

JSA Marlinespike Seamanship Test Process and Scoring

LOCATION: Beach Point Club, 900 Rushmore Avenue, Mamaroneck, NY 10543

TIME: Tuesday, July 28, 2026, from 12:00 to 14:00

PROCEDURE: JSA will administer the contest as individual sailors arrive at the tables. Sailors will start at their leisure. Total test time is typically about 15 – 20 minutes.

The competitors need to be age 14 by end of this year. Younger sailors are welcome to come and take the whole test or only a part of it, but they won't be scored as contestants. This could be a fun time for your younger knot tying juniors!

KNOTS

- Knot tying to be graded on time in seconds to the 1/10th of a second.
- Timekeeping and verification of the knots should be done by reputable people experienced in timing sporting events and tying knots.
- To ensure consistency there should preferably be one individual timer allocated to each knot, e.g., one timer times bowlines while another times figure-eight knots.
- The timer shall give a starting signal and shall record the time from the start to when the knot is completed and dropped to the ground.
- The knot must be properly tied and reasonably tensioned.
- Each competitor may make two tries at each knot with the best time being recorded.
- The score earned for the knot tying shall be the ranking multiplied by a “point factor” (the point factor will have to be worked out to balance the relative weight of the total possible points earned for knot tying as compared to the total possible points earned in the other skill sets so that there is an approximate ratio of 40% to knot tying and 60% to the splicing and whipping skills).
- A competitor must tie and be timed on all knots to qualify for the knot tying section of the competition.
- If the two top competitors have a combined times within 1.00 seconds of each other there shall be a tie-off between the two competitors. The tie-off shall be side-by-side tying of a bowline with a simultaneous start given by a single timer. The winner shall be determined by the best two out of three wins.
- A separate trophy may be awarded for the lowest combined knot tying time.

SPLICING & WHIPPING

- Splicing and whipping shall be graded on a scale of “Outstanding” (2 pts), “Good” (6 pts), “Fair” (10 pts) and “Not done or incorrect” (15 pts).
- A maximum time of 5 min shall be given to each tested art, splice or whipping (15 minutes total).

SCORING

- The total points shall be added up of only those competitors who complete all items in all categories; this includes the points earned in the knot tying competition. The overall Marlinespike Seamanship winner shall be the competitor with the lowest number of points. The trophy will be presented at the JSA Annual Meeting in the fall.
- The Knot Tying Trophy, if any, shall be awarded to the competitor with the lowest combined knot tying time (except in the case of the “tie-off” as noted above).

RESOURCES View useful splicing guides at New England Ropes ([Eye Splice 3-strand](#)), NetKnots ([Whipping 3-strand](#)), and New England Ropes (making a [Brummel splice](#) using a tubular fid that is provided at the contest).

**JSA Marlinespike Seamanship Test
Process and Scoring**

NAME _____ CLUB _____ AGE _____

PART 1

20 seconds for a miss-tied knot

Bowline _____

Sheet Bend _____

Figure Eight Knot _____

Rolling Hitch _____

Clove Hitch _____

Total _____ seconds

Part 1 POINTS

Total seconds x ½ equals total points for Part 1 _____

PART 2

15 minutes maximum total

Appearance points:

2 points	Outstanding
6 points	Good
10 points	Fair
15 points	Not done or incorrect

Eye Splice (3-Strand) Appearance _____

Whipping (3-Strand) Appearance _____

Brummel Splice (12 Strand) Appearance _____

Part 2 POINTS

Add the appearance points to yield the total points for Part 2 _____

TOTAL POINTS OVERALL Parts 1 + 2 _____