

How to thread a rope through a belay chain.

This technique **does not apply to trad climbing or multipitch climbing.**

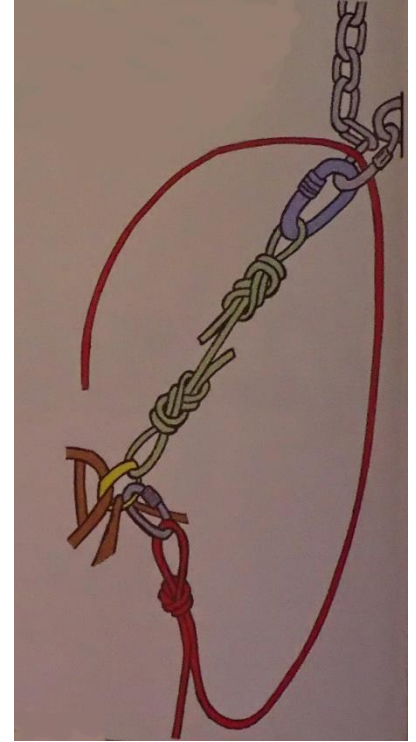
The main point is that you should stay on belay during all the process, this is the most dangerous part of your climb (you are going to untie) you want to achieve double safety at every step. So yelling to your belayer : "safe", "off belay" (or "vaché !», my fellow climbers) is irrelevant. You're not safe and your belayer should never put you off belay.



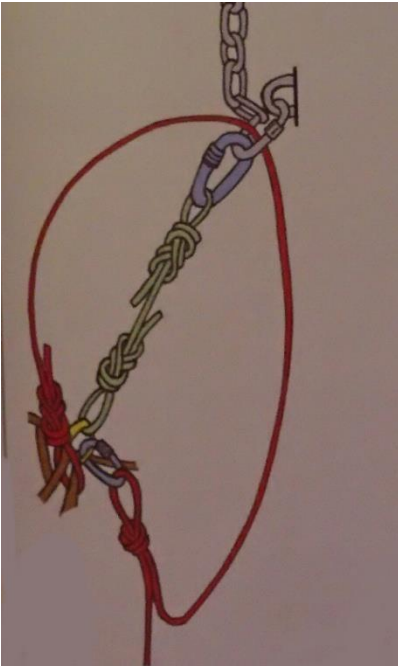
First, tie on to the chain belay with a sling (or better with a 9mm cordelette) fixed on your belay loop and a screwgate carabiner.



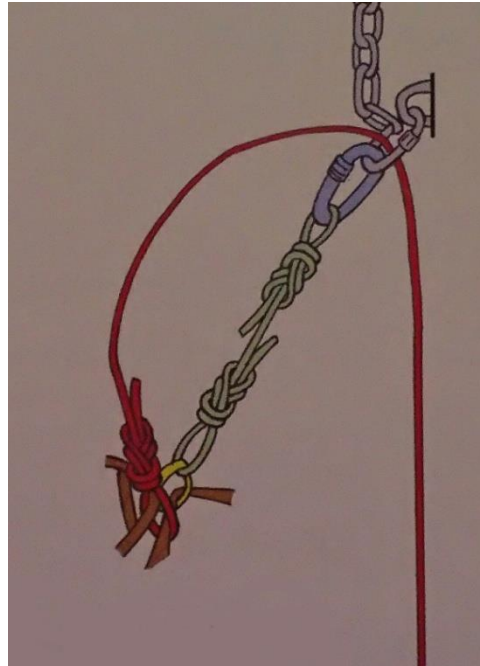
Then take some slack on your rope, make a knot and tie it to your belay loop (and **not to a gear loop**) using another screwgate carabiner. The point of this step is to prevent from losing the rope **and to stay on belay from your belayer on the ground.**



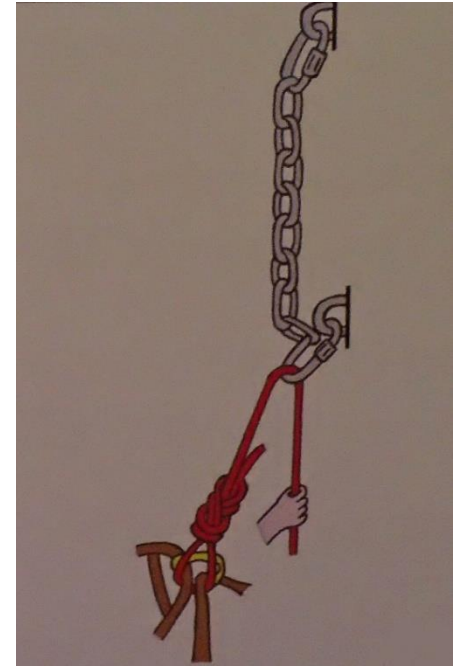
Untie your rope from your belay loop. At this point you're still secured by your sling on the belay chain AND by your belayer on the ground who should never put you off belay !



Thread the rope through the big maillon on the belay chain and tie on to your harness again like you would do on the ground.



Untie the knot you've made on the screwgate carabiner on your belay loop, check calmly that you got everything right (knot on your harness, rope properly threaded through the big maillon of the chain, make sure your belayer understands you clearly) and...



... ask your belayer to take the slack, unclip your sling from the chain and ask him to lower you off slowly.

A few remarks :

1) It's not the only way to do this, just the best in my opinion.

This film from the BMC presents two different techniques to thread the rope:

<http://www.thebmc.co.uk/how-to-lower-off-from-a-sport-climb>

The first one is also perfectly safe as long as :

- You're sure to have **more than enough rope** to be lowered off to the ground as it shortens significantly the length of rope available.
- The rope can be fed in double through the maillon(s) of the chain.

The second one in the film is the one described above (I would not use a clove hitch as a back up though, it's too easy to get it wrong, the simple overhand knot is perfect in that situation).

- 2) In the UAE, many belays come in the form of two chains on two separate bolts not linked together. In that case make sure to thread the rope in a maillon of each chain.
- 3) It might be a good idea (safer and more comfortable) to start by clipping a quickdraw in the lower maillon of the chain, then tying on to the upper bolt of the chain. If you have not led the route and the rope is not clipped in any quickdraw below you it's even compulsory, otherwise your backup is completely lost.
- 4) If people are going to top-rope the route after you, leave an extra quickdraw/carabiner on the highest bolt of the chain, it will minimize wear and tear of the lowest maillon of the chain. The last climber will have to retrieve it.
- 5) Drawings copyright : © Denis Garnier, many thanks to him.