

The humble deadeye fid

By Ted Walsh

To those of us who secure our shrouds with a rigging screw or turnbuckle, this is a wonderfully archaic tool. To those of us with deadeyes and lanyards, however, a deadeye fid, sometimes called a deadeye wedge, makes the potentially difficult chore of tuning shrouds with deadeyes into a relatively simple task.

The trick to deadeyes is to get the lanyard to slip when you want it to (when you are trying to tighten them) and not slip when you want them to (when you are tying off the lanyard). The trick to getting the lanyard to slip is basically to make sure that the holes in the deadeyes are smooth and well greased (I use Bag Balm to grease the deadeyes, it works well and does not appear to break down synthetic line).

The problem comes when you have tightened the lanyard. For example; I unshackle the bottom block of the throat halyard from the gaff and bend the lanyard to the block. I can now use the halyard to tighten up the lanyard and deadeyes. The problem is at some point you need to unbend the lanyard from the halyard in order to tie off the lanyard. How to do this without slacking off on the lanyard? Here is where our humble fid comes in.

With the halyard pulling tension on the lanyard; belay the halyard. Now drive your fid into the last hole in the deadeye with a mallet. This locks the lanyard in place and you can now slack off your halyard without slacking the deadeye. Unbend the halyard from lanyard and cow-hitch the lanyard either over the sheer-pole or the top deadeye. When all is snug drive out the fid, all that's left is to seize the tail of the lanyard.

A deadeye fid is easy to make. I turned mine out of maple on a treadle lathe, but a piece of closet pole could be shaped with a block plane and gouge to the same effect.

Some further tricks:

- If you are going to use the throat halyard to provide the mechanical advantage for the lanyard it is much easier if you have sway-hooks and someone to tail the line for you.
- Tie a string lanyard onto your fid, when you drive it out of the deadeye it tends to exit with some force and can end up overboard.
- If it's the start of the season and I know I will have to re-tighten the deadeyes I will often seize the lanyard tail with cloth friction tape rather than marline. It takes less time and is easier to remove.

If there is a rigging topic that you would like to see illustrated and addressed please send your suggestion to NEWSLETTER@FSS.ORG

