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## 2-ply Cordage Making Techniques

In this article I will show you three different techniques for making 2-ply cordage; the rope lay, thigh rolling and Finger rolling. You will also find a list of suitable cordage making materials towards the bottom of the page.

2-ply cordage is made up of two fibre strands which are encouraged to twist together with tension to create a cord of considerably better strength than the single loose fibre strands you began with.

Multiple fibre strands are added in as you go to create a length of cordage as long as necessary.

2-ply cordage is excellent for situations where a more refined or load-bearing cord is needed; for some tying jobs and craft work a simple strip of suitable bark or root is sometimes not good enough.

### Starting the Cord Making the 'eye'

Whether you're making a rope or a fishing line, generally all techniques begin with making an 'eye'.

Before you begin it may help to dampen your fibres a little with water, this will often make the fibres more supple and also help you to grip the fibres as you twist them. Rather than dunking the fibres in water I prefer to dip my fingers in water then pull the fibres through my hand to wet them a little.

Begin by holding your length of fibres, not at the middle, but offset. (this is so that when the ends are running short later, both ends do not end at the same time, that would mean we would need to join in new material to both sides at the same time resulting in a weak point in the cord. It is much better to stagger the joins).

Now twist the fibres in opposite directions as shown. Tension will build and the fibres will naturally kink to form a small 'eye', this is the very first twist at the beginning of your cord. If you continue to turn both sides in this way, more twists will be made resulting in a small piece of cordage... Since this is not a very quick or controlled way of making cordage we switch to using a more effective technique from here on. (Three techniques explained below)



## 3 methods for cordage making...

### Technique 1 - The Rope Lay

Mostly used for making thick cord and rope, although I often use it when making relatively thin cordage because it creates a very tight and even string of high quality. (To help with the explanation I have used two different fibres of different colours)

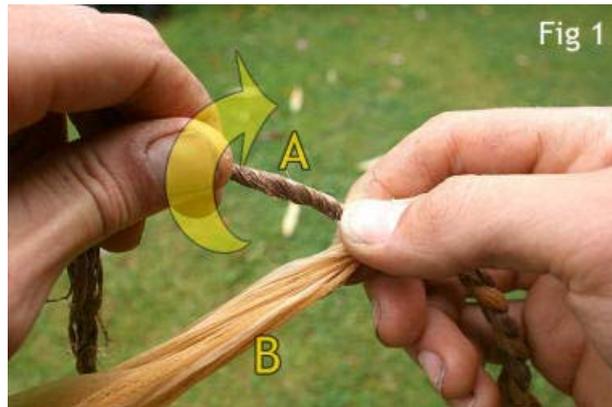
1 - Pinch and hold the fibres at the point where the two fibre strands meet (or at the 'eye' if just starting).

2 - Now tightly twist the strand which is furthest away from you (A), (twisting away from yourself.)

3 - While keeping twisted, bring the strand over strand 'B' so that the two strands have swapped places (Fig 2.)

4 - Repeat with strand 'B' which is now furthest away from you. With every new twist re-pinch and hold the cord further along where the two strands meet. Continue in this way to make the length of cord needed.

**\*Adding in new fibres is covered at the end of the 3 methods\***



With practice you can do the rope lay technique with quite swift finger movements. I find the way shown in this video is easier and quicker...

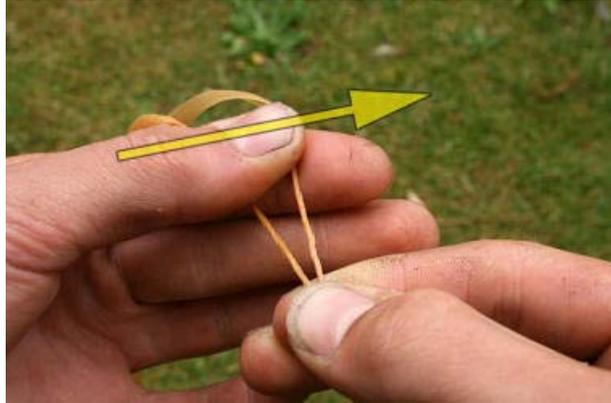
## Technique 2 - Finger Rolling

**An excellent technique for making thin cordage such as a fishing line**

1 - Pinch and hold the fibres at the point where the two fibre strands meet (or at the 'eye' if just starting).

