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# Nautical Rigging Knives: A Guide to the Market



## Synopsis

*Contemporary rigging knives should have five specific features—attributes corroborated by historical research and current experts. This document describes these five core features, and reviews dozens of rigging knives (both fixed-blade and folding) against them. Through most of September 2008, there was a documented need for one additional folding knife design that did not exist. With the newly announced [Myerchin P300 Knife](#) (launched late September 2008), this is no longer the case.*

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*Vince Francis*  
Technical Author, Researcher



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## Introduction

This document introduces tools that are common to boaters and emphasizes rigging knives that are used by sailors. The primary goal of this document is to outline the status and offerings of the rigging knife market. A secondary goal is to give visibility to the features that define modern day rigging knives, and to define historical attributes of these tools.

Currently, fixed-blade knives are combined with separate marlin spikes and shackle keys. Additionally, performance rescue knives that fold and lock can be used in this way. As a third option, folding rigging knives could offer some advantages, to including a very few tools into one design, but with greater focus than any multi-tool.

The promise for folding rigging knives entails five core requirements or features:

- a locking blade of quality steel and appropriate shape
- a dedicated and locking marlin spike
- a foldout shackle key that easily can be made to include a bottle and can opener
- a lanyard and carrying strategy
- finish the design with true one-handed usability, and that's it—nothing else.

Sailors get to choose from dozens of folding rigging knives, each of which has some or most of these features, but not one of which has all of them (until the [Myerchin P300](#)). Therefore, this document reviews all types of rigging knives. This document addresses the following questions:

- ["What are Typical Tools for Boaters?" on page 6](#)
- ["What is a Rigging Knife?" on page 8](#)
- ["What Rigging Knives are Available?" on page 18](#)
- ["What More is Needed from the Makers of Folding Rigging Knives?" on page 30](#)
- ["What Are Alternative "Nautical" Knives?" on page 31](#)
- ["Conclusion" on page 34](#)

## How the Myerchin P300 Changed Things?

The initial version of this research document was published in complete form on September 10, 2008. Certain document revisions have become helpful or compelling since that time, and these revisions and research updates are itemized in "[Document Revision Tracking](#)" on page 35.

Myerchin launched the [P300 Sailing Tool](#) (a folding rigging knife) within two weeks of published research (this document) that cited the need for such a design. These two developments are very much the coincidence that they appear to be.

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**NOTE:** The Myerchin P300 is a new rigging knife design that contains each of these five core features, and it is the only folding design that does so. The Myerchin P300 design became available within two weeks after this research publication.

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There remain many additional folding options. Alternative designs and alternative knife makers are now and always have been cited with Myerchin and its designs. If this document favors one folding design, it is the Myerchin P300, but certainly some other designs and makers have inspired passion from their users.

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**NOTE:** All knives remain subject to jurisdictional restrictions for locking blades on folding knives, and concealment or carrying of fixed or folding blades. For additional information, refer to the section "[Legality Resources](#)" on page 35.

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### What are Typical Tools for Boaters?

The most common tools for boaters of any type include the following:

- a boating toolbox stocked with predictable and also lesser known tools
- multi-tools often carried in a sheath on a belt
- cooking tools and utensils stored in the galley or carried in a cargo bag
- rigging knives used specifically by sailors while on deck, in motion with sails

This topic provides additional resources for those who wish to delve into any category.

### Well-stocked Toolbox

A well-stocked toolbox likely resides onboard or nearby onshore. Some online articles describe boating toolboxes, as do retail books. These are two resources that provide additional information.

- [How to Build a Boat Toolbox](#)
- [Google's latest returns on "boating toolbox"](#)

### Multi-tools

Multi-tools support various tasks on short notice. These tools are extremely popular across society, they inspire true passion from their users, and they come in three primary types:

- [Standard Multi-Tools](#)
- [Swiss Army Multi-Tools](#)
- [Simpler Metallic Multi-tools](#)

Additional resources for multi-tools include the following:

- [Multitool.org's Online Forum](#)
- [Best Multitool Guide: Leatherman vs Swiss Army Knife for Backpacking and Daily Use](#)

### Standard Multi-Tools

The standard or conventional multi-tool is a butterfly-handled device in which both sides of the handle encase smaller foldout tools. Typically, both sides of the butterfly handle turn into plier handles when opened. Having at least one knife blade is common. There are nearly countless high-end, middle-road, and budget multi-tools for many applications.

- [Leatherman™](#) multi-tools are perhaps the most widely known, and there are several Leatherman models [specifically designed for boaters](#).

- High-end and performance multi-tools are also offered by [SOG Knives](#) and [Gerber](#).
- Victorinox has at least one butterfly-style multi-tool, the [SwissTool-X](#).
- Additional resources, makers, and models are available, as are independent reviews.

### Swiss Army Multi-Tools

Any Swiss Army knife has at least one blade. Those blades and the accompanying tools vary widely by application. A few Swiss Army designs emphasize the needs of boaters:

- [Victorinox Swiss Army™ Mariner/Helmsman Lockback](#), model 53664
- [Victorinox Swiss Army™ Skipper Lockback](#), model 53663
- [Wenger Swiss Army™ Alinghi Yachtsman](#), model 16310

### Simpler Metallic Multi-tools

Simpler metallic multi-tools offer additional options.

- The [Attwood™ Boaters Key/Multi-tool, model 66500-3](#), provides a series of keys, wrenches, and screwdrivers specific to boats. Additional choices for this type of multi-tool include the [CAT KEY Shackle Tool](#) and [Davis Universal Deck Plate Key](#).
- Another multi-tool of this type is a shackle key that has additional functions. That would be the [Berkeley Point Titanium Shackle Key, model TSK0156](#).

### Cooking Utensils

Boaters can be accomplished cooks, and some resources delve into onboard cooking tools:

- [SailGB's Cooking Equipment and Utensils](#)
- [Sailnet's "Cooking On board" thread](#) - a superior itemization of galley tools

### One Specific Tool for Sailors—The Rigging Knife

Being distinct from all other boating tools, rigging knives have a dedicated focus for sailors on deck. Sailors embrace wind, waves, large sails, strong and sometimes violent lines, and hardware that is subject to a corrosive environment. In this environment, a well-designed rigging knife enables the following tasks:

- working to secure or break loose a stubborn shackle
- cutting off the knotted end of a severely fouled and violently active jib sheet
- prying loose and unraveling a very tight knot without damaging the line any further
- additional tasks such as rope splicing

## What is a Rigging Knife?

This section provides the foundation by which to evaluate any rigging knife. This section defines rigging, then defines five established characteristics of a tool that is made for rigging. For an overview that weighs many specific knives against these five criteria, refer to "*What Rigging Knives are Available?*" on page 18.

## The Nature of Rigging

Rigging entails sails, all rigid structures that hoist and support those sails (spars, masts, yard arms, spreaders), and cordage. Cordage entails cables and ropes. Cables can be referred to as shrouds or stays, and ropes are called lines or sheets. The following article relies heavily upon the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and further describes nautical rigging:

- Wikipedia's **Rigging** article and additional references  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rigging>

The rigging knife is not a wonder tool that can resolve any issue whatsoever with sails and lines. Rather, a dedicated rigging knife specializes in doing a few very specific tasks well.

