

Advice for Rope

By Topologist

In kink spaces, DON'T:

Touch anyone without their explicit permission (or touch their toys, garments, rope on them, etc.)
Interrupt or invite yourself into in-progress play
Assume that if you saw someone do something with someone else, they'd like to do it with you
Photograph anyone, except with consent and according to the venue's photo policy
Refer to people using words they haven't consented to

When playing with somebody new:

Check up on them with experienced local players
Negotiate everything you're going to do before starting
Share relevant medical history, body limitations, etc.
Discuss known risks and the possibility of injury
Establish safe words and check-in procedures
Play at a **public event**, and/or ask a friend to observe

Red Flags – avoid anyone who:

Gets **defensive** when you ask about their expertise, or how they determined that something is safe
Tries to tell you **how a bottom should be**, that you have to do certain things to play with them, or shouldn't advocate for your own safety and desires
Has many partners themselves, but **tries to control** who else you play with
Wants to **isolate** you from the community, or discourages you from talking to others with more experience
Doesn't respond well to feedback, or when you ask for something to be changed during play
Blames the bottom when a tie doesn't work out the way they had hoped, or complains about not being able to tie what they want to because of your limits

Advocate for yourself:

Speak up if someone makes you uncomfortable or violates your boundaries – if you're at an event, promptly notify the host
Listen to your body and be honest with yourself and your partner if something doesn't feel right
Trust that you can always play differently, or another time; it's better to risk ending a scene than risk injury
Judge for yourself whether what your partner wants to do is within your risk tolerance

Know the risks:

Nerve injury from rope pressure or body position can happen without any warning signs, be seriously debilitating, and last for months or even forever
Falling due to tripping while tied, tipping furniture, rope / equipment / human failure during suspensions, etc.
Rope burn can happen accidentally and leave scars that are visible for years or sometimes permanent
Bruising is often caused by rough rope or suspension

When tying, watch out for warning signs:

Tingling, numbness, or other unusual sensations should always be taken seriously; modify or untie
Check periodically for normal feeling and strength in the extremities (top checks, and bottom checks self)
Light-headedness, cold sweats, seeing spots, ringing ears, or becoming incoherent often mean someone is about to pass out and/or throw up. Get to the floor, relax horizontally, slowly sip hydrating fluids, and untie.

Prepare your body:

Avoid playing dehydrated, hungry, tired, sick, hot or cold
Warm up and/or lightly stretch before strenuous play
Learn about your body so that you know what is safe for you and can recognize danger signs

DON'T get ahead of yourself by:

Leaping into difficult ties or suspension without experience
Trying new things with people who are also new to you
Pushing your partner beyond their comfort zone

RISK OF DEATH:

NEVER leave a restrained person unsupervised
AVOID rope around the neck that could choke
DON'T play intoxicated or with impaired judgment
DON'T suspend without expert training and safe equipment, especially in a head-down position

Be prepared for emergencies:

Keep **safety shears** within reach at all times
Think about what would happen if the bottom passes out with no warning; will they be injured?
Have a **plan** for what you're going to do if the building catches on fire and the electricity goes out

Things that are extra risky:

Suspension has much higher risk, especially when new
Mixing rope with sex, sensation / impact play, etc.
Rope on the upper arm causes the largest number of serious nerve injuries (but learn about other nerve risks)
Allowing people from outside your scene to join or interact with play is usually a bad idea; tops should prevent this
Group play is harder to negotiate and results in a disproportionate number of misunderstandings

Suspension safety everyone should know:

Past performance of a hardpoint does not guarantee its safety; both tops and bottoms should know how to assess a hardpoint. Don't just trust venues (or tops).
Jute rope can break when used for support lines in suspension. There are safer alternatives readily available that work just as well for 99% of scenes.

Learn more at: crash-restraint.com/ties/1