

# Tying Down Lumber

How to keep your mahogany off the highway



BY GARY WILLIAMS

If you live in an area where you hear daily traffic reports, you're probably familiar with the phrase "ladder in the roadway." Christmas trees, couches and mattresses also find their way onto the pavement from time to time and so, unfortunately, does good lumber. Keeping these things with the vehicle for the entire trip home is a challenge often met by throwing yards and yards of rope or twine over them and hoping for light winds.

As with most things in woodworking, there are tricks to keeping lumber from taking flight, and most of the tricks are simple. When it comes to tying down, the tricks I've found most useful are these:

- Use several short ropes, not one long one.
- Learn three knots.

When my ropes need replacing, I buy about 50 ft. of  $\frac{3}{8}$ -in. braided or three-strand nylon (don't use polypropylene rope—the

cheap yellow stuff—because it won't hold a knot) and cut it into four equal lengths. A 12-ft. piece of rope is long enough to get over most things that will fit in my little truck, with enough left over for some knots. Several short ropes give redundancy that one long piece doesn't offer. The load is cinched down and tied off in at least two separate places; should one rope or knot fail, the others are still on the job. They also get you on the road sooner because you're not feeding a mile of rope through every loop and hook.

The three most useful knots are a bowline, a slipknot and a half hitch. Together, these three basic knots are usually called a trucker's hitch and provide a sure, simple means of cinching down the load and quick release when you are safely in the driveway. □

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## THE BOWLINE KNOT







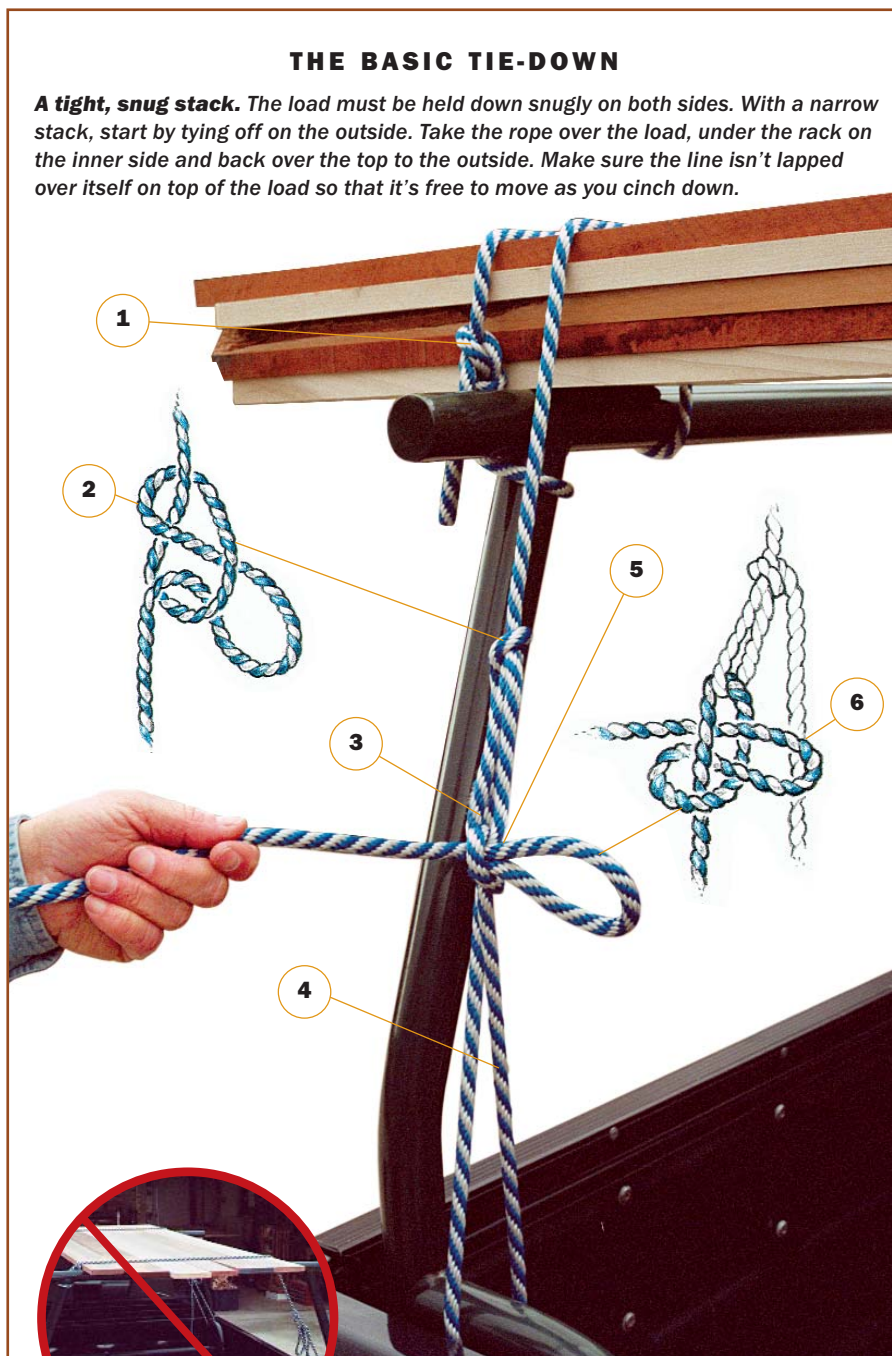
**1.** Start with a bowline, tied to the rack. Then lead the line over the load and back.



**2.** Tie a slipknot near the top of the load.



**3.** Bring the end down under a hook or bar on the truck and back up through the loop of the slipknot.



**Not a good idea.** A wide stack can be dangerous. The rope, stretched horizontally, can't exert sufficient pressure to keep the middle boards from sliding out in a hard stop.



**4.** Then pull down hard. Try to move the lumber sideways; if it moves, pull harder on the rope.



**5.** Pinch the rope together to hold things tight.



**6.** Then grab another loop of the loose end and tie a half hitch. This locks the tie-down. Because you made the half hitch with a loop, you can untie it simply by tugging on the end.

## COMBO STACK: TYING PLYWOOD AND LUMBER TOGETHER



When carrying a mixed load, it's safest to tie down the plywood first. Pad the edges with carpet scraps or cardboard to avoid damage.

After tying down the plywood, lay two loose ropes across it and stack the lumber on the ropes, approximately in the center of the truck.

Toss the ends of each rope over the stack so the ones from the right end up on the left and vice versa.

Tie off the lines on both sides using trucker's hitches. Make them loose at first, then cinch them tightly.