## Five Characteristics of a Modern Rigging Knife

*Consider the research performed by Sam Cox* to design and recreate a historically accurate rigging knife for the *Spirit of South Carolina* tall ship. The result is a design that is amazingly consistent with modern-day priorities. The knife has a fixed sheepsfoot blade with a separate marlin spike carried in the same sheath. The spike has a shackle slot. History itself provides the greatest evidence for the evaluations conveyed in this document.

A rigging knife is designed to work with lines and shackles that function with sails, and it must be as safe as possible, for people, boats, lines, and sails. This topic describes what many sailors consider to be the five standard elements of nautical rigging knives.

- [1 - Blades for Rigging Knives](#)
- [2 - Marlin Spikes](#)
- [3 - Shackle Keys](#)
- [4 - Securing and Accessibility](#)
- [5 - One-hand Usefulness for Everything](#)

This section concludes by asking the question, "*That's It—Nothing More?*" on page 17.

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**NOTE:** Not every knife can be presumed to be safe, even if locking blades or locking marlin spikes are cited as features.

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## 1 – Blades for Rigging Knives

Rigging knives emphasize blades with rounded or squared-off tips. These shapes lessen the risk of injury. If one falls or the knife is dropped, there is less chance that the blade injures someone, gouges a hole in the deck, or gashes a sail. Naturally, rigging knives often emphasize steel that resists rust.

Folding blades are widely available, and a locking feature can make them stronger and safer if that locking feature is well designed. Several experienced sailors still prefer a fixed blade. Other blade factors entail the type of cutting edge, and the point.

Therefore, the blades of rigging knives include the following characteristics:

- **Structure:** Rigging knives are either fixed-blade or folding.
- **Shape and Tip:** Blade tips are usually rounded (whaler), angled (semi-sheepsfoot), or squared-off (sheepsfoot or clipped tip). If knives have a point, as they often do with a whaler shape, this tip is significantly reduced in sharpness.
- **Grind:** Blade grind must retain a sharp edge for use with lines, and also support re-sharpening over time.
- **Edge:** The cutting edge must create a clean slice through line, preferably with one swipe. Knife edges can be straight, serrated, or both.
- **Steel:** Steel must resist rust while supporting repeated re-sharpenings over time.

There are likely more folding designs than fixed-blade designs in general production today. Fixed blades dominate but do not entirely own the high-end. Both fixed and folding blades have advantages and disadvantages.

One historical use for rigging knives is to pound on the back of it with a mallet to cut through extremely thick line. Where this application still exists, fixed-blade knives have the only edge, as such use would destroy any folding option on the market.

For additional commentary about this and certain additional factors, refer to the work by Brion Toss, a widely-known and authoritative author on rigging:

- “*The Complete Rigger’s Apprentice: The Tools and Techniques for Modern and Traditional Rigging*,” ISBN 0-07-064840-9 (International Marine/McGraw Hill, publisher)

There remains a need to assess the folding knife market—it is huge and offers some advantages. Therefore, this document addresses both types of rigging knives, and largely allows knife makers to speak for themselves and consumers to decide for themselves.

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**NOTE:** Perhaps not everyone needs to pound on a rigging knife with a mallet to cut through line, but safety is certainly a supreme criteria for any type of knife.

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### Fixed Blades

Fixed-blade knives enjoy well-known advantages in strength and ease of use. In any *quality* fixed-blade knife, the blade becomes a tang that extends through the length of the handle. This single piece of metal makes the overall knife stronger. Tangs can become more narrow in the handle so as to reduce some overall weight.

Another advantage with fixed blades is that they are quicker to deploy than folding knives. This is relevant when working in a one-handed environment, in which the other hand keeps the sailor on the boat. A third advantage is that a fixed blade knives remove the possibility of having the blade fold back to the hand and slicing one's fingers.

Perhaps one disadvantage with fixed-blade knives is the size, increasing the need to carry the knife in a sheath on a belt. That sheath often must remain accessible even with foul weather gear. Another disadvantage can be the legality if carrying such a knife in public.

Fixed-blade knives often require that two other tools be carried separate from the knife. A separate marlin spike or a shackle key can be carried in the same sheath as a kit or system.

### Folding Blades

Folding blades came of age in the 20th century with several manufacturing and design breakthroughs. They also create concern, but certainly some designers have emphasized safety and one-handedness as their priorities. One advantage with folding knives is their smaller size, making such knives easier to carry in legal fashion, but this depends on the jurisdiction.

Another advantage is that folding knives can incorporate additional tools into the knife itself, decreasing the need for separate tools. Of course, this becomes a liability when taken to excess, as often happens.

Selectively, some folding knives can make one-handed opening easy, and also lock the blade in both the opened and closed positions. As an extreme example, SOG® gives a great vision of what is possible for folding knives. Perhaps they can offer rigging knives at some time in the future. *Several SOG® series folding knives* offer Arc-Lock™ and SAT™.

Disadvantages with folding knives could include legality. Locking blades simply are not legal in some jurisdictions. This might explain why so many folding rigging knives that come from the UK in particular do not make the blade to be locking. However, on the same rigging knives, the marlin spike often is locking.

Finally, folding knives are only one-handed some of the time. That is, most folding rigging knives are not one-handed. This is very ironic, given the general accomplishments of knife-making in general, and the known requirements of sailors for centuries (for a free hand).

## Sheepsfoot or Rounded Sheepsfoot Blade

This is perhaps the most traditional and common shape for dedicated rigging knives. The blade tip is angled downward to reduce or eliminate any sharp point on the end. The cutting edge can be smooth-edged (straight), serrated, or a combination of the two.

- *The AG Russell Seamaster* is a folding rigging knife with a rounded-down sheepsfoot shape. This blade offers a combined 50% straight and 50% serrated edge. The *front* half of the edge is serrated, making it unique in the entire field of rigging knives. This knife presumes a separate shackle key.
- *The Davis Deluxe Rigging Knives, and Model 1551* in particular, employ a fairly standard sheepsfoot blade. Model 1551 has a blade, spike, and shackle key, and this is desirable. However, these knives currently lack locking functionality for the blade and for the marlin spike, and may not be one-handed.
- *Myerchin A500 Fixed-blade* and *Myerchin A508 Fixed-blade* both feature the sheepsfoot shape in performance rigging fixed blades. These fixed-blade knives presume a separate marlin spike and shackle key.
- *The Sheffield folding rigging knives* all use or modify the sheepsfoot blade shape. As with the Davis knife, these Sheffield knives address most things in fairly economical package, but leave out locking blades and one-handed operation.
- *Spyderco Atlantic Salt, Spyderco Mariner Salt, Spyderco Assist, and Spyderco Salt 1* all accomplish advanced locking blades that start with a sheepsfoot shape, and then modify that shape. The *Spyderco Pacific Salt* cannot be called a modified sheepsfoot shape, for example, but this is why Spyderco offers so many designs—to emphasize variety in shapes.

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**NOTE:** Quality rescue knives, by definition, do not have marlin spikes nor shackle keys, but almost invariably, they have locking blades.

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- *Wichard* and *Whitby* rigging knives also use the sheepsfoot shape for their knives.

