How to Tie the Required Scout Lashings (with Practical Uses)

Now, it's time to talk about lashings! Are you curious as to what a lashing is? **It's what we call any rope technique that holds two or more poles together!** Lashings can be used in so many awesome ways. The different types of lashings can even be combined with each other, allowing you to create impressively complex objects and structures!

In this article, we're going to explore every last lashing in the Scouts BSA Handbook. The first three lashings I'll cover are essential to reaching First Class rank, as you're required to both discuss and demonstrate them to advance any further. **Here are the requirements in the words of Scouts BSA:**

3a. Discuss when you should and should not use lashings.

3c. Demonstrate tying the square, shear, and diagonal lashings by joining two or more poles or staves together.

3d. Use lashings to make a useful camp gadget or structure.

While the second trio of lashings *does* show up in the Scouts BSA Handbook, learning those three is not required to proceed to any specific rank. **Still, I'd highly recommend that you get the hang of them!** There are situations where these lashings will absolutely come in handy, and it's so very important to be prepared :)

Now, let's go over a few terms directly related to lashings! **These are just the basics, but they're still essential to know:**

- **Pole:** The "building block" of every pioneering project! Poles are typically made of wood, and they're what you'll use to put your structures together. The ideal strength of the pole depends on the size of the project. When it comes to larger projects, you'll want a tough and sturdy pole!
- **Wrap:** A turn made around the poles to keep them together. The number of wraps required depends on the lashing! For example, the square lashing takes three wraps, while the tripod lashing takes six to eight.
- **Frap:** A turn made around the wraps to hold them together. More often than not, two fraps are required for a single lashing. However, just like with wraps, the number of fraps needed can vary!
- **Spar:** A thick and heavy pole, the type with a high degree of strength! If a thin and weak twig were forced to withstand heavy strain, it would snap in the blink of an eye. That's where the strong and sturdy spar comes in!

TIP: Make sure to skin any spars you use in your pioneering projects! The bark has a tendency to slip when weight and strain are applied. Plus, the structure will look much better without rough and bumpy bark all over :P

Wondering what type of rope you should use for lashings? Well, the answer you get will depend on who you ask! **That said, here are two go-to options for your pioneering projects:**

- Pure manila rope (the best all-around rope)
- Binder twine (an alternative sometimes used in a pinch)

Now that we've seen a couple of ropes useful for lashings, let's talk about the flip side! **Here are a few rope types to stay far away from:**

- Sisal (much weaker than manila)
- Nylon (strong but stretchy)
- Polyethylene (forms kinks under strain)

Certain knots, such as the clove hitch and the timber hitch, are used to start and end lashings. So, if you haven't already, I'd recommend taking a look at ScoutSmarts' guide to Scouting knots! It breaks down all the knots you need to know and gives a detailed overview of each. Now, ready to go? **Let's get started!**

Square Lashing

How to Tie the Square Lashing

The square lashing is used to fasten two poles that are directly touching each other. **These poles typically intersect at a right angle, but the square lashing can be utilized at any angle between 45 and 90 degrees!** The "square" in this lashing's name is a reference to the wraps, which are at 90 degrees to the poles.

Practical Uses of a Square Lashing

Thanks to the way it's designed, the square lashing can withstand both weight and strain. When tied effectively, it can be used to create support frames! Like I said before, the square lashing is commonly used to bind poles at a right angle. So, the shapes it creates will sometimes be rectangular.

There are lots of practical ways you can put the square lashing to use! **Here are a few of the most common ones:**

- Tying together intersecting poles to make a raft
- Binding poles at 90 degrees to create a fence
- Building simple furnishings for a den or shelter

Shear Lashing

Shear Lashing Knot | How to Tie a Shear Lashing

Now for the second lashing on the list! Some call it "shear," and others call it "sheer." Still, while there *is* some debate over the spelling of this particular lashing, there's no question that it's both practical and reliable! Like the square lashing, the shear lashing is strong and can endure great strain. **Best of all, the only materials you need to create it are two poles and a rope!**

Practical Uses of a Shear Lashing

The shear lashing's purpose is to create what are known as "shear legs." **These legs are specifically intended to support weight, making the shear lashing ideal for holding up and bracing objects.** When combined with two square lashings, this lashing can even be used to create an A-frame! The shear lashing would go at the top, the square lashings at the base.

As I'm sure you can see, this lashing is an essential part of the pioneering toolkit! **Here are some awesome ways you can utilize it:**

- Bind poles at their tops to create table legs
- Create firm and steady legs to bear the weight of a sawhorse
- Make a line of shear legs to support an aerial pathway for pedestrians

Diagonal Lashing

Diagonal Lashing

The diagonal lashing's name fits it well, but not for the reason you might think! **The "diagonal" doesn't refer to the orientation of the poles, but rather to the way that the wraps cross the poles' intersection.** This lashing interacts with that meeting point very differently than the square lashing, which makes it exceptionally simple to tell the two lashings apart!

Practical Uses of the Diagonal Lashing

The diagonal lashing is used to close a gap between a pair of poles. **It's the key to putting cross braces on a structure, which in turn keeps the structure's poles from twisting and turning.** You'll often see cross braces at the center of an H-frame, fixed firmly in place in the shape of an X!