2 - Roll both strands at once along the index finger using your thumb. (the strands must be kept slightly separate to prevent them rolling over each other)

3 - at the end of each stroke, whilst keeping the tension on the strands with your rolling fingers, release the cordage from your non-rolling fingers. You should see the strands immediately twist together into cordage. You can encourage this twisting a little before repeating these three stages again and again until you have made the length of cordage needed.



**Note** - It can be helpful to pre twist each strand first, by twisting them between the fingers or rolling them over your thigh. Moist fingers and fibres give good grip.

**\*Adding in new fibres is covered at the end of the 3 methods\***

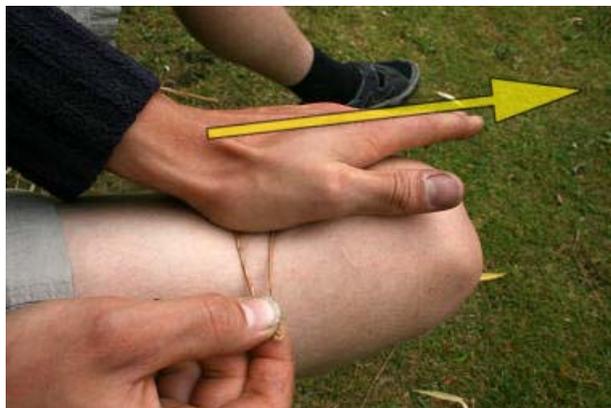
## Technique 3 - Thigh Rolling

**Mostly used to make thin cordage. Relatively long sections of cordage can be made with each roll over the thigh, this makes it a fast technique; ideal for situations where a lot of cordage needs to be made e.g. making a fishing net. (It is usually necessary to use damp fibres with this technique)**

1 - Pinch and hold the fibres at the point where the two fibre strands meet (or at the 'eye' if just starting).

2 - Using the full length of your hand roll both strands at once along your thigh. (the strands must be kept separate to prevent them rolling over each other)

3 - at the end of the stroke, keeping the strands clamped to your thigh, release the cordage from your other hand. You should see the strands immediately twist together into cordage (Fig 3). You can encourage this twisting a little before repeating these three stages again and again until you have made the length of cordage needed.



**\*Adding in new fibres is covered below\***



## Adding in new fibres

New fibres need to be added in when you can feel that one of the two strands is becoming thinner than the other. To make strong cordage of good quality the trick is to keep each strand equal in thickness.

(To help show which is the new fibre, I have used a slightly different coloured material.)

When one of the strands starts to feel thinner than the other, take a new fibre of suitable thickness, add the end in on top of the thinner strand at the point where the two strands meet. Pinch in place, then carry on...



**Example of Poor cordage** - One of the two strands has become thinner and is wrapping around the thicker strand. This results in a weakness because all the strain will be just on one strand.



**Example of good cordage** - Each strand is of an equal thickness resulting in a strong balanced cord.



## Materials Suitable for Cordage Making

### Strong

- Stinging Nettle fibres (preparation - see [here](#))
- Lime bark (retted - see method [here](#))
- Great Willowherb & Rosebay Willowherb (outer fibres - prepare similar to nettle, gather in winter)
- Animal Sinews
- Hair e.g. Horse hair

### Medium Strength

- Inner Elm bark
- Inner Willow Bark ( inner bark - boiled in wood ash & water)
- Inner Sweet chestnut bark
- Honeysuckle bark (Naturally shedding bark fibres)
- Clematis bark (teased or buffed into finer strands)

### Weak - (serviceable depending on use - Use rope lay method)

**Reeds** such as Cattail AKA Reedmace (preferably dried)

#### Rushes

**Grasses** (use long tough grass - thick grass ropes can be reasonably strong)

#### Sedges

## Related Articles & eBooks



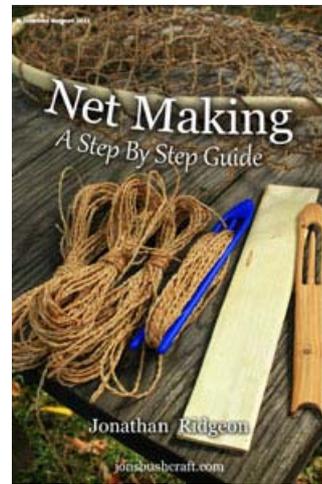
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