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**NOTE:** *Wichard* models 10061-10064 and models 10031-10034 may offer good to great performance for a competitive price, without sacrificing safety, and they use a sheepsfoot blade; however, Wichard sacrifices one-handed functionality, and rather emphasizes the need for two hands when using the blade or the spike. The foldout shackle key seems very user friendly. Overall, two-handed operation has to be deliberate for the sailing event or context for which this design was developed.

*Whitby's* accomplishments compare to those of Sheffield and Davis, in which so much is offered at the cost of a locking blade.

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### Rounded Whaler Blade

The whaler blade is the second most common shapes for rigging knives. The whaler tip is rounded and there is often a slightly pointed tip as a compromise between safety and wider utility. The edge can be completely smooth, entirely serrated, or any combination of both.

- The [Boye Basic Cobalt 3](#) is available in two options, one of which is a rounded tip.
- Most [Myerchin Fixed Blade rigging knives](#) emphasize this traditional whaler shape. Models A001, A100, and B001 would be primary examples.
- [The Spyderco Aqua Salt fixed-blade marine knife](#) might be classifiable as a whaler blade, but it pushes the envelope because it is more pointed than any standard rigging knife.

### Squared-off Blade

For this type of blade, the tip is nipped off at the end, making it more square than with the sheepfoot, and the squared tip is not sharpened.

- The [Boye Sheepfoot Cobalt Folder](#) removes the pointed tip entirely off the end of the blade, and leaves that squared edge unsharpened. This approach attains the performance of a rescue blade while achieving the increased safety of a rigging blade.

### Hawksbill or Billhook Blade

This shape is much less common for “rigging knives,” but this shape has a decisive nautical presence. This knife resembles a carpet cutting knife with a longer blade, like a fruit-picking knife. The cutting edge is hook-shaped, and this increases the ability to cut multiple loose lines or poorly controlled lines. This shape does not eliminate the pointed tip of the knife, but protects it somewhat by curving it downward or rounding it off slightly, or both. The edge can be smooth, serrated, or a combination of the two.

These would be some fixed-blade and folding examples of the hawksbill shape. Most are not rigging knives.

- [CRKT Bear Claw](#) (fixed blade). [Alternate availability here](#), as one example. The CRKT Bear Claw has a hooked blade with a ‘tear-drop’ tip that is a sharply rounded tip.
- [Generic Hawksbill out of Sheffield, UK](#)
- [Shefftek Hillwalker Knife](#) is not marketed as a rigging or marine knife, but it is made by a company that has a long maritime presence.
- [Smith & Wesson CKMAR Cuttin’ Horse Marlin Spike Knife](#)—a very rare *rigging* knife with both a locking blade and spike, and they have chosen a hawksbill blade. This knife is made overseas, and further evaluation is pending.
- [Spyderco C106 Tasman Salt \(hawksbill folding knife\)](#),
- [Spyderco Harpy C08 \(hawksbill folding knife\)](#)

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**NOTE:** The hawksbill shape inspired the [Spyderco Whale Rescue Blade](#) designed for use with a 10-foot extension pole to rescue whales in submerged nets.

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### Edge Types

The cutting edge of a rigging knife can be smooth (straight), serrated, or have a combination of smooth and serrated edges. Very few, if any, rigging knives have a double-edged blade, in which the top and the bottom of the blade have an edge. Double-edged blades are exceptionally dangerous in a marine environment, but at least one water knife employs them—the [CRKT Hammond A.B.C. Aqua Whitewater #2604](#).

Serration achieves certain advantages for a rigging environment, and it is no coincidence that so many rigging knives use serration for at least a portion of any given blade. Serration combines the slicing action of a knife with the cutting action of a saw. The valleys (recessed portions) of a serrated edge remain sharper over time because the ridges take most of the burden. Furthermore, the valleys of a serrated edge actually increase the cutting surface of the blade.

Serrated knives can be resharpened, but it takes more time and care. Quality knife-makers such as Myerchin educate customers about this factor prior to a sale.

A combined-edge blade can increase the cutting power through lines while at the same time retaining the wider usefulness of a straight edge. Perhaps the leading innovator of the hybrid edge would be A.G. Russell with their [Seamaster model](#), as they are the only maker to put serration at the front of a combined edge.

Additional information about the nature of serrated blades can be found at many resources, to include the following articles:

- Wise4Living.com's "[Serrated Knife](#)" article
- Yachts-vip.com offers an additional article, "[Review of the Knives Used in Boating](#)," to include a discussion of serration for rigging knives.

### Steel Characteristics and Grind Types

The grade of steel can vary significantly, and is one of the largest factors in the overall cost of any knife. One very high priority is rust-proof or rust-resistant steel. Being able to sharpen the blade over time becomes a factor, as does the ability of any given steel to hold a sharp edge. Consider these factors when reviewing knives for a purchase.

There are several articles that describes the various grades of steel that are available with their respective advantages. Such resources include the following:

- "[Steels Used by Knife Makers](#)," by Bob Engnanth
- [A.G. Russell Knives' "Steel](#)," to include additional recommendations for reading

The grind of a knife blade refers to how a slab of steel is shaped to retain a sharp edge. The following resources describe how grinds can vary. The grind can influence how sharp a blade can become, how long it can retain a sharp edge, and how easily it can be resharpened. Naturally, this entails the grade of steel as well, and ample information remains available for those who wish to delve more deeply into this factor:

- Ragweedforge.com's "[Blade Grinds](#)"
- The KnifeCenter.com provides countless authoritative articles, and their article entitled "[General Knife Sharpening Instructions](#)" is a relevant starting point.

## 2 – Marlin Spikes

The marlin spike, marlinespike, or marlingspike is used for working with lines of various diameter and enables at least three different tasks: prying loose and unraveling a tight knot without damaging the line, splicing lines, and pulling lashings tight. These are the most common applications, but there are a few more.

There is no other tool that can replace the marlin spike for a sailor, unless it were to be a standalone awl or spike. The spike on folding rigging knives should be locking.

Consider the following perspective from Brion Toss, author of the most compellingly authoritative book available on rigging:

*“All of rigging—right up to its most abstract engineering complications—is based on principles and procedures relating to this tool. It is used for pulling seizings and lashings tight, making splices, loosening jammed knots, and tightening shackles...Many people like the folding rigger's knife-spike combination, but I don't; a spike is too often needed in a hurry when you don't have both hands free.”*

Brion Toss, "[The Complete Rigger's Apprentice: The Tools and Techniques for Modern and Traditional Rigging](#)," ISBN 0-07-064840-9 (Internat'l Marine/McGraw Hill, publisher)

Marlin spikes are available to support both fixed-blade and folding rigging knives. Marlin spikes can be standalone and carried separately, perhaps in the same sheath as a fixed-blade rigging knife. Marlin spikes can also be included in folding rigging knives very easily, and many manufacturers make them locking, even if the blade on the knife itself is not locking. Marlin spikes sometimes include a shackle key slot as a part of the spike. Below is one marlin spike available specifically from a leading maker of rigging knives:

- [Myerchin's A008/A009 Marlin Spike, Shackler and Sheath](#)
- [Sheffield Marlin Spike and Sheath](#)
- [Grohman #3154 Marlin Spike and Shackler](#)

### 3 - Shackle Keys

Shackles are hardware rings or clasps (per se) that are designed to be difficult to open. Most often, they attach a sail to a halyard. They are exposed to the elements, and a shackle key may be the only way to open or close shackles in reliably tight fashion. Shackle keys are also known as shackle breakers.