Tripod Lashing

Tripod Lashing | How to Tie a Tripod Lashing

Now, let's go over the second trio of lashings in the Scouts BSA Handbook! As I mentioned earlier, learning these next three lashings is not required for advancement. **The tripod lashing is closely related to the shear lashing.** And of course, it's just as practical and useful as the other lashings on this list!

Practical Uses of the Tripod Lashing

The tripod lashing is used to bind three poles in the form of a tripod. The tripod is a commonly used object in Scouting, and for good reason. There are so many situations where it can be put to good use! I'd even say that it's one of the most well-rounded tools in a BSA Scout's toolkit.

Want to see just how awesome and handy the tripod lashing really is? **Here are just a few tasks where it can be put into action!**

- Suspending a pot over a campfire
- Holding up a tarp at a campsite
- Hanging a lantern in midair
- Creating simple scaffolding

Round Lashing

Round Lashing | How to Tie a Round Lashing

Often referred to as the "second form" of the shear lashing, the round lashing is in fact its very own type of lashing! While the shear lashing involves tying together two poles to create shear legs, the round lashing is used to attach two parallel poles to each other. Just remember: **Any time you hear the words "Shear Lashing Mark II," they're talking about a round lashing!**

Practical Uses of a Round Lashing

This lashing lets you combine the length of two poles, greatly extending their reach! **In doing so, you can create impressively tall objects, such as a flagpole.** You can also use it to increase the strength of two poles, binding them together and having them add to each other. It's more commonly used to lengthen than to strengthen, but it works perfectly fine either way!

Floor Lashing

Floor Lashing

Now, here's the last of the lashings in the Scouts BSA Handbook! **This one requires more poles than the others, although the exact number will vary depending on the size and nature of your project.** Thankfully, the amount of rope it takes is pretty small in comparison! I'm going to delve into a bit of terminology for this one, so please bear with me :P

Practical Uses of a Floor Lashing

As its name suggests, the floor lashing is meant for constructing flat surfaces. **It involves a group of poles (called treads) to make up the surface itself, plus two large poles for the platform to sit on (known as stringers).** Of course, the floor lashing is not limited to making *just* a floor! There are tons of other usages as well.

Looking for some practical ways to utilize this lashing? **Here are a few neat projects where you can put it to good use:**

- Making the surface of a table
- Constructing a chair seat
- Building the seat of a bench
- Putting together the floor of a deck

TIP: If you prefer, you can turn to the square lashing when constructing surfaces like these! Some will vouch for the floor lashing, while others will vouch for the square lashing. So, I'd suggest you experiment with each method to decide which works better for you.

Structure Ideas

Now that we've gone over the ins and outs of the six Scout lashings, let's take a close look at two structures we can make with them! The ones you're going to see here are pretty simple, but they're a great way to show the practicality of lashings. We're going to focus only on the use of lashings in each structure, so these will not be full how-to guides :)

H-frame

The H-frame is a type of trestle, and its strong makeup makes it very useful for supporting larger structures. It consists of two vertical poles (the legs), two horizontal poles (the ledgers), and two diagonal poles crossing each other at the center (the cross braces).

The legs and the ledgers are bound together using four square lashings, forming the outline of a large and empty rectangle. **The cross braces go at its center, and they're tied to the legs using four square lashings as well.** And as you probably recall, the cross braces are bound to each other using a diagonal lashing!

Camp Table

Creating table legs with lashings is relatively simple. First, a set of shear legs are constructed by tying together a pair of poles using a shear lashing. Then, the shear legs are bound to a horizontal pole using two square lashings. **This neat little process creates an A-frame!** The table legs are completed by putting together a second A-frame in the very same way.

For the table top, the floor lashing is used to bind a group of poles into a single surface. **The horizontal support sticks on the A-frames serve as the stringers, lashing the table top to the table legs!** Pretty cool, don't you think?

Leave No Trace

Before we wrap things up, let's briefly talk about the importance of Leave No Trace! As I'm sure you know, the principles that go with it are a key part of the Scouting code. It's very important to follow its rules during all outdoor activities, and tying lashings is no exception.

Now, let's put it into practical terms! **Here are just a few ways you can put Leave No Trace into action when it comes to pioneering projects:**

- Use poles supplied by your troop or council camp to avoid damaging natural habitats
- Be careful not to impact the environment if you gather poles from the outdoors
- Disassemble and remove all the structures you create

Make sure to follow these guidelines while planning and carrying out your projects. And of course, please use your best judgment out there! **The benefits you'll bring to the great outdoors are absolutely worth it.**

Conclusion

As you can see, learning a lashing allows you to complete all sorts of impressive tasks. And for every lashing you learn, you'll be able to do that much more. **Once you've mastered these six lashings, you're going to be amazed by just how much you can create!** So, practice hard and study them well. It's sure to benefit you in the long run :)

It's best to think of Scout lashings as an exciting new set of skills to learn, as opposed to a requirement for a rank or a badge. Let yourself have fun with it, and take pride each time you master a new one. **I hope this helped, and thanks for reading!**