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How to Tie a Scarf

Tie a long scarf in four reliable ways and a square scarf in one, know which to choose for the weather and the coat you're wearing, and fix a scarf that's bulky or slipping.

3-day guide · 3 chapters · Self-Directed Learning Framework

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Every guide on this site is produced with the Self-Directed Learning Framework: instead of an article that explains a topic at you, it turns the topic into a structure you work through — each chapter with one outcome, a starting action under twelve minutes, the minimum you actually need to know, a worked example, a checklist, and exercises using your own situation. No filler, no re-reading required.

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Your Scarf and the Two Everyday Wraps

> **Outcome:** "I can wear a long scarf in the simple drape and the once-around wrap, and I know which one suits which coat."

Micro-start (under 12 minutes)

Take the scarf you own, stand in front of a mirror, and hang it around your neck so both ends are the same length in front. That's already the first style.

The minimum you need to know

Scarves come in three common shapes. A long rectangular scarf, in wool or knit, is the most versatile and the one this guide uses in Chapters 1 and 2. A square scarf, often silk, is folded before tying (Chapter 3). A loop or infinity scarf has no ends and is simply worn once or twice around the neck. For a long scarf, length matters: if it reaches roughly to your waist when hung around your neck, all the knots here will work. The simple drape: hang the scarf around the back of your neck so both ends hang down the front at the same length. That's it. It suits an open coat or a jacket indoors, when you want the scarf for looks more than warmth. The once-around wrap is warmer and stays put better: (1) hang the scarf with one end about twice as long as the other, (2) take the long end across the front of your neck and around the back once, (3) let it come forward over your shoulder and hang down the front next to the short end. Adjust the loop around your neck so it sits loosely, not tight. The once-around is the everyday choice under or over a closed coat.

Worked example

Worked example: the scarf that only looked right open. Someone wears their new long wool scarf as a simple drape every day, and it looks fine with the coat open, but blows around and lets the cold in when the coat is buttoned. They try the once-around wrap instead, with one end hanging longer to start. The scarf now sits close to the neck and both ends tuck neatly inside the closed coat. They keep the simple drape for indoors and the once-around for outside.

Checklist

- [ ] Scarf shape identified: long rectangular, square, or loop
- [ ] Long scarf reaches roughly to the waist when hung
- [ ] Simple drape done with both ends level
- [ ] Once-around wrap done, starting with one end about twice as long
- [ ] Loop around the neck adjusted so it sits loosely

Exercises

1. Do the simple drape and the once-around wrap three times each in front of a mirror.
2. Try the once-around with your coat closed and open, and decide which you prefer for each.
3. Measure where your scarf ends reach when hung, to check it's long enough for Chapter 2.

Warm Knots That Stay Put

> **Outcome:** "I can tie the Parisian knot and the twice-around wrap so my scarf stays in place and keeps the cold out."

Micro-start (under 12 minutes)

Fold your long scarf in half so the two ends meet, and hold it up. You should see a loop at one end and the two loose ends at the other. That fold is the start of the Parisian knot.

The minimum you need to know

The Parisian knot, also called the European loop or slip knot, is the most useful winter knot. It holds itself in place without being tied tightly, and you can do it in about ten seconds. (1) Fold the scarf in half lengthwise so the ends meet. (2) Hang the folded scarf around the back of your neck, with the loop hanging down on one side and the two loose ends on the other. (3) Reach through the loop and pull the two loose ends through it. (4) Slide the loop up towards your neck until it's snug but not tight, and let the ends hang down the front. To loosen it, just slide the loop back down. The twice-around wrap is the warmest option, best for thinner or very long scarves on the coldest days. (1) Hang the scarf with one end much longer than the other. (2) Wrap the long end around your neck twice. (3) Let both ends hang in front, or tuck them into your coat. A chunky knitted scarf wrapped twice is usually too bulky, so use the Parisian knot or the once-around for thick scarves instead. Whichever knot you choose, put the scarf on before your coat if you want it tucked in, or after if you want it to show over the top.

Worked example

Worked example: the scarf that kept sliding off on a bike. A cyclist's once-around wrap keeps loosening and sliding off one shoulder on the way to work. They switch to the Parisian knot: scarf folded in half, loop on the left, ends pulled through the loop, loop slid up to the neck. It stays in place for the whole ride and keeps the wind off their neck. On the coldest mornings they use a thinner scarf wrapped twice around instead, tucked into the jacket.

Checklist

- [ ] Scarf folded in half lengthwise so the ends meet
- [ ] Loop on one side, loose ends on the other
- [ ] Both loose ends pulled through the loop
- [ ] Loop slid up until snug, not tight
- [ ] Twice-around used for thinner scarves, not chunky ones
- [ ] Scarf put on before or after the coat, depending on the look wanted

Exercises

1. Tie the Parisian knot five times in a row, then once without looking in the mirror.
2. Time yourself tying it: aim for under fifteen seconds.
3. Wear the Parisian knot outside on a windy day and check whether it moved.

Square Silk Scarves and Fixing Bulky or Slipping Scarves

> **Outcome:** "I can tie a square scarf as a neckerchief, and fix a scarf that looks bulky or keeps slipping without starting over."

Micro-start (under 12 minutes)

If you have a square scarf, lay it flat and fold it corner to corner into a triangle. If you don't, practise the fixes below on your long scarf instead.

The minimum you need to know

A square scarf, often silk or cotton, is folded into a band before tying. (1) Fold it corner to corner into a triangle. (2) Starting from the long edge, fold it over in strips about two fingers wide until it becomes a long, narrow band. (3) Wrap the band around your neck so the ends meet at the front or slightly to one side. (4) Tie a small knot, or a double knot for a slippery fabric, and tuck or spread the ends. This is the neckerchief. For a looser look, skip the folding into a band: wear the triangle with its point at the front and tie the two ends behind your neck. Two problems account for most scarf frustration. If a scarf looks bulky, you've usually wrapped it too many times for its thickness. Take one wrap out, or switch to the Parisian knot, which keeps the bulk at the front instead of around your whole neck. Spreading the fabric flat across the back of your neck also helps. If a scarf keeps slipping, the knot isn't holding it. Switch from a drape to the once-around or the Parisian knot. For silk, use a double knot, because silk slides more than wool. A scarf that looks slightly casual is fine. It's meant to look worn, not arranged.

Worked example

Worked example: a bulky scarf under a coat. Someone's thick knitted scarf, wrapped twice around, pushes their coat collar up and makes their neck look twice its size. They take one wrap out and tie it as a Parisian knot instead, spreading the fabric flat across the back of the neck. The coat collar sits properly again, and the scarf still covers the front of the neck. Later they try a square silk scarf as a neckerchief for an office day, with a double knot so it stays tied.

Checklist

- [ ] Square scarf folded into a triangle, then into a narrow band
- [ ] Neckerchief tied with a small knot (double knot for silk)
- [ ] Triangle style tried with the point at the front
- [ ] Bulky scarf fixed by removing a wrap or switching to the Parisian knot
- [ ] Slipping scarf fixed with the once-around or Parisian knot

Exercises

1. Tie a square scarf as a neckerchief, or fold a long scarf into a band for practice.
2. Take your bulkiest way of wearing a scarf and reduce it by one wrap.
3. Pick one knot for each of your coats and write it down, so tomorrow is a ten-second decision.

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