Some folding knives incorporate a separate fold-out shackle key, but these are rarely locking. More often, folding knives create a slot in the blade, the spike, or the handle to function as a shackle key.

Fixed-blade knives may incorporate a shackle slot in the main blade, and some standalone marlin spikes have a shackle slot.

Finally, shackle keys can be purchased separately. These would be some examples of standalone shackle keys or marlin spikes with a pronounced shackle key slot:

- Answers.com provides our [definition of shackle](#) at the present time, and we refer specifically to spin and anchor shackles.
- Answerbag.com elaborates by answering the question, “[On a rigging knife, what do you use the shackle key for and how do you use it?](#)”
- Berkeley Point provides a standalone shackle key called the [TSK0156 Titanium Shackle Key](#) that complements any rigging knife that does not have a shackle key.
- [Myerchin's A008/A009 Marlin Spike](#)—a standalone marlin spike with shackle slot.
- Wichard offers a [standalone shackle key](#) similar to Berkeley point at less than half the price (\$13 USD), but one gives up certain advantages of titanium.

A shackle key can (and sometimes does) combine a bottle opener, a can opener, or both. One example of a foldout shackle key in this vein is offered by [Sheffield](#), and another is that offered by [Wichard](#).

#### Shackle Pliers by Myerchin, Inc.

As of late September 2008, Myerchin has launched the [P300 Series Sailor's Tool](#), a rigging knife that not only contains (for the first time available in this industry) each of the five core requirements of a rigging knife that are described in this document, but also revises the concept of a shackle key into shackle pliers complete with a handle.

### 4 - Securing and Accessibility

One priority on deck with any tool is keeping that tool from dropping on self, on others, on the deck, on sails, or dropping overboard. To that end, rigging knives have long emphasized bales, lanyard loops or holes for lanyards that are independent of sheaths.

There are two primary characteristics for lanyards that support rigging knives:

- One side of the lanyard attaches the knife to one's belt or harness. This side of the lanyard must be quickly removable so that the lanyard can move with the knife. It must detach from the belt or harness with one hand, and not be overly long.
- The other side of the lanyard, naturally, attaches to the knife itself. There is often an additional loop just above the knife so that your hand can slip through that loop prior to detaching the lanyard from the belt. This loop attaches the knife to the wrist, so that when the knife is knocked out of the hand, it drops merely a few inches at most.

Brion Toss speaks to lanyards and provides illustrative instructions. At least one craftsman has taken this concept further to offer high-end lanyards that follow Toss' approach and address further ideas. These lanyards are true works of art and are meant to be used (heavily), but they may cost more than many rigging knives themselves:

- FrayedKnotArt.com's [Boatswain's Lanyards](#)
- FrayedKnotArt.com's [Knife and Keychain Lanyards and Pouches](#)

Many nautical lanyards may be available for keeping the knife around the neck. This creates so many potential issues around sails and lines that this matter will not be investigated any further in this document.

Good sheaths can be bundled with a given knife at the time of purchase, or are available separately, perhaps for an upgrade. Sheaths still presume the presence of a lanyard for rigging knives, and likely for marlin spikes and shackle keys as well.

The first concern with a sheath of any nature is where to mount it—a belt is a given, but with foul weather gear, the belt may be concealed underneath. There are, of course, alternate mounting locations for the sheath or lanyard. Two workarounds are as follows:

- The first workaround is to use a fanny pack, or a web wading belt that is made for soldiers, divers or flyfisherpersons. In the case of Army/Navy gear, such a belt may be called a shell belt, garrison belt, or pistol belt.

Such a belt is quickly removable, it is often designed for a wet environment, it can be very lightweight, and it can carry multiple belt-mounted tools over foul weather gear. Sometimes wading belts also include a small fanny pack that offers a great deal of practicality to a sailor. A web wading belt is not likely to interfere with a life vest nor portable flotation device (PFD), nor is it likely to interfere with the dynamic harness that keeps a sailor tied to the boat. However, such compatibility cannot be assumed, and everything should be verified by peers or the skipper.

These would be a couple examples of lightweight wading belts:

- [Simms Web Wading Belt](#) (\$10.95 - \$16.95 USD)

- [Multiple wading belts to include nylon, neoprene, back-support, and fanny-pack options](#)
- [The Hunters Wading Belt](#) has inspired quite a few divers as well as surfcasters
- Another workaround when wearing foul weather gear is to use a specialized sheath for certain rescue knives, and to mount it in an alternate location.
  - [NRSweb.com offers several such rescue or boating knives with specialized sheaths](#)

With or without a sheath, rigging knives simply are not rigging knives if they do not have a lanyard loop or hole through which to attach a lanyard.

## 5 - One-hand Usefulness for Everything

One-hand operation enables the supreme credo while in motion on the water—"One hand for (holding) the ship, and one hand for self." Fixed-blade knives and stand-alone marlin spikes have a decisive edge for one-handed usefulness. Selectively, some folding knives can make one-handed opening easy, and also lock the blade in the opened position.

Perhaps one-handedness can be an incremental factor rather than a black-and-white, all-or-nothing factor. One-handedness would entail these elements for rigging knives, and most folding knives do not address all of them across the board:

- One-handedness for the blade, to entail opening assistance
- One-handedness for the marlin spike
- One-handedness for the shackle key
- One-handedness for the lanyard
- One-handed locking and unlocking, not just one-handed locking
- One-handed opening and closing, not just one-handed opening
- Left-handedness as well as right-handedness (ambidexterity for the knife and the sheath, if applicable)

As an extreme example, SOG<sup>®</sup> gives a great vision of what is possible for one-handed and ambidextrous folding knives. Perhaps they can offer rigging knives at some time in the future. [Several SOG<sup>®</sup> series folding knives](#) offer Arc-Lock<sup>™</sup> or SAT<sup>™</sup>.

## That's It—Nothing More?

It can be demonstrated in multiple ways that it is advantageous to have nothing more on rigging knives than the five features described in this topic.

- Blade of appropriate shape and steel
- Marlin spike
- Shackle key
- Lanyard loop

- One-handed operation for everything

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**NOTE:** Perhaps one exception would be to adapt shackle keys to include a bottle opener and can opener, as these can be added to the design of a shackle key without reducing the core mission of the shackle key. Several makers do this.

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Rigging knives should have a simple design and a small set of features for these reasons:

- Multi-tools, Swiss Army knives, and other boating tools are likely to reside elsewhere on a boat anyway, perhaps in safer stowage. If this is the case, then rigging knives are free to function strictly as rigging knives, doing nothing more and doing it better.
- Multi-tools can get lost or damaged, because such multi-tools are not made to specialize in the rigors of a rigging environment.
- Sailors benefit from a rigging knife that has every characteristic cited in this document, while at the same time remaining relatively disposable.

Therefore, performance can be gained from structural simplicity. Another reason why a rigging knife should be fairly simple is to keep the price down, where possible.

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## What Rigging Knives are Available?

There are many rigging knives available, and some of them have good to great reputations. This section provides an inventory of nautical rigging knives that are widely available in the market today. This inventory is subject to changes in availability and may not be comprehensive. This section includes the following classes of rigging knives:

- ["Fixed-Blade Rigging Knives" on page 19](#)
- ["Folding Rigging Knives" on page 21](#)
  - ["Classic Folding Designs" on page 21](#)
  - ["Modern Folding Designs" on page 22](#)

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**NOTE:** At the present time, it can be demonstrated with ease that every maker of *folding* rigging knives has missed one point. See ["What More is Needed from the Makers of Folding Rigging Knives?" on page 30](#) for additional information.

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Rigging knives are a very specific type of "nautical" knife. For alternative knives in a marine environment, refer to ["What Are Alternative "Nautical" Knives?" on page 31](#).

## Fixed-Blade Rigging Knives

Fixed-blade rigging knives represent the most well-established and proven designs for the modern sailor. They are the most subject to legal differences between jurisdictions. Fixed-blade knives accomplish the greatest structural strength, and they always offer the quickest and easiest (and arguably the safest) one-handed operation.

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**NOTE:** Refer to the section titled "[1 - Blades for Rigging Knives](#)" on [page 9](#) for additional information about the advantages and disadvantages of fixed-blade knives.

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Fixed-blade rigging knives nearly always include a belt-sheath. They often have a hole for an additional lanyard or cord, and sheaths can often be mounted to harnesses or web belts. These knives can be found with an accompanying marlin spike that is carried in the same or separate sheath. Fixed-blade rigging knives most often require a separate shackle key as well. There are not many makers who put a shackle slot on the blade of a fixed-blade knife.

**Table 1: Fixed-Blade Rigging Knives and Kits**

Maker/Model	Length Overall	Price	Blade	Separate Spike?	Shackle Key?	One-Handed?	Sheath?
<a href="#">Boye Cobalt Basic 3</a>	8"	\$360.00 USD	Rust-proof cobalt blade. Drop-point tactical blade shape but with option of rounded tip. Straight edge.	No-not incl.	No-not incl.	Yes	Yes-ballistic nylon
<a href="#">CRKT Bear Claw 2510</a>	5-3/4"	\$30.00 USD	AUS-4 stainless steel with hawksbill shape. Straight edge with sharp point, or serrated edge with tear-drop rounded point.	No-not incl.	No-not incl.	Yes	Yes-plastic
<a href="#">CRKT Hammond A.B.C. Aqua Whitewater #2604</a>	8.5"	\$80.00 USD	AUS-8 stainless steel with blunt tip (squared-off) blade in rescue shape (narrow & straight). Two-edged blade, with serration at top, straight edge on bottom.	No-not incl.	No-not incl.	Yes	Yes-multiple carry options
<a href="#">CRKT Veff M.U.K.</a>	9"	\$11.00 USD	3Cr13 high-carbon stainless steel at 52-55 Rc. Tilted-back sheepsfoot blade with combined straight and serrated cutting edge.	No-not incl.	No-not incl.	Yes	No

**Table 1: Fixed-Blade Rigging Knives and Kits (Continued)**

Maker/Model	Length Overall	Price	Blade	Separate Spike?	Shackle Key?	One-Handed?	Sheath?
<i>Grohmann Knives' Boat Knife Series</i> <i>Canada</i>	8.25"	\$67.00 - \$84.00 USD	Choice of high-carbon stainless or carbon steel.  Pointed whaler-style blade. Straight cutting edge or partially serrated,	Yes—available in kits or bought alone	Shackle slot part of optional spike	Yes	Yes
<i>Myerchin Fixed-Blade Rigging Knives (8 models &amp; optional kits)</i>	8.25"	\$64.00 - \$130.00 USD	440C stainless steel.  Rounded whaler tips in all cases but the A500/508 blades, which are sheepsfoot. Straight, serrated, or combined cutting edges.	Available in kits	Shackle slot part of spike, or knife handle	Yes	Yes-ballistic nylon
<i>Sheffield Mariner Knife and Spike</i>	On request	£21.60 - £26.00 GBP	Heavy carbon stainless steel blade with a very sharp tactical point. Not a true rigging knife. Straight edge.	Yes-with lanyard ring	No	Yes	Yes-leather
<i>Sheffield Rigging Knife &amp; Shackle Spike Kits</i>	On request	£26.00 - £32.00 GBP	Heavy carbon stainless steel blade with a very traditional sheepsfoot shape.  Straight edge.  Kits can also include standalone shackle key, marlin spike, and pliers.	Yes- includes longer shackle key slot	Yes - longer slot is part of spike	Yes	Yes-leather
<i>Spyderco Aqua Salt (Alternate color)</i>	9-1/4" (235 mm)	\$165.00 USD	H-1 stainless steel that cannot rust.  Drop-point rounded tip with fully straight or fully serrated edge.	No-not incl.	No-not incl.	Yes	Fiber-glass reinforced nylon
<i>Spyderco Caspian Salt (FB21) and Caspian2 Salt (FB23)</i>	7-5/16" (186 mm)	\$185.00 USD	H-1 stainless steel that cannot rust.  FB21: Rounded whaler blade with pointed tip. FB22: Rounded whaler blade with squared blunt tip.  Both have combined straight and serrated cutting edge (50/50).	No-not incl.	No-not incl.	Yes	Yes-fiber-glass reinforced nylon

## Folding Rigging Knives

If fixed-blade knives are desirable and even preferable, why do so many people prefer a folding knife? Two reasons include the following:

- Legality and cost can be factors for many people.
- Size and weight can be factors for some some or many people.

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**NOTE:** Refer to the section titled "[1 - Blades for Rigging Knives](#)" on page 9 for additional information about the advantages and disadvantages of folding-blade knives.

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The remainder of this topic itemizes the specifications, features, and limitations of each folding knife included. There are two types of folding rigging knives, as follows:

- "[Classic Folding Designs](#)" on page 21
- "[Modern Folding Designs](#)" on page 22

### Classic Folding Designs

Classic folding designs date back several decades. These were the first serious folding rigging knives, but they did not always feature a marlin spike. These knives do not have locking blades, they always have a lanyard loop, and the blade is a sheepsfoot shape.

**Table 2: Classic Folding Rigging Knives**

Maker/Model	Length (closed)	Price	Blade	Spike	Shackle Key?	One-Handed?	Lanyard Loop?
<a href="#">Camillus Rigging Knife (discontinued)</a>	4.5"	Market	High-carbon Stainless (US Gov't spec), straight edge with semi-sheepsfoot tip. Not locking.	Yes-not locking	No	No	Yes
<a href="#">Case Whaler XX 1199 (discontinued)</a>	4-3/8"	Market	Stainless steel sheepsfoot blade with straight edge. Not locking.	No	No	Perhaps	Yes
<a href="#">Colonial Co. Marlinspike</a>	4.5"	\$24.95 to \$28.00 USD	High-carbon Stainless (US Gov't spec), Straight edge, semi-sheepsfoot tip. Not locking.	Yes-not locking	No	No	Yes

## Modern Folding Designs

This section itemizes and evaluates the many folding rigging knives available today.

Rescue knives without spikes are not included in this evaluation, but they certainly come to mind, particularly after some time investigating the options. If a sailor wishes to use a locking rescue knife as part of their rigging kit, then separate marlin spikes and shackle keys are available. Refer to two additional topics for more information in this case:

- ["2 - Marlin Spikes" on page 14](#)
- ["3 - Shackle Keys" on page 15](#)

Only marlin-spike or rigging knives are cited herein. It is more common to find locking spikes than locking blades. Any maker that offers both stands out from the crowd. However, when such designs are available, they often remove a standalone shackle key.

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**NOTE:** In short - not one single folding rigging knife currently on the market—*repeat, not one*—has every basic feature of a rigging knife or kit, as defined earlier in this document.

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**Table 3: Standard-Sized Folding Rigging Knives**

Maker/Model	Length (closed)	Price	Blade	Spike	Shackle Key?	One-Handed?	Lanyard Loop?
<a href="#">A. G. Russell Sailor's Knife</a> USA	4-1/4"	\$79.00 USD	AUS-8 stainless steel sheepsfoot blade. Cutting edge is 100% serrated. Slip-joint locking blade.	Yes-locking	Not known	Yes?	Yes
NOTE: This is one of two spectacular designs from A.G. Russell. Both the blade and spike lock open. No mention is made of either a shackle key or a shackle slot.							
<a href="#">A. G. Russell Seamaster</a> Italy/USA	4-1/8"	\$250.00 USD	ATS-34 high carbon stainless. One-handed locking blade with rounded sheepsfoot tip. Edge is 50% serrated.	Yes - locking	A shackle slot is located on the blade	Yes-likely	Un-known
NOTE: This is an exceptionally spectacular folding rigging knife. Both the blade and the spike are locking, and the blade is one-handed with a combined serrated/smooth cutting edge unlike any other on the market. The cost and the shackle slot (instead of a key) might be considered as the downsides by at least some sailors.							

**Table 3: Standard-Sized Folding Rigging Knives (Continued)**

Maker/Model	Length (closed)	Price	Blade	Spike	Shackle Key?	One-Handed?	Lanyard Loop?
<i>Blade Classics CAT1 Catalina Sailor Knife China</i>	4.5"	\$11.50 - \$19.00 USD	440 stainless steel at RC 57-58. Sheepsfoot blade with straight cutting edge. Blade not locking.	Yes-locking	No shackle key	Yes-likely	Yes
NOTE: This budget rigging knife does not have a locking blade nor a shackle key, though the spike is locking.							
<i>Boye Folding Boat Knives USA</i>	4" 101 mm	\$130 USD	Cobalt - supreme performance. Two blade shapes and edges are available: one entirely serrated with a squared-off tip, the other entirely smooth-edged with a pointed tip. One-handed locking blade for both.	Yes - locking	Yes-shackle slot in the marlinspike, not a standalone tool	Yes	Yes
NOTE: The Boye knife above achieves a great deal—far more than nearly any competitor. It also inspires a great deal of passion from its owners for multiple reasons, the Cobalt blade being a large factor. The shackle slot can be used to break shackles without having to open the marlin spike, but there is not a dedicated shackle key.							
<i>Currey Lockblade Deckhand #02901 Great Britain</i>	93 mm	£16.95 GBP	Stainless steel. Sheepsfoot blade tip with straight edge.  This is the only Currey knife with a locking blade. One-handed.	No	Shackle slot on the knife handle	Yes	Yes
<i>Currey Lockspike Bosun's Mate #02902 Great Britain</i>	93 mm	£21.95 GBP	Stainless steel. Sheepsfoot blade tip with straight edge.  One-handed blade not likely locking.	Yes	Shackle slot on the knife handle	Yes	Yes
<i>Currey Lockspike Bosun #02903 Great Britain</i>	93 mm	£23.95 GBP	Stainless steel. Sheepsfoot blade tip with straight edge.  One-handed blade not likely locking.	Yes-locking	Shackle slot on the knife handle	Yes	Yes

**Table 3: Standard-Sized Folding Rigging Knives (Continued)**

Maker/Model	Length (closed)	Price	Blade	Spike	Shackle Key?	One-Handed?	Lanyard Loop?
<i>Currey Lockspike Captain #02904 Great Britain</i>	93 mm	£29.95 GBP	Stainless steel. Sheepsfoot blade tip with straight edge. One-handed blade not likely locking.	Yes-not locking	Yes-fold-out shackle key includes can & bottle opener.	Yes	Yes
NOTE: The Currey knives cited above all offer what appear to be one-handed blades. However, Currey knives offer either a locking blade, or a locking spike, but never both in one design. Only one model offers a dedicated fold-out shackle key. Otherwise, the other Currey knives have a shackle slot instead on the knife handle.							
<i>Davis Deluxe Rigging Knife #1551 USA</i>	Approx. 4.25"	\$17.00 - \$24.00 USD	"Top quality stainless." Straight Dura-Edge with sheepsfoot blade tip. The blade is neither locking nor one-handed.	Yes-not locking	Yes-fold-out shackle key includes bottle opener	No	Yes
NOTE: Davis offers a model that easily competes with Currey, Sheffield, and several other makers of lower-priced options. The fold-out shackle key appears to be well designed and functional. However, as is often the case in this class, the blade is neither locking nor one-handed, and the spike is not locking.							
<i>Eikhorn Solingen Skipper 2 Germany</i>	11.5 cm 4.53"	109.00 EUR	Stainless Bohler N695 steel (HRC 58) square-clipped blade with 50% serrated edge, 50% straight edge. One-handed blade is locking with liner lock.	Yes-locking	Yes-spike includes shackle slot	Yes	Yes
NOTE: This Eikhorn model above achieves superior design, with a combined cutting edge, a one-handed blade, and a high-quality locking mechanism. The spike is also locking. This is a great feature set that comes very close to an ideal design. But alas, this model settles for a shackle slot in the spike, requiring the spike to be open when working with shackles, and there is not a dedicated shackle key, ruling out a bottle opener as well.							
<i>Excalibur Yachting Knife #CK33300 Australia</i>	Approx. 4.5"	\$45.00 AUD	Stainless steel. Sheepsfoot blade with straight edge. Not locking nor one-handed.	Yes	Yes-foldout shackle key and can opener	No	Yes
NOTE: The primary drawbacks of this design are the lack of a locking and one-handed blade, and the spike is not locking, either. The foldout shackle key design is a positive feature.							

**Table 3: Standard-Sized Folding Rigging Knives (Continued)**

Maker/Model	Length (closed)	Price	Blade	Spike	Shackle Key?	One-Handed?	Lanyard Loop?
<i>Fox Blue Sailing Knife Europe</i>	10.5 cm 4.13"	109.00 EUR \$155.00 USD	High-quality 440 stainless steel with semi-pointed whaler tip.  50% serrated edge.  Blade appears to be locking.	Yes	Yes-shackle slot in the main blade	Yes	Lanyard hole with cord incl.
NOTE: The blade appears to be locking and is likely one-handed. However, the shackle slot requires the main blade to be open when working with shackles, the spike does not appear to be locking, and there is no standalone fold-out shackle key.							
<i>Herbertz Sailing Knife Europe</i>	11 cm 4.33"	32.00 EUR \$45.67 USD	High-quality stainless steel with sheepsfoot blade.  50% serrated edge.  Blade not locking nor likely to be one-handed.	Yes	"Ascertainable" (?) (No?)	Not likely	Yes-bale
NOTE: The design does not having a locking, one-handed blade, it is not clear whether there is any shackle tool, this knife is not likely to be one-handed, nor is the spike locking.							
<i>Ibberson Yachting Knife Great Britain</i>	3.5"	£36.00 GBP	Stainless steel. Sheepsfoot blade with 100% serration. Non-locking blade.	Yes-not locking	No	Not known	Yes
NOTE: This yachting knife has no locking blade, no locking spike, and no shackle key.							
<i>Joseph Rodgers Marlin Spike Army Knife Great Britain</i>	3.75"	\$42.95 USD	High-quality stainless steel. Sheepsfoot blade. Straight edge.  Non-locking blade.	Yes-not locking	No-screwdriver, can opener instead	Possible	Yes
<i>Joseph Rogers Marlin Spike Sailor's Knife Great Britain</i>	4"	\$59.95 USD	High-quality stainless steel. Sheepsfoot blade. Straight edge.  Non-locking blade.	Yes-not locking	No-bottle opener and screwdriver instead	Possible	Yes
NOTE: Neither the blades nor the marlin spikes are locking on Rodgers' knives, nor is there any shackle key.							

**Table 3: Standard-Sized Folding Rigging Knives (Continued)**

Maker/Model	Length (closed)	Price	Blade	Spike	Shackle Key?	One-Handed?	Lanyard Loop?
<a href="#">Mercury Sailor #8997-2G</a> and <a href="#">Mercury Clipper #MERC8B916</a> <i>Italy</i>	4.5"	\$25.00 - \$30.00 USD	Fully hardened stainless steel blade with sheepsfoot tip. For Sailor, the edge is 50% serrated on the rear half. For Clipper, the edge is 7/8ths serrated.	Yes	Shackle slot in handle  Bottle opener	Possible	Yes
NOTE: The blades are likely to be one-handed but are not locking. There is a shackle slot instead of a dedicated fold-out shackle key, but the slot is in the handle, meaning neither the blade nor the spike must be open for shackle breaking. That is a positive factor. Another positive is a bottle opener that does not interfere with the true rigging features of the knife.							
<a href="#">Myerchin Offshore Crew Pro A377P</a> <i>USA</i>	3.8"	\$50.00 - \$63.00 USD	440C stainless steel. Sheepsfoot blade shape with 75% serration. Blade is locking.	Yes-locking	Shackle slot in the main blade	Likely	Yes
NOTE: Many additional models are available, and all benefit from Myerchin's reputation for excellence. The blade and the spike are both locking. However, all folding Myerchin rigging knives use a shackle slot instead of a dedicated shackle key, and that slot requires that the locking blade be open for shackle breaking.							
<a href="#">Myerchin Offshore B300/B300P</a> <i>USA</i>	4.75" 120.6 mm	\$101.00 USD	440C stainless steel. Sheepsfoot blade shape with 75% serration for B300P, or straight with B300. Blade is locking.	Yes-locking	Shackle slot in main blade	Likely	Yes
<a href="#">Myerchin L300P Light Knife</a> <i>USA</i>	4.75" 120.6 mm	\$58.00 - \$73.00 USD	440C stainless steel. Pointed whaler-type tip (not a truly rounded whaler tip).  Blade is locking	Yes-locking	Shackle slot in main blade	Likely	Yes
NOTE: The Myerchin knives cited above accomplish both a locking blade and a locking spike, and they are likely to be one-handed, though this is not confirmed by their maker. These knives lack a dedicated shackle key, and use a shackle slot in the main blade instead, requiring the knife blade to be open in shackle-breaking mode.							

**Table 3: Standard-Sized Folding Rigging Knives (Continued)**

Maker/Model	Length (closed)	Price	Blade	Spike	Shackle Key?	One-Handed?	Lanyard Loop?
<i>Myerchin P300 Series</i> <i>USA</i> <i>(September 2008)</i>	5.0" 12.7 cm	\$29.95 USD Introductory Price \$39.95 USD	440C Stainless Steel blade of modified sheepsfoot shape, perhaps resembling some rescue blades.  Locking blade is an ambidextrous and one-handed design, with 75% serration.	Yes-locking	Yes-shackle pliers with articulating handle unlike any other rigging knife available anywhere	Yes: blade, spike, and shackle pliers are one-handed	Tethering loop, belt clip, and sheath
<p>NOTE: The Myerchin P300 Series was launched within two weeks of the first publication of this research document. This design launched several updates to this document to convey the latest state of the art. The Myerchin P300 is the first rigging knife on the market to fulfill five core requirements into a single folding design, as described in and requested by this document, but this was a well-timed coincidence, on the part of Myerchin. This design became available in late September 2008.</p> <p>The Myerchin P300 overhauls the concept of a simple shackle key into shackle pliers that enable greatly enhanced utility and usability. This design uniquely enables the knife blade and the marlin spike to remain closed when working with shackles, and there is no need for a separate spike or shackle tool.</p> <p>Furthermore, this unique knife design adds a belt clip, while retaining a tethering (lanyard) loop, and Myerchin adds a nylon sheath to this impressive package. Finally, the introductory price of the Myerchin P300 series makes this folding design extremely competitive in any conceivable category. There is no other folding rigging knife on the market like the Myerchin P300 Series, and there never has been prior to late September 2008.</p>							
<i>Pacific Cutlery Rigging Knife #YT385PS</i> <i>Australia</i>	9.5 cm	\$15.00 AUD	Stainless steel sheepsfoot blade with 75% serrated edge.  Not locking nor one-handed.	Yes-not locking	Yes-foldout shackle key	No	Yes
<p>NOTE: The blade is neither locking nor one-handed, and the spike is not locking. This knife does feature a dedicated fold-out shackle key.</p>							
<i>Pacific Cutlery Yachtsman's Rigging Knife #YT240</i> <i>Australia</i>	9.5 cm	\$15.00 - \$20.00 AUD	Stainless steel sheepsfoot blade with straight edge.	Yes-not locking	No-but can opener included	Likely	Yes
<p>NOTE: Neither the blade nor the spike are locking, and there is no shackle key, though a can opener is included. Which is more relevant to a "yachtsman" who is "yachting" and rigging? Opening cans or having a shackle tool?</p>							

**Table 3: Standard-Sized Folding Rigging Knives (Continued)**

Maker/Model	Length (closed)	Price	Blade	Spike	Shackle Key?	One-Handed?	Lanyard Loop?
<i>Sheffield All Weather Sailor Rigging Knife</i> <i>Great Britain</i>	4" 10 cm	£35.95 GBP	Sheffield stainless steel, Ibberson blade. 100% serrated edge. One-handed ring pull blade in sheepsfoot shape.	Yes-locking	Yes-foldout shackle key includes a bottle & can opener	Yes	Yes
<i>Sheffield Heavy Duty Sailors Rigging Knife</i> <i>Great Britain</i>	3.75"	£43.95 GBP	High-grade stainless steel. Sheepsfoot blade shape with 100% serrated edge. Blade is not locking nor one-handed.	Yes-locking	Yes-foldout shackle key includes a bottle & can opener	Not known	Yes
<i>Sheffield Offshore Rigging Knife</i> <i>Great Britain</i>	4" 10 cm	£31.95 GBP	Sheffield stainless steel Ibberson blade. 100% serrated edge. Sheepsfoot blade. Possibly a one-handed blade.	Yes-locking	Yes-foldout shackle key includes a bottle opener & screw driver	Not known	Yes
NOTE: Sheffield offers several nautical knives with spikes. Each of these knives features a dedicated fold-out shackle key that also has a bottle opener. One of these knives is reliably one-handed. <i>In all cases (without exception), the blades are not locking; the marlin spikes might be.</i>							
<i>Shefftek Oceanmaster Yacht Knife</i> <i>Great Britain</i>	4.5" incl. loop	£35 GBP	Stainless steel blade. Sheepsfoot blade tip with 100% serrated edge. One-handed opening when wearing gloves. Blade is not locking.	Yes - not locking	Yes-foldout shackle key includes a bottle & can opener	Yes	Yes
NOTE: Another great design from Great Britain at an affordable price, this is another knife with a great fold-out shackle key design. This is also another example of neither the blade nor the spike not locking.							
<i>Smith &amp; Wesson Marlin Spike (CKMAR)</i> <i>China</i>	4.020" (102.11 MM)	\$9.00 - \$12.00 USD	440 C stainless steel with liner-lock locking blade, made in China. Non-serrated hawksbill blade.	Yes-locking	No	Yes	Yes
NOTE: This extreme low-budget knife might be better than other generic knives made in China, because (1) Smith and Wesson puts their name on it? (2) This particular model cites the liner-lock for the blade, and (3) the spike is locking as well. There is no shackle key, nor even a shackle slot. Verify locking carefully on this one.							

**Table 3: Standard-Sized Folding Rigging Knives (Continued)**

Maker/Model	Length (closed)	Price	Blade	Spike	Shackle Key?	One-Handed?	Lanyard Loop?
<i>Valor 3181</i> <i>Overseas budget manufacturing suspected</i>	Not known	\$7.00 USD	Stainless steel. Sheepsfoot tip. 2/3rds serrated edge, with 1/3 straight edge at front of blade. Not known if blade is one-handed. Blade is not locking.	Yes-not locking	Yes-foldout shackle key	Not known	Yes
NOTE: As with most budget knives, neither the blade nor the spike are locking. This one features a fold-out shackle key, however.							
<i>Whitby Heavy-Duty Sailor's Knife</i> <i>Unknown</i>	3.5"	\$50.47	Stainless steel blade. Sheepsfoot shape. 100% serrated edge. Blade not locking.	Yes-locking	Yes-bottle opener incl.	Not likely	Yes
NOTE: This is another of very numerous examples in which the knife includes a locking spike and a well-designed standalone shackle key, only to sacrifice a locking blade and one-handed operation.							
<i>Wichard Rigging Knife 10061-10064</i> <i>Thiers, France</i>	4.5"	\$50.00 - \$55.00 USD	High quality stainless steel. Sheepsfoot blade. Half serrated edge. LOCKING blade. Ergonomic handle	Yes-not locking	Yes-foldout key with bottle opener	No—very much a two-handed design	Lanyard hole
NOTE: This is not a typical folding rigging knife for two reasons. First, it achieves a locking blade, and this alone makes it less common. Second, it likely offers one of the most ergonomic handles available. Also note that this knife features a fold-out shackle key. Finally, note that the Wichard model cited here requires that the user release the locking mechanism for the blade by partly deploying the marlin spike. This is one of the least one-handed rigging knives on the market.							

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## What More is Needed from the Makers of Folding Rigging Knives? The Myerchin P300 Series Does It

As of late September 2008, the answer to this question becomes as follows:

*The Myerchin P300 Series provides a single and very affordable folding rigging knife that includes five widely documented features, when nobody else on the planet has done it.*

In other words, the [Myerchin P300 Series](#) introduces a unique breakthrough in the folding rigging knife market, and Myerchin is the first knife maker to do it. This is not so much an independent endorsement as it is a simple statement of documented and researched fact.

Otherwise, the remainder of this topic remains unchanged from the initial version published in early September 2008. Aside from the newly available Myerchin P300, this topic remains as relevant as when initially authored, two weeks prior to the P300's launch.

### One Single Design That Includes Five Widely Established Features

The evaluation of folding rigging knives in this document proves that there is not one folding rigging knife that includes five specific, uncompromised, and widely desirable features into one design. The solution is to request, humbly and respectfully, that one knife maker achieve the following features in one single design:

- a locking blade of quality steel and appropriate shape
- a dedicated and locking marlin spike
- a foldout shackle key that includes a bottle opener at minimum, perhaps a can opener (Myerchin enhances this concept with the P300 shackle plier concept)
- a one-handed lanyard and carrying strategy
- finish the design with true one-handed usability for all of it; that's it—nothing else.

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**NOTE:** Myerchin achieves immunity to the above above request with the P300 Series.

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### Affordable Price

In the final analysis, rigging knives might be considered to be semi-disposable tools, or at least semi-loss prone. It remains the decision of each sailor to weigh cost, experience, personal discipline, and rigging needs for each purchase. Affordability increases the likelihood that superior design gets deployed widely enough to be of benefit both to the knife-owner and to the additional sailors around him or her.

### What Are Alternative “Nautical” Knives?

This document describes “nautical rigging knives” by a specific definition and application. However, “nautical” implies a great diversity of maritime choices, to embrace designs for boating, sailing, fishing, diving, ocean rescue, other watersports, and small water craft. A few additional types of nautical knives include the following labels. Much of the time, this is more a study in linguistics than it is a study in distinct classes of knives.

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**NOTE:** Clearly defined differences between these knife types often do not exist.

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- [Boat or Boating knives](#)
- [“Canoe” Knives](#)
- [Marine and Mariner Knives](#)
- [Nautical Knives](#)
- [Sailor or Sailing Knives](#)
- [Sea or Seafaring Knives](#)
- [Seamens Knives](#)
- [Spike or Marlin Spike or Marlinspike Knives](#)
- [Watersport Knives](#)
- [Yacht, Yachting, or Yachtsman Knives](#)

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**NOTE:** Examples for any term can be found with ease, and distinctions are not always clear, well-defined, or logical. Citation here does not imply endorsement of the products cited.

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### Boat or Boating knives

Naturally, this classification entails any knife that could be used on a boat. Rigging knives would be one type, but this general classification could include the entire spectrum of nautical knives.

- The Knife Center lists a variety of knives as “boat knives:”  
[http://www.knifecenter.com/kc\\_new/store\\_keywords.html?srch=boat&SUBMIT2.x=35&SUBMIT2.y=10&SUBMIT2=Search](http://www.knifecenter.com/kc_new/store_keywords.html?srch=boat&SUBMIT2.x=35&SUBMIT2.y=10&SUBMIT2=Search)
- Grohmann Knives of Canada is one maker of rigging knives that prefers to use the term “boating knives” or “belt knives” instead. Grohmann supports partly serrated cutