

SCOUT PIONEERING

Is It a Lost Art?

by Ian Mitchell

When was the last time your Scouts or Venturers made a bridge from wooden spars to span a stream at camp? Have your Scouts ever made a camp loom? What about a flag pole or lookout tower?

Catapults, climbing gyms, bridges, towers, shelters, gateways, woven lean-tos, fences, rafts: with a bit of ingenuity, Scouts or Venturers can build almost anything using only spars and rope.

At the same time they'll learn important leadership, planning and team-building skills. More basic projects like shoe racks and wash basin stands provide a great introduction to knots and pioneering for Cubs.

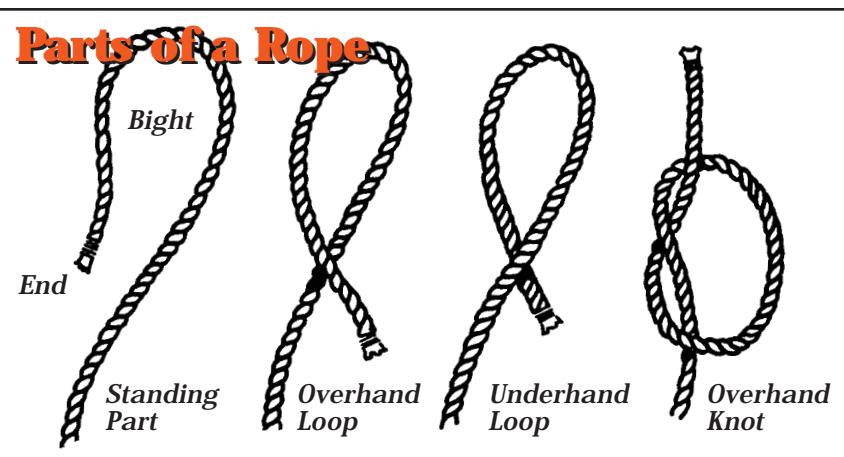
Since the days of B.-P., pioneering has formed an important part of Scouting, but in many groups these have somehow fallen by the way. This traditional skill makes it easier to live comfortably in the wilds without high tech fold-away tables, chairs and plastic games. It also builds self-reliance and confidence.



"Who needs a conventional meeting hall?"

Ha! When we cover this with a giant tarp, we'll be all set."

Photo: Allen Marzifney



Choose and Inspect

Not just any rope will do for pioneering projects, because the strength and security of a structure depends on it. Choose your rope carefully. (See "Did You Know...?" on page 6.) Also, choose the right knot for particular tasks. A properly chosen knot holds when you want it to hold and unties quickly. The wrong knot may slip loose when someone puts tension on it. This may cause a serious accident.

Before making any pioneering project, inspect your rope for frays, cuts or rotten spots that will weaken it. Cut out any weak spots and splice good rope ends together. (See *Fieldbook of Canadian Scouting*)

Major pioneering projects will require wooden spars three to four

metres long and 10 to 12 cm wide. It's not always easy to obtain these, so why not tie your program into a tree-thinning project? Check with local forest rangers and property owners before starting any cutting.

An excellent pioneering book like John Sweet's *Scout Pioneering* (available at most Scout Shops) will make any project more fun. Also, it will answer many questions and provide lots of ideas.

