

## Basic Paracord Jesses

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Parachute cord – also known as ‘paracord’—has been used for many years as an alternative to leather equipment in raptors. It comes in various colours and styles; the most common and useful type being ‘550 cord’, so named because it has a minimum breaking strength of 550lbs. Non-military grade paracord is approximately 3mm in diameter, has a core of twisted nylon threads, and is readily available for purchase in most areas.



With the exception of anklets, most basic raptor equipment (jesses, leashes, extenders, etc) can be crafted from paracord. There are many benefits to its use over that of leather, which include overall strength, cost, and longevity. However, there is something of a learning curve to its use. Many guides exist on the topic of making simple paracord equipment. In the case of jesses, it can be as simple as feeding a loop of paracord through itself and tying it off:



This design has two potential flaws. The first is that the loop is free to slide, and may become larger or smaller (or disappear within itself entirely) over the course of normal use. The second is that the loop is round and smooth and more difficult to pass through a swivel than the pointed ends of leather jesses. Both of these flaws can be corrected through the use of two simple modifications; the result is a tabbed, locked paracord jess. The following guide will take a step-by-step look at making this style of jess.

A note before beginning: paracord is composed of interwoven fibers that snag easily on any rough surface. A bad snag can ruin your jesses when you've barely begun work! Take the extra time to make sure your tools are smooth and snag-free to make the process less stressful and more efficient.

**Tools:**

- Length of sturdy wire, filed round at one end (a trimmed wire coat hanger works well)
- Scissors
- Scratch awl or smooth needle-nose pliers
- Lighter or BBQ starter
- Paracord
- Ruler



### Steps:

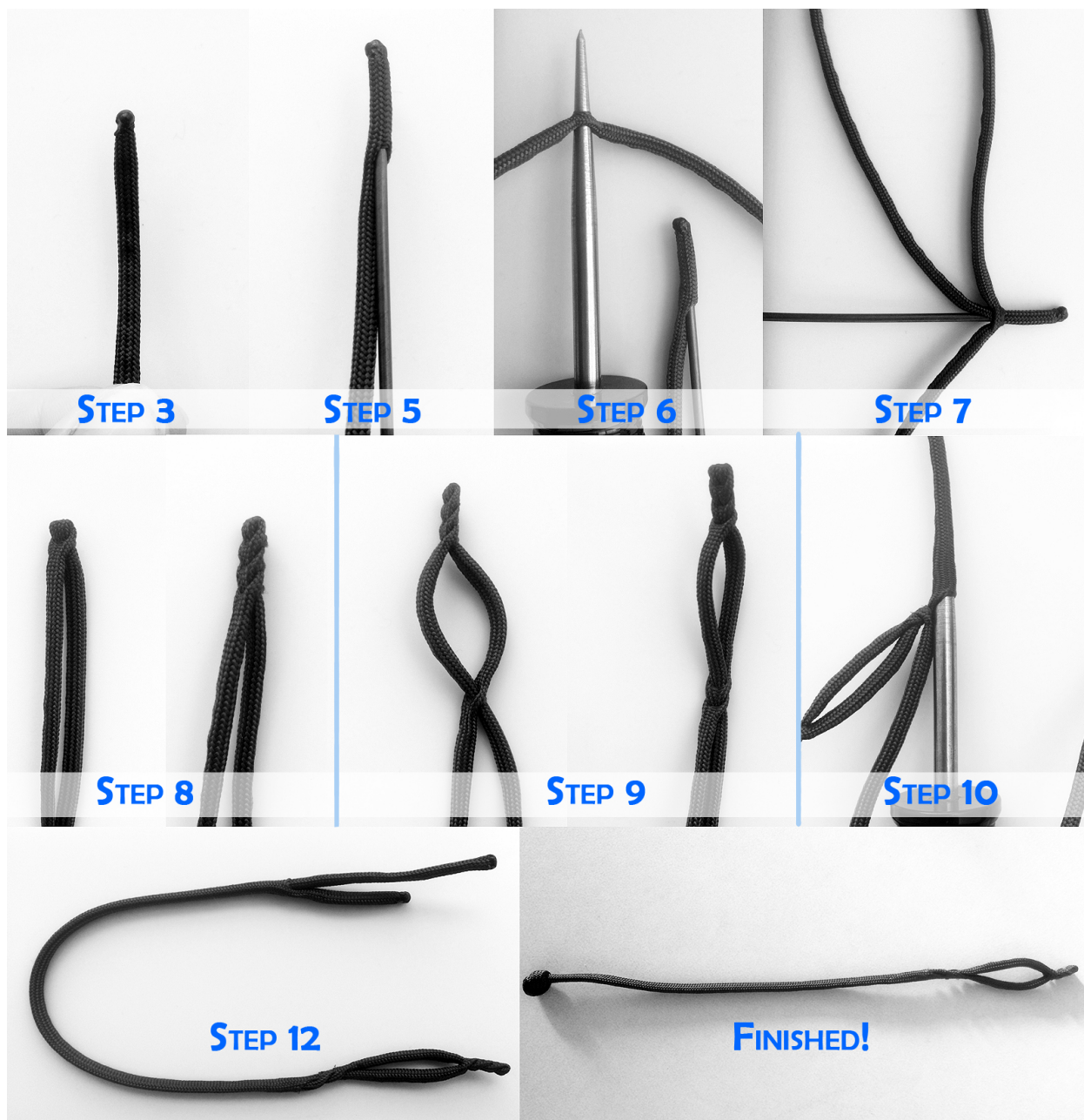
1. Cut a length of paracord that is double the length of the jess you want, plus 4 inches. Example: if you want a 7-inch long jess, cut a length of paracord that is 18 inches long.
2. Remove the core strands. Discard.
3. Melt both ends, ensuring the resulting edge is smooth. If it is jagged or likely to catch, trim it off and try again if necessary. These ends need to pass through the core of the cord, and will catch and snag if they aren't smooth. It is worth taking an extra moment to ensure that this step is done properly, as it will save time and frustration later on.
4. Using the scratch awl or pliers, make a hole half an inch from one end of the paracord, on **one side only**. Do not pass all the way through the cord. Whenever you make a hole in this manner, you are just pushing the fibers in the cord out of the way. This makes a space that you can insert objects into. You do not want to snap, pull, or damage the fibers—only displace them temporarily.
5. Insert your rounded wire into the hole.
6. Use the scratch awl to make a hole at the midpoint of your length of paracord. This hole should pass **all the way through** the cord.

7. Using the wire, carefully thread your paracord end through the new hole you've created. Try not to twist your cord while doing so—while twisting the cord won't affect the strength of the final product, it's less likely to lie flat and it will not have as nice a final appearance.
8. You now have the beginnings of your tab! Repeat what you have just done by creating a new hole half an inch from the opposite of the cord and inserting the wire, then making a hole all the way through the original cord right beneath the tab. Do this three times.

(Note: When feeding paracord through itself in this manner, be sure to alternate which end of the paracord is being fed through which strand. If it's difficult to keep track, use a drop of nail polish or whiteout to mark one end so that you can identify them more easily.)

9. On your next feed-through, make your hole approximately an inch below the tab. This is the loop of the jess, and can be as large or as small as you like if you move the hole accordingly. Feed it through one more time to lock it in place.
10. On the next pass, make the hole in **one side of the paracord only**. This is the most challenging part of making paracord equipment, and the easiest step for the paracord to get snagged. The hole you make should be as large as possible.
11. Carefully thread your wire-supported paracord inside itself. Because of the way paracord bunches and stretches, it is difficult to determine exactly where to bring the tip out again; as this is what dictates the length of your jess, it is better to go too long than too short since it is difficult to pull it back through and try again. Ideally, exit just over an inch from the end of the cord.
12. You nearly have a jess! Tie a loose knot of your preference. Do not trim or melt this knot until you have made your second jess. This makes it far easier to match the length of each jess precisely.
13. Once both jesses are completed, trim and melt the knots. If needed, you can add leather buttons for additional strength and security. Congratulations on your new jesses!





Some final notes on paracord: while a versatile and long-lasting material, paracord does have its limitations. It may not be the best option with birds that habitually pick at their equipment, as it can be shredded by focused effort. Coating vulnerable areas with ‘no-bite nailpolish’ can reduce or remove damage from equipment-picking birds, but as always, all equipment should be monitored daily for wear. For those in northern climates, paracord can also be an issue when frozen—it is very difficult to undo a frozen paracord falconer’s knot! However, single-strand paracord thaws readily (if uncomfortably) in the palm of your hand.

Using the same basic techniques listed above, you can make leashes (button, loop, fox, layman, etc) and tabbed extenders as well. With the addition of more paracord strands and basic braiding, the possibilities for equipment are nearly endless. The four-strand round braid paracord jess below managed more than 12

months of wear on a bald eagle before it needed to be replaced. While it is certainly recommended to change your equipment out more often than that, it also showcases the strength and versatility of well-made paracord equipment.



Happy paracording!