

# Marlinespike Seamanship

By Ted Walsh

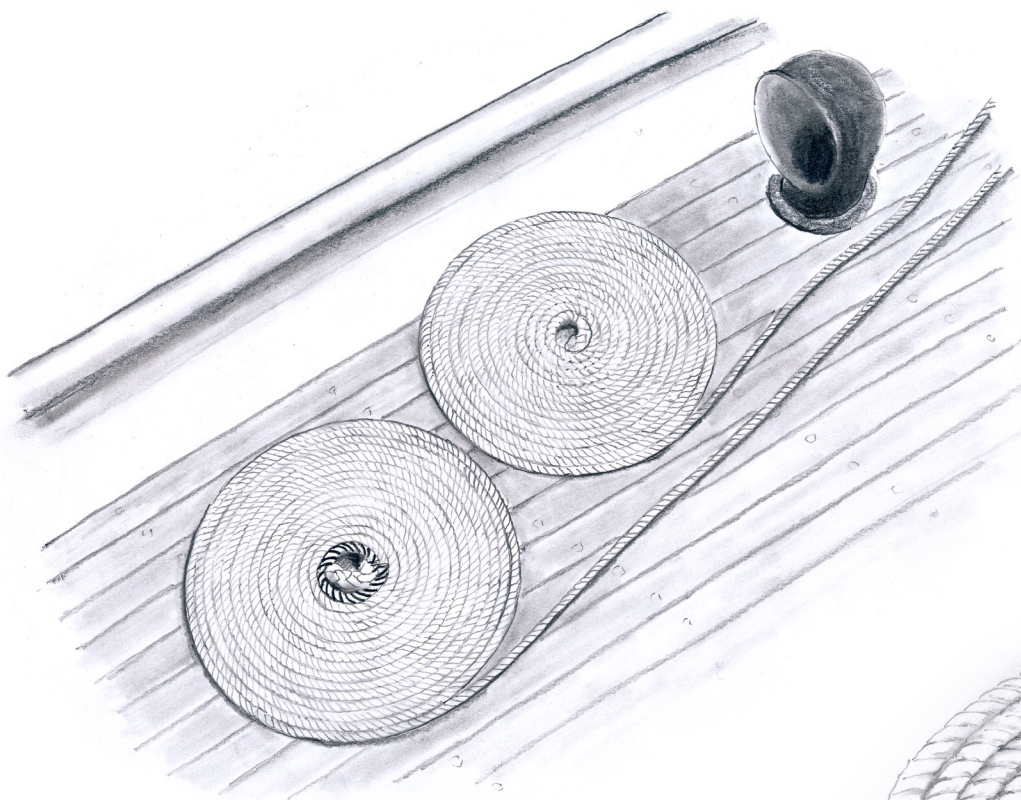
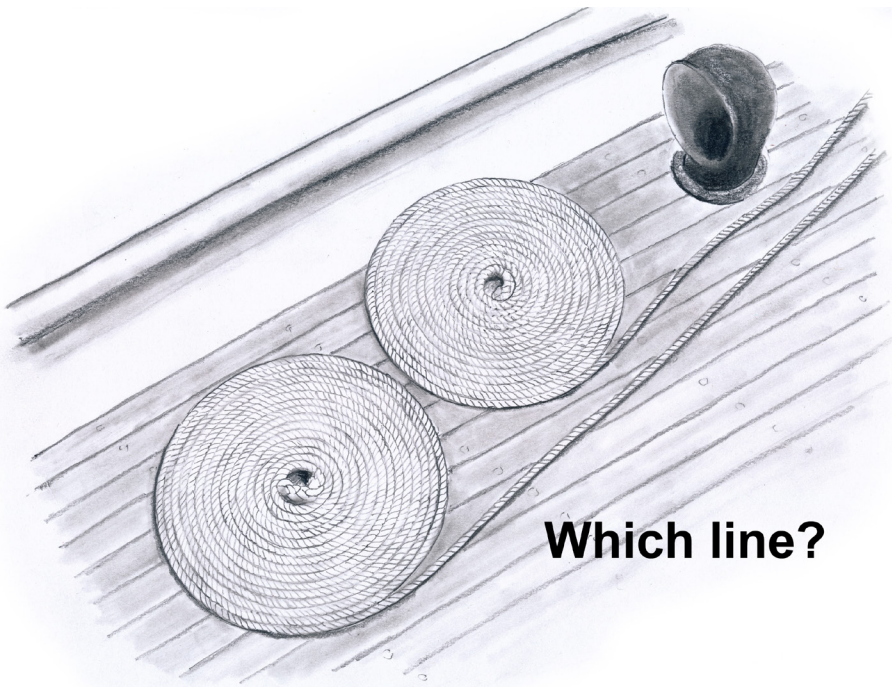
## Color Coding Three-strand line

We often have guests aboard who would like to help sail the boat, but they don't know the lines. It can be difficult to describe which line to haul on, cast off, or belay. More modern rigs use color-coded braided line to make this easier.

However, if you have tradition three-strand line, and many of us do, there are not really color options. Additionally there will be many purists that don't like the look of colored braided lines on a traditional rig.

One solution is to color strand the end of your three-strand line.

What you are technically doing is "worming" the last foot or ten inches of the bitter end of a halyard, sheet, or down-haul, with colored braided line that has a small diameter. This is easy to do; aesthetically it fits in with a traditional rig, and can make it much easier to identify a specific line.



The result will be more subtle than a modern brightly colored line, but it is distinctive enough to let a novice identify the correct line.

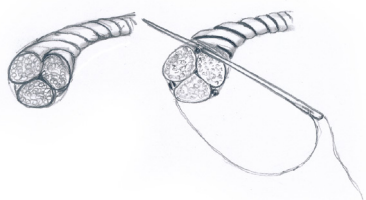
You will need:

- Small dimension colored braided line

(I use either 275 lb or 95 lb utility cord, or micro-cord, depending on the size line that I am color-coding. These come in different colors and are inexpensive.)

- A marlinespike or hollow fid
- sailmakers needle or roping needle, anything between #10-#15 in size
- Some sailmakers waxed twine

Choose a color-braided cord that is small enough to lie between the three strands of line that you are marking.



The key to getting this to work right is to make the braided cord lie snugly between the three strands of the line without increasing the diameter of the line, or having the colored cord come loose from the line.

So, to keep the ends of the braided cord in place and under consistent tension, you need to stitch or whip the cord in place at either end of the wormed section. This will keep a uniform tension on the cord and line.

Where the line has been wormed, it will be stiffer than the rest of the line (filling the void between the strands takes some of the flex out of the line) so you will likely not want to have the section that is wormed be more than ten or twelve inches.