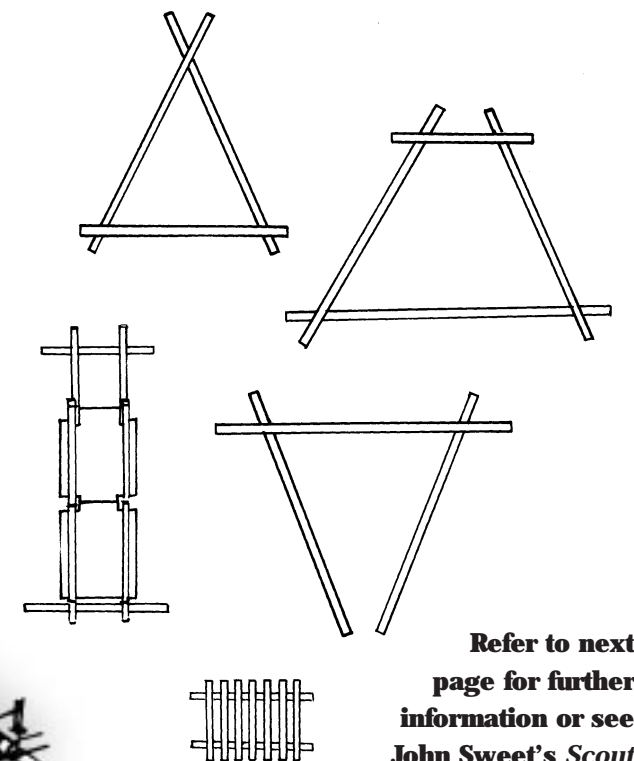
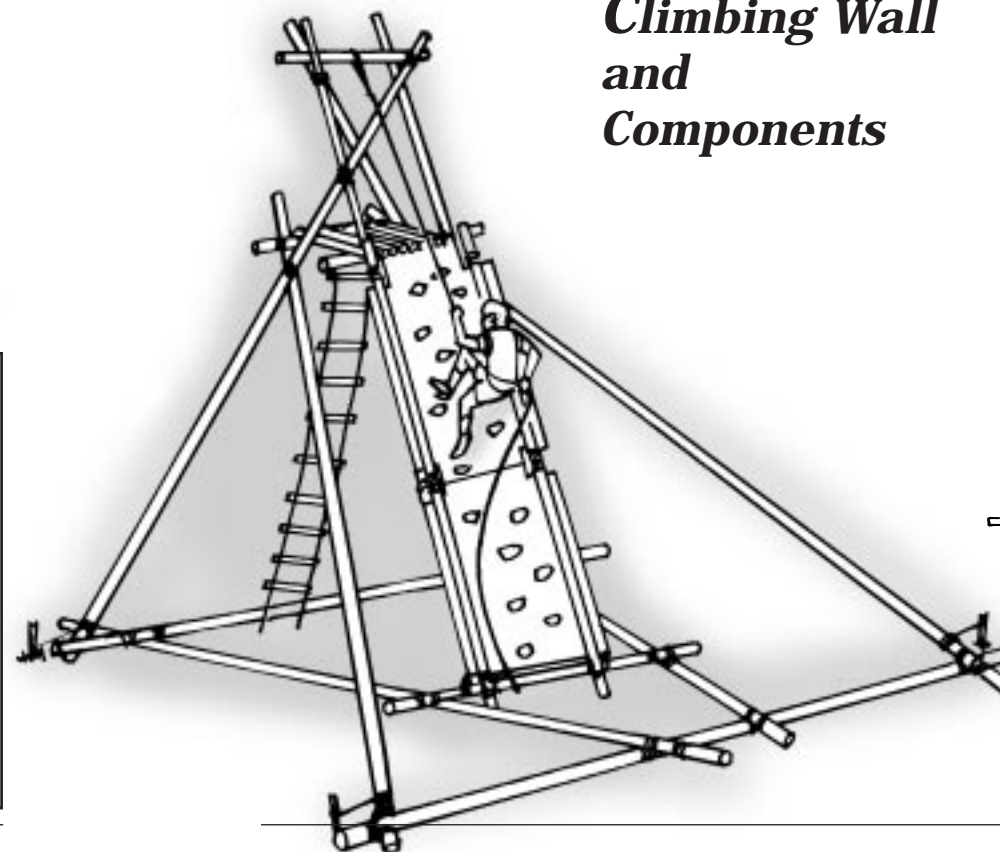
Gateways to Creativity

Gates keep people out, but they also tell a story about those who live behind them. Here are a few gates that will not only give varying impressions to passers-by but also challenge the engineering skills of your members.

WHAT IS "PIONEERING"?

Pioneering is the word used to describe the work done by 18th and 19th century military engineers who went ahead of an army to build bridges and towers with rope and timber. In Scouting, it refers to building structures using wooden spars and rope.

Climbing Wall and Components



Refer to next page for further information or see John Sweet's Scout Pioneering (available at most Scout Shops).

Basic Gate

Any patrol or company will be able to make this gate. Use square lashing to complete it. Don't overlook the bell (a tin can with a rock in it) for visitors.

Lift Gate

Only those with knot-tying experience and those seeking a real challenge should tackle this project. You'll need to invest considerable thought, time and some advance planning.

