Children Learning To Tie Shoelaces

- Replace thin shoelaces with something easier to grip. Soft, wide (but not too fat) laces are ideal.
- Thick shoelaces also provide extra friction in the eyelets, which helps keep the **Starting Knot** tight while working on the tricky finishing bow.
- Replace slippery synthetic shoelaces with ones made of cotton or other natural fibers, as these provide better grip and also help keep the Starting Knot tight.
- Use a **Double Starting Knot**, which keeps things even tighter.
- Make sure the shoes fit snugly. If the shoe is already nice and tight, the shoelaces don't have to be tied quite so tightly, making it easier while learning.
- Sit comfortably and practice with a shoe on a table, or with a shoelace or rope wrapped around the thigh, instead of awkwardly reaching down to tie your shoes.
- Buy training shoelaces with half one color and half another color, or join together two half shoelaces of different colors (as per **Half & Half Lacing**), making it easier to follow either colored diagrams or verbal instructions.
- Use a felt tip marker to permanently highlight the points on the shoelace that should be gripped together when making a loop or loops.
- Knot the very ends of each shoelace to stop those ends being accidentally pulled through the knot (when tightening) or out of the eyelets (when loosening).
- A neater alternative to knotting the ends is to push the aglet back into the end of the shoelace, resulting in a thick, bulged end with the aglet inside. It's a bit like turning a sock inside out by pushing in the toe. Note that this only works with some laces, particularly with flat ones.
- Make sure the child's shoelaces are untied every night when they remove their shoes. This will ensure that they can't take a shortcut and try to shove their foot into a shoe that's still tied. Besides being better for both the feet and the shoes, the daily ritual of tying also helps them to learn more quickly.

Left Handed Children / Teachers

- Sit in front of your child and have them mirror your movements. Make sure that they also mirror the **Starting Knot** in order to prevent the finished result becoming an un-balanced **Granny Knot** (which comes undone).
Alternatively, try the Ian Knot, in which neither hand is really dominant.

**Tips For The Teacher**

- Before teaching any shoelace knot to your child, try learning a new knot yourself, particularly the Ian Knot (if you don't already know it). This is a great way of recalling the difficulty and frustration of having to pay attention to "Loops" and "Loose Ends" and what to hold and what to let go, all of which otherwise happen automatically with your existing technique.

- Double-check the instructions for the method that you will be teaching to ensure that your technique does not result in an unbalanced Granny Knot (which comes undone).

- When the child finally succeeds, check the result for the tell-tale "Crooked Bow", indicating that they have probably done one of the steps in reverse and produced a Granny Knot (which comes undone).

**Which Knot To Teach**

If you're looking for a simple way to teach your kids to tie their shoelaces, forget the huge collection of Shoelace Knots on this site (which is presented mainly as a scientific and/or historical archive) and stick with these three basic shoelace knots:

- The Standard Shoelace Knot (a.k.a. "Around The Tree" method);
- The Two Loop Shoelace Knot (a.k.a. "Bunny Ears" method);
- The Ian Knot (a.k.a. "The World's Fastest Shoelace Knot").

It's important to realise that, if tied correctly, all three methods produce the identical finished knot! I therefore recommend that you consider trying any (or all) of these methods and seeing which works best with your child, as different methods can suit different learning styles.

- The "Standard Shoelace Knot" has the most individual steps to memorize and the most opportunities for making mistakes, and thus is probably the most difficult to teach and learn.

- The "Two Loop Shoelace Knot" is easier because the second stage is so similar to the first stage. However, this is the main reason that it's often taught and/or learned incorrectly, resulting in a Granny Knot (which comes undone). It's therefore important to also teach the fact that the second stage should be done in reverse to the first stage. A second, unrelated problem is that kids will often be teased as they get older for using this "Kiddie's Knot", despite it being a perfectly good method if done correctly.
The "Ian Knot" has the fewest steps to memorize and is also less biased towards left or right handedness. Many occupational therapists have had great success with this knot, which I believe is because it has fewer sequential steps to memorize and perform. Once they get the starting position correct, the rest just flows fairly smoothly. This is especially helpful for children with sequencing difficulties.

