

Instructions for Tying One's Shoes

When instructing an individual in tying one's shoes, we must first familiarize ourselves with the parts of the shoe. First there is the **shoe body**, which encases the foot. Two parts of interest of the body are the **tongue** of the shoe, which covers the top of the foot and moves independently from the rest of the shoe body, and the **shoelace grommets**, which can be located on the main shoe body on opposite sides of the tongue. After that, we have the **shoelace**, a string-like fastening apparatus that operates on the principle of friction. Depending on how many grommets can be found on the main shoe body, the shoelace itself can vary in length from six inches to a full eighteen inches. Modern cloth shoelaces are equipped with **agulets**—a plastic device that prevents the shoelace itself from fraying. Leather shoelaces can forego the agulet, as fraying is rarely a problem.

Next we must examine the shoe itself and the manner in which it was laced. Is this a short shoe or a more supportive shoe that encases the ankle and shin? We must make sure that the laces have passed through the grommets in an alternating fashion, so that a lace exiting a grommet on the left of the tongue will enter the next sequenced grommet on the right side, and vice versa. In the case of some shoes, such as hiking or skating boots, **hooks** will be used in place of grommets. Please ensure that the lace has passed fully around the outside of the hook, away from the tongue. *NOTE: It is at this time that the shoe can become "over-tightened". Make sure that full mobility within the shoe is still possible without allowing the foot to move too freely within the shoe. Improperly tightened laces can result in a loss of feeling in the toes, or blisters around the heel and ankle of the shoe-wearer. Your shoe manufacturer is not responsible for any injuries sustained from improperly tightened laces.*

Once proper tightness is achieved through the lace and grommet assembly, cross the laces over the shoe tongue, maintaining proper tension on the lace unit. Then, pass the top lace under the bottom lace so that it goes through the space between the crossed laces and the shoe tongue. This will form the **half-knot** so commonly found in macramé projects and Girl-Scout meetings. Once this knot is formed, pull gently on the laces, away from the shoe itself, until the knot rests against the shoe tongue. *NOTE: This is another time where over or under-tightening is possible; please, use caution.*

Now we enter the most difficult step in shoe tying:

- With the right hand (or left hand, depending on preference—right handed instructions are presented here) form a loop with the lace while still keeping tension on the half-knot. A finger can be placed in the center of the knot, holding it in place.
- With the left hand, take the left lace and loop it around and outside the loop formed with the right lace. This will form a second loop around the right thumb but in front of the right index and pointer finger.
- With the right pointer finger, push the section of the left lace loop closest to the agulet (or end if no agulets are present) under the section of loop between the half-knot and right thumb.
- Carefully release the left lace and move the left hand to receive the section of left loop passing under the right thumb.
- Take this section with the left hand and slowly apply tension away from the shoe tongue while doing the same with the right hand and right loop.

Congratulations! The shoe is now properly fastened or "tied".