Campsite Improvements

All Scouting youths like as many luxuries as possible to make camping more comfortable. It's rarely possible to transport tables, tripods, tool racks and fire stands into the backwoods for a weekend, but you can easily make them. Try building one of these.

Dining Table

A flat eating surface at camp? Impossible? With this table, all you'll need are candles and a gourmet meal to transform a wilderness site into a classy establishment.

Shower Unit

With this unit, you won't have to wait for rain to have your next camp shower.

Climbing Wall

This play structure requires lots of patience to build, then plenty of adult supervision to use it safely.

Pioneer Loom

Scouts and Venturers can make sleeping mats using a loom.

"Are You a Knot-er or Knot-ee?"

It's amazing how many neat things you can make even if you only know a few knots.



Photo: Allen Macatney

"Are You a Knot-er or Knot-ee?"

Get your Cubs, Scouts or Venturers working on a pioneering project this summer. Not only will it give them something tangible and useful, but it will inspire them to hone their knot-tying skills. X

Internet Resources

- You'll find many pioneering projects at: www.hurricanedistrict.org/pioneering.htm
- <http://www.mistral.co.uk/42brghtn/knots/42ktmenu.html>

Program Links

Cubs: Green Star, Camping Badge
 Scouts: Pioneering Challenge Badge, Voyageur: Outdoor Skills #15, #16, Pathfinder: Outdoor Skills #6, #7.
 Venturers: Exploration Award, Outdoorsman Award

— Many thanks to Scouters D. Roach, L. Moran, R. Castillo, J. Bowers and B. Wilkes for their input.

KNOT AND PIONEERING GAMES

When group members need a break from their pioneer projects, these games will keep them focused on knot-tying.

Knotting Baseball

Form teams as in baseball. Give the pitcher and batter each a piece of rope. The pitcher calls out the name of a knot and may throw his rope to anyone in the field. If the batter reaches first base with the knot tied correctly, he's "safe." If a knot tied correctly by a fielder reaches first base before the batter, the batter is "out."

If the batter cannot tie the knot, he's "out." If a fielder cannot tie the knot, the batter goes to first base. The next batter takes his place and play continues. If a fielder ties the knot correctly and beats the batter to first base (making the person "out"),

the fielder can then run to second base, third and home bases trying to touch other runners and getting them "out."

Make sure pitchers throw the rope to all fielders and not just to the person on first base.

Black Out!

Play this game inside at night.

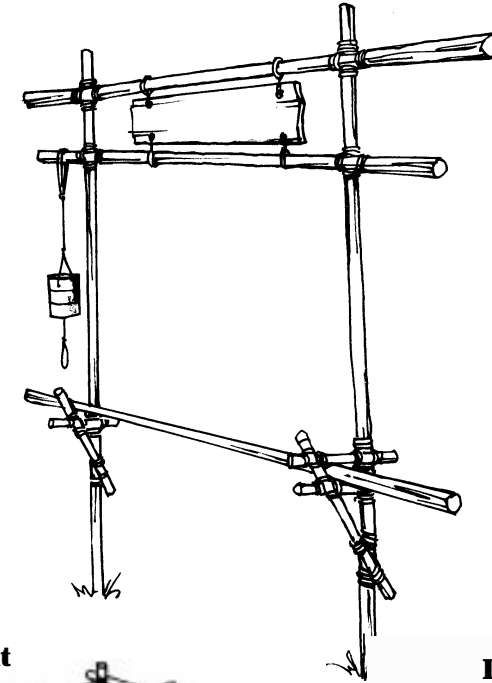
Give all players a piece of rope. Assign a specific knot for everyone to tie, then turn off the lights and see who can tie the knot in the dark. Start with an easy knot, then move on to more difficult ones. Also, vary the length of time the lights remain off.

DID YOU KNOW...?

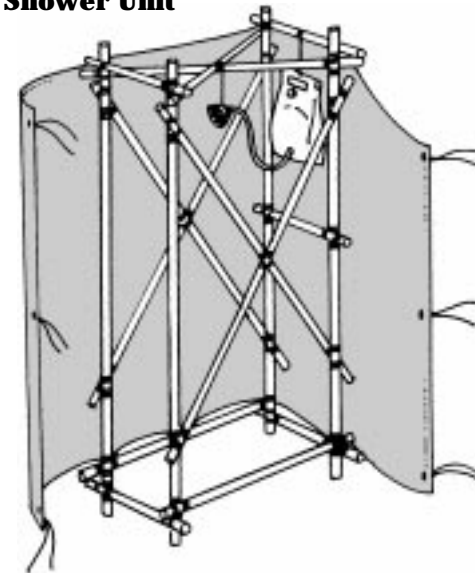
- Natural fibre and nylon ropes are good for making pioneering projects because of their great ease of knotting, while polypropylene rope is poor.
- Nylon rope stretches while natural fibre, polyester and polypropylene don't stretch easily.
- Nylon rope has high tensile strength, while natural fibre rope has low tensile strength.

More Pioneering Structures

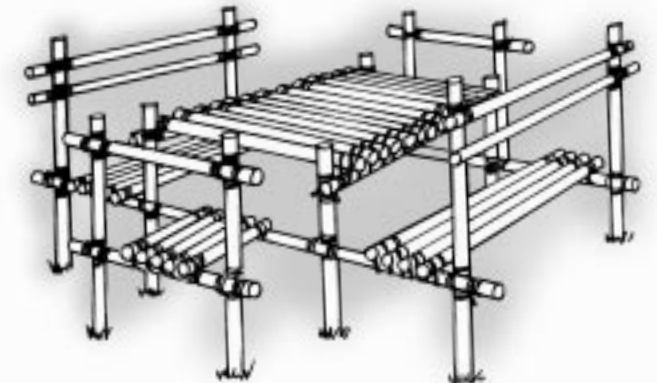
Basic Gate



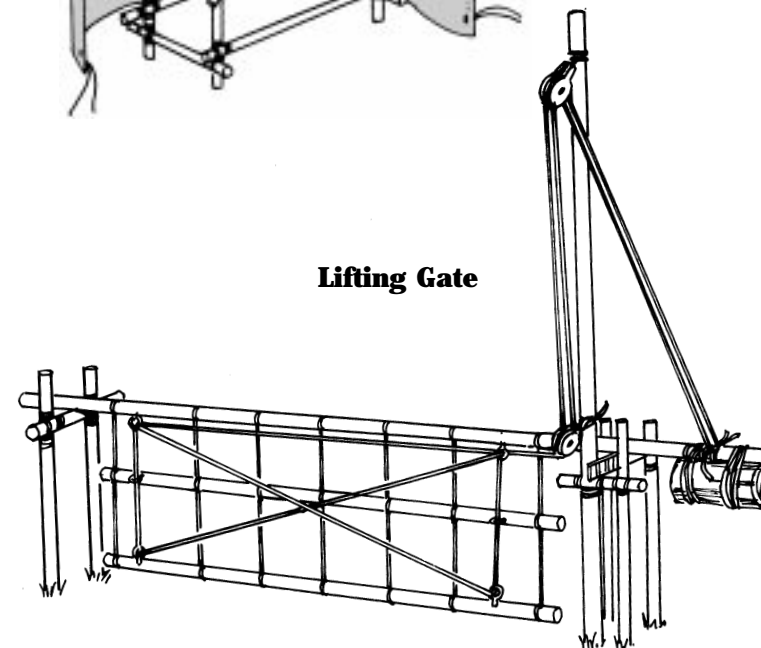
Shower Unit



Dining Table



Lifting Gate



Make a waterfront tower for your lifeguards at camp.

Photo: Mary Margaret Boone

Rope Tying Tips

Use ropes at least two metres long and 6 to 12 mm in diameter. Make sure the ends have been properly whipped to prevent fraying.

Never hammer nails into a tree, and always take your pioneer project apart when finished with it.

Before starting a major pioneering project, spend time learning the necessary knots. (Youths always learn knot-tying quickest when they can see an immediate application.) Don't try teaching several difficult knots in one evening to inexperienced Cubs or Scouts. Teach one knot, then review it next week, before teaching another.

Knot-tying can be difficult for little Cub fingers. Plan for this. Don't expect absolute perfection from their efforts. After Cubs have mastered a knot, show them how to use it in a simple pioneering project.