Please don't compare any of these knots with the one you're currently using (and can do automatically) and make the mistake of assuming it's too tricky. If you're not willing to learn it yourself, at least let your child try it!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Shoelace Knot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes referred to as an &quot;Around The Tree Shoelace Knot&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of all the shoelace tying techniques shown to me by others, this is by far the most common: Make a loop with one end, wrap the other end around it and pull a loop through the "hole" in the middle. This is how I was first taught to tie my shoelaces when I was young.
All of the shoelace techniques shown on this site use the same "Left-over-Right" Starting Knot. Here's how to tie this basic knot, known as a "Half Knot" or "Overhand Knot". Don't worry, this knot is a LOT easier than it looks in these diagrams!

**Step 1:**
Cross the left (blue) end over the right (yellow) end. The left (blue) end is now on the right side.

**Step 2:**
Begin to wrap the right (blue) end around the front of the left (yellow) lace to end up at the back of the gap between the laces.

**Step 3:**
Feed the right (blue) end through the gap to emerge at the front right hand side.

**Step 4:**
Pull both ends tight to complete the knot.
Standard Shoelace Knot
*Sometimes referred to as an "Around The Tree Shoelace Knot"*

Of all the shoelace tying techniques shown to me by others, this is by far the most common: Make a loop with one end, wrap the other end around it and pull a loop through the "hole" in the middle. This is how I was first taught to tie my shoelaces when I was young.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Step 1:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Step 2:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Step 1" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Step 2" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie a Left-over-Right <em>Starting Knot</em> as shown, then make the right (blue) end into a &quot;loop&quot; by simply doubling it back onto itself.</td>
<td>Take the left (yellow) end and pass it around to the right, going behind the right loop.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Step 3:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Step 4:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Step 3" /></td>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Step 4" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue the left (yellow) end around the right loop to end up in front.</td>
<td>Start to feed the left (yellow) lace into the &quot;hole&quot; that has just been made.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Step 5:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Step 6:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Step 5" /></td>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Step 6" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With the left (yellow) lace now through the &quot;hole&quot;, grab hold of both loops and start to pull the knot tight.</td>
<td>Continue pulling on the loops until the knot is firmly tied.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I tie my shoelaces with an "Ian Knot", the World's Fastest Shoelace Knot: Make a loop with both ends and simultaneously pull them through each other to form an almost instant knot. Don't confuse this with the very similar looking Two Loop Shoelace Knot - the technique is quite different and much faster. It's a truly revolutionary way to tie your shoelaces!

Please don't be put off by these detailed instructions - even the Standard Shoelace Knot looks tricky when illustrated! Give it a try; you'll find it's easier than it looks.

**Step 1:**

Tie a Left-over-Right Starting Knot as shown, then hold the laces as pictured. The right (blue) lace is held *between* the right thumb and forefinger whilst the left (yellow) lace is held *around* the left thumb and forefinger, using the other fingers of the left hand to hold the lace taut.

**Step 2:**

This move creates two loops, one with the loose end behind, the other with the loose end in front. Use the middle finger of the right hand to push the loose end of the right lace behind, whilst the left hand simply rotates forwards to swing its loop across to the right.

**Step 3:**
This next move crosses the two loops over each other. Use the left thumb to push its loose end over to the right, whilst the right middle finger continues to push its loose end all the way between the left thumb and forefinger to end up inside the left loop. 

*Note that the diagram at left shows somewhat exaggerated crossed loops. They are really more "alongside" each other, which is difficult to illustrate.*

**Step 4:**

This tricky move requires each hand to use the two fingers inside its own loop to grab the loose end of the other hand's loop. Use the left thumb and forefinger to grab the loose right end, then the right thumb and middle finger can grab the loose left end.

**Step 5:**

This move sees each hand releasing its own loop and pulling the loose end of the opposite loop through its own. Take care not to pull the ends all the way through, as this will form a "knot" instead of a "bow". In fact, this is a quick way to tie a starting knot (though the finger movements must be reversed left to right or else it forms a [Granny Knot](#)).

**Step 6:**
This final step simply completes the knot by pulling the loops tight. With practice, I can now tie my laces in about \textit{one third} of the time of a conventional knot!

Note that you do not have to follow my instructions to the letter. So long as you retain the "core" of the technique, you are welcome to use whatever finger movements are most comfortable for you.