

Cord-Wrap Handle Options

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Weapon/tool retention is critical. In an emergency or in a fight, be thankful if you can access your blade and be prepared for a major psychological setback if you drop it. Losing a blade when it is needed is simply unacceptable when it could mean failing in your mission, causing injury or death or simply a bruised ego. That is a chance we don't want to take. For this reason, many knife users elect to wrap the handles of their blades, especially those without bolted on handle materials, with various types of cordage. Cord wrapping allows the user to customize their handle to their hand; fitting it to the size of their grip circumference and personal attributes. Cord wrapping has its share of benefits and drawbacks. 550 parachute cord, jute twine impregnated with resin, Kevlar cordage, and cordage covered with bicycle inner tube all make suitable handle options depending on the scenario where and when they will be used.

Flat Wrap: Sometimes, the best cord-wrap is the flattest. Since the baseline cordage used for most cord-wraps is paracord, it's advised to "neuter" it first if this is the type of cord wrap you're looking to do. By taking out the 7 inner strands, the paracord is much easier to wrap tightly around the blade without creating a much thicker handle profile. Thinner is also accomplished by using smaller diameter cordage like type III cord or even Kevlar cordage. The flat wrap is a great way to tuck a knife in places where it can't protrude and give away its carry. The drawback to the flat wrap is the comfort in hand. I've found most flat wrapped blades are generally pinched and held horizontally when used to cut. The thickness of the cord wrap can be mitigated by the profile of the handle though.

Textured Cord Wrap: cordage-wrapping a handle provides more purchase on a blade than the bare steel. Some types of cordage wrapping provides more texture though than your standard whipped handle. When I purchased my MBK-Ti at BLADE Show in 2017, there were a number of blades wrapped with a variation of a half-hitch textured wrap. This cord wrap (probably familiar to those of you who have purchased from the MISSION booth before) is textured on one side and flat on the other. It is a happy medium type of wrap as it keeps the knife close to the body but still offers some purchase on the blade. The benefit of this is a triangular shaped handle that fills the palm when held in the hand. There are many textured cord wraps with online tutorials for each. From the "paracord bracelet" or Cobra stitch to Japanese handle wraps traditionally used on swords to Turk's Head knots, there are many to choose from. For those of you looking to add even more grip to the handle, look into Cross-Tac's grip cord that has raised texture on the cordage sheath. It is what I currently have wrapped on my MBK-Ti and it is unsurpassed in grip. There are times when textured cord wrap can literally be a pain though. Using a textured handle for sustained amounts of time can create hot spots and blisters. Also, carrying a textured handle against the skin (inside the waistband for example) can irritate the hell out of more sensitive skin.

Cordage and Rubber Shrink Wrap/Athletic Tape: Another option for a handle wrap is to use a combination of paracord or the cordage of your choice and overlay a layer of bicycle innertube or apply a layer of athletic tape. The combination of these two provides both the body needed to

build up a grip as well as the tackiness desired for tool/weapon retention. If something other than paracord is desired for a handle, try using silicon or rubber O rings with a bicycle innertube over the top. This will give a ribbed texture to the handle that is subtle but noticeable in hand. Even if a blade already has a secondary handle such as the optional G-10 handles sold for certain MISSION Knives, this cordage and shrink wrap/athletic tape can be done to build up the handle for larger grip circumference hands. In other words, if you can easily hold onto a double-stack 45 pistol with room to spare, you may want to build up a handle with this combination method. If all you have is athletic tape, try laying it over your blade in a twisting pattern prior to wrapping it flat. This will give you added texture and more grip to play with.

Jute and Epoxy: Last but not least in these cord-wrap suggestions is the jute and epoxy combination. Jute is a natural cordage used by many primitive and traditional survival skill practitioners but it has a place in the modern cutlery world. Many custom makers are using jute with hardened epoxy as an alternative handle choice to standard micartas, G10s, bones and hardwoods. The combination of jute and epoxy is a modern throwback to the way stone knives were hafted into bone and wooden handles with natural cordage and resin. Jute, by the way, need not be epoxied and it can be used as a natural tinder if no other options are found. One downside to using jute and epoxy is the semi-permanent nature of the finished handle. Some epoxies harden as tough as steel and while they can be great handle options on the knife, they can be a pain in the ass to get off the knife. I personally wrapped an MPS-A2 with jute and finished the grip with a paracord Turk's Head knot for a combination of form and function.

The benefit of using cordage and the materials previously described is their cost. Nothing mentioned will break the bank and if you make a mistake, it shouldn't cost much to do the process all over correctly this time. The same can't be said with certain handle materials like G10, exotic hardwoods, or other natural materials. Therefore, one could set up a blade for a particular trip, disassemble it afterward, and reconfigure it for the next trip if the requirements change. These are just a few options for creating a handle for a blade and in future entries, there will be others discussed. Also necessary to mention is the fact learning how to fashion a makeshift handle from cordage is an essential skill as you may not always have the blade you carry and you'll have to make your own in the field. The same cord-wrapping methods mentioned here can be applied to walking sticks, survival rifle slings, large-body flashlights or any other place where enhanced grip can benefit the user. That blade won't be all edge and you'll need something to grab onto. With the information from this article, you'll be able to create a handle you can get a grip on.

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