

## Clip on Reins

Double as Leadrope on the Trail

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April 2004

Readers may be interested in this tip. These clip on reins are nice to use whilst riding but can be easily unclipped from the bit and used as a lead rope from the halter. They are also strong enough to securely tie up your horse. The one item does double duty and saves the weight and bulk of carrying a separate lead rope.

I make these reins from double braided rope that I get from my local ship's chandlery (boating shop). This rope is commonly known as "Yacht Rope". Buy a piece about one metre longer than the finished length of your reins.



From the same shop, purchase two marine grade stainless steel clips, just big enough to readily clip onto the bit (and your halter). On the other end of the clip, make sure that the eye is big enough to fit the size rope you intend to use. Ensure that you get strong rope and clips because if your horse pulls back whilst tied up and breaks free, you might be in for a long walk or worse. Stainless steel is considerably stronger than brass and won't rust like nickel-plated steel. Marine grade clips also use stainless steel springs unlike the steel springs that readily rust in brass and nickel-plated steel clips.

Whilst marine grade stainless fittings are a little dearer than the cheap alternatives, they are maintenance free, outlast them by a huge margin and won't let you down on the trail.

The hardest and most time-consuming part of the job is to attach the rope to the clips.

One way is to sew and "whip" the folded back ends with whipping twine. This is easier than eye splicing the rope but doesn't look as neat and is not as strong as an eye splice. The upper rein end in the picture is whipped.

The second and preferred method is to eye splice the rope to the clips.

A well-executed eye splice can be up to 80% of the breaking strain of the rope. The lower rein end in the picture shows an eye splice. You will need a tool called a "FID" to make your eye splices. A fid looks like a piece of polished steel rod with a dull point at one end and a hollow recess drilled in the other. I bought mine from the ship chandler in a kit that included three sizes of fids and an instruction sheet on eye splicing. Someone with access to a lathe or a drill press could easily make their own fids. In use, a long thin screwdriver is used to push the fid through the rope. There is another type of fid that looks like a rod with an eye like a sewing needle on one end. It is used with a pulling action unlike the previous type described. I have no experience with this second type so can't comment on which type is preferable other to say the one I use works.

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I will not attempt to describe how to form an eye splice in the double braided rope, as there are readily available instructions with your fid kit or search for on-line instructions<sup>1</sup>.

Two points are however worth mentioning.

- 1.) Ensure you size the eye of the splice carefully - not too big or small
- 2.) Make sure you taper the tail of the inner core, which gets buried inside the rope in the last step of forming the splice. Without an adequate taper, the rope will be too thick to feed through and there will not be a smooth transition from the eye to the main rope.

I have not seen commercial reins as strong or as durable as the ones described so you'll probably have to make your own or get someone to do it for you. Most boat chandlers know someone who can eye splice double braided rope (these people typically make up boat rigging) so ask them if you don't feel inclined to do it yourself.

I hope you find these reins as comfortable and useful as I have.

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<sup>1</sup> Make sure you search for eye splice for double braid