

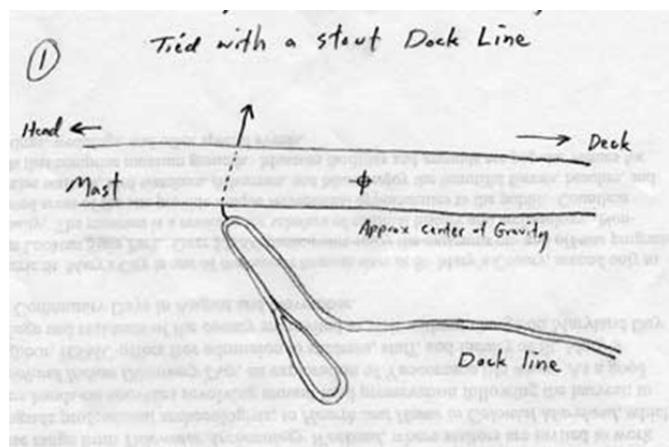
Mast-Sling Knot

W.S. Gates

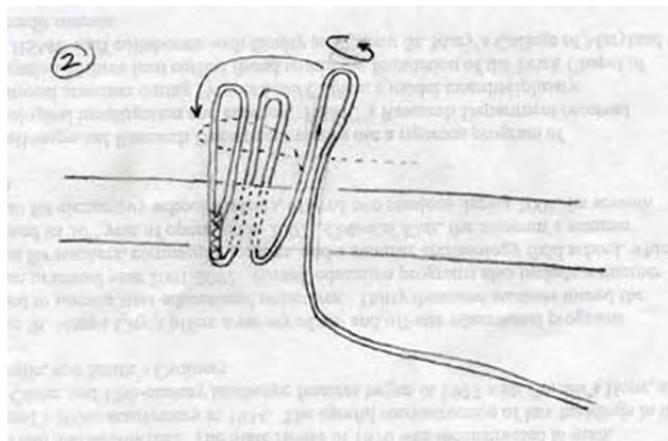
The preferred method of slinging a mast for installation or removal is to use a padded two-eyed or endless strop at the balance point and separate heel preventer to keep the strop from slipping when the mast is vertical. Often, however, the separate strop is not available when needed. Years back I saw Capt. Carl Chase improvise a mast sling and preventer out of a single dock line. Later I had to re-construct the knot in a similar circumstance. I have since used it many times in stepping and removing masts on the Maryland Dove and other smallish vessels. While I would prefer the low stretch and strength of the wire sling and polyester heel preventer for heavy ship's masts, this arrangement works fine for small to larger boat masts where the weight of the mast will not cause undue stretch in the system as the mast tips to vertical.

Instructions:

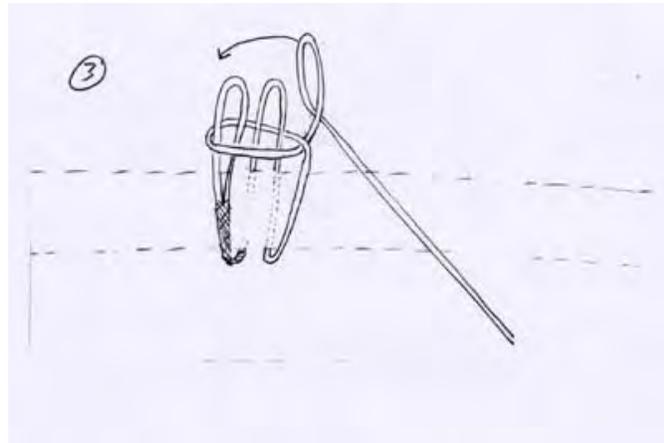
1. Choose a stout line with a large spliced or seized eye. A low-stretch material such as polyester is best.



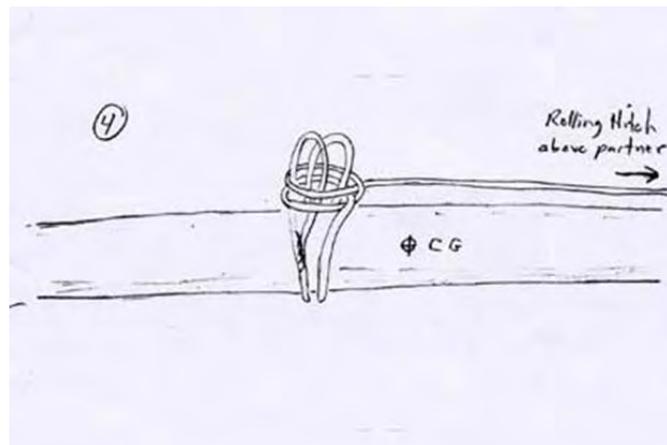
2. From one side of the mast, pick up a bight well below the splice of the eye, and pull it up behind the mast. Draw the spliced eye up the near side of the mast and hold the eye and bight together. Adjust the length of the bight and splice so that they come together two or three mast-diameters above the mast



3. Hold the spliced eye and bight together above the mast, and turn a hitch over them with the standing part of the line. A second hitch makes this a clove hitch. Keep this clove hitch well away from the mast, so that the sling you have just formed does not jamb on the mast. Both the bight and eye together will be hooked onto the crane or hoist. If the crane is not ready, stopper the eyes together with a bit of small twine, or have an accomplice hold the sling in position.



4. With the sling-knot held just at or above the balance point, stretch the remainder of the dockline down the mast to fasten above the partner -within reach of the deck once the mast is installed. A rolling hitch is usually used, finished with a hitch back on the standing part. Cleats or other sturdy fittings on the mast provide stoppers to keep the rolling hitch from sliding up, but should not be trusted to use by themselves instead of the rolling hitch.



Cautions:

1. The clove hitch on the sling can jamb if the mast is heavy. Use a phid or hardwood wedge in the hitch to keep it from jamming. If you toggle the hitch in this way, insert it into the clove hitch from the crane side, toward the mast, and put a lanyard on the toggle. The wedge has been known to fall out at an inopportune time. Wear a hard hat too!
2. Keep the bights long, and the clove hitch well out from the mast, so that the "sling" can slide up and down the mast.
3. If the mast is going up, the sling can be very close above the balance point. The heel preventer will stretch, allowing the sling to slip up further above the balance point. Warning: Keep your toes clear of the load! The mast will jump as the sling slips. If the mast is coming down, you will attach the crane to the sling from the deck and then have the crane hoist to the balance point. Now fasten the heel preventer and have the crane take most of the stretch out before clearing the last stays and partner wedges.