before play

- Choose the right rope for the job (save natural fibre for clean play, synthetics for messy).
- Check ropes for damage: frays, thin spots, discoloration.

### After play

- Wipe ropes with a damp cloth if dusty or oily.
- Coil while checking for wear.
- De-energize by running rope through your fingers.

### Cleaning

- Use the gentlest option: damp cloth → handwash → dishwasher → delicate machine wash (last resort).
- Always hang natural fibre ropes under tension to dry.
- Never clean contaminated rope without sanitizing first.

### Conditioning

- Singe fuzzies lightly with a flame, wipe off soot.
- Apply wax/oil sparingly to restore softness and water resistance.
- Avoid rancid cooking oils—stick to stable oils (jojoba, camellia, mineral).

### Sanitizing

- Isolate contaminated ropes immediately.
- Bleach bath, sunlight, and patience before reuse.
- Better: keep a separate set of cheap synthetics for messy play.

### Storage



- Store out of sunlight and away from dust.
- Coil loosely if storing long-term.

### Golden Rules

- Don't over-clean.
- Don't ignore damage.
- Don't risk safety for sentiment—retire tired ropes.