Here are some skills and activities that are so strongly associated with one of the services that they are often overlooked by the others.

In the first article in a new series, Liz Worman, from HQ RN CCF, shares some of her expertise on knots and explains how they can be used in useful activities for all CCF sections.

Liz Worman explains how to get to grips with three handy knots

**Bowline**

This very useful loop is used for everything from tying up boats to making a climbing harness. Impossible to undo under load and very hard to undo even once a heavy load has been taken off.

1. Make a loop so that the short end is on top.
2. Pass the short end up through the loop so that the end sits over the crossing ropes.
3. Pass the short end behind the bit you haven’t used yet (the long end), without changing its direction over the cross.
4. Pass the short end down through the loop so that it lies alongside the bit that went up and pull tight.

**Reef Knot**

This knot is used to join two ropes of the same thickness together. It is also useful when stowing away equipment as it is very easy to undo, even under load.

1. Take the two ends of rope.
2. Pass right over the left and tuck it underneath.
3. Then pass the left over right and tuck under (the left is now the old right).
4. Pull the knot tight.

**Sheet Bend**

This knot is ideal for joining two ropes of different diameters together. The reef knot is quick and easy but you will soon become unstuck if all of your rope isn’t the same size and shape.

1. Fold the thicker of the two ropes so that it is bent in two.
2. Use the thinner rope and lay it underneath the bend in the thick rope.
3. Take the thin rope over to one side before going under both bits of the thick rope.
4. Lift the piece of thin rope that is sitting over the ‘arm’ of the thick rope and slide the short end of the thin rope underneath. Pull the thin rope tight.

**Create a Rope Stretcher**

A good knowledge of knots can be very useful for command and leadership tasks for Army, Royal Marines and RAF CCF sections. A simple planks and crates crossing exercise can be made more elaborate by the need to lash two planks together – or you could try an exercise such as the one below that focuses completely on ropework.

**The Rescue**

**Equipment:** 15m rope (6-11mm diameter), dummy casualty scenario:

Your team is midway through an expedition when one member slips and injures his or her leg. You must get the casualty to a mountain rescue post, although they are unable to walk.

**Aim:** Construct a rope stretcher that can carry the casualty at least 30m

**Solution:** Construct a rope stretcher

1. Lay out 8-10 loops from the centre third of the rope, to form the ‘bed’ of the stretcher.
2. Take the long tail of rope on one side, and use it to tie a clove hitch near the end of each loop, leaving a 10cm loop sticking out beyond it.
3. When one side is complete, repeat along the other side. Thread the remaining rope tails through the small loops, until none remains.
4. The clove hitches can now be pulled outwards to trap the rope tails in the small loops.
5. Finally, ensure each clove hitch is tight, and that the transverse ropes form an even support for the casualty.

**Did You Know?**

Ropes with evenly spaced knots were used by the Navy to measure speed.