

The most versatile piece of kit ever?

Why buying 12 metres of special string may be the cleverest thing you do all week...

There are few things more comforting out on the hill than having your back covered by a piece of kit you know is there but don't even notice. Quite often that takes the form of something fairly bulky like a survival bag, a personal locator beacon, spare batteries or a down jacket. But one of the most versatile items you can carry weighs practically nothing and has literally dozens of uses. You can even carry it around your wrist.

"Unlike strings, twines, general cable and nylon cords, Type III 550 paracord is a very technical rope with unique physical properties that allow it to be adapted to everything from dental floss to suture fabric in the field," says search and rescue specialist Lyle Brotherton, author of *The Ultimate Navigation Manual*.

"Type III 550 paracord has a tensile strength of 250kg. It's a dynamic rope that stretches by 30 per cent before breaking, won't rot or mildew, and is UV-resistant. Twelve metres weighs just over 80g."

Buy the right kind, though, says Lyle. Lots of items are sold as paracord, but the only genuine Type III is made in the States to a strict specification. Ensure it's US-manufactured 550 Type III; and if you need to cut it, use a sharp pair of scissors then seal with a flame.



LANYARD
Essential for securing kit to your person or rucksack, such as your compass, hand-held satnav (GPS receiver) or mobile phone. Lose one of these and you could be in deep trouble.

HALYARD
Paracord, despite a diameter of just over 3mm, has a minimum tensile strength of 250kg and is perfect for lifting or lowering kit – from ice axes to rucksacks – over drops. Just remember to anchor the other end to ensure you don't drop it...

WASHING LINE
If you need to dry your kit at camp after a rainy day, attach a length between two objects.

GUY ROPES
Extra support for your tent in high winds can be gained from tensioning paracord against a rock or other solid object then attaching the other end to your tent. And if you use glow-in-the-dark paracord you won't trip over it at night!

SPARE BOOTLACES
Spare laces are the item we all forget but we're stuffed without. Never be without them again!

AND LOADS MORE USES...

Zip pulls	Dog lead	Lashing items to your pack
Creating a pacing counter using toggles	Securing items to a roof rack	A fire-starting bow string
Securing a splint to a broken limb	Hanging food in a bear-safe tree (you never know)	Emergency belt
	Key fob	Securing rucksacks to a car roof rack



When counting paces, you can keep track using toggles on a piece of paracord.

You can also separate the threads inside the cord and use them as:

- Dental floss, fishing line
- Sewing/suture fabric
- Clothing or equipment repair
- Tinder for firelighting

US-manufactured Type III 550 paracord: a walker's best friend?

All you need is a few simple tools...



...and a bit of creativity...

...and you've got your very own accessory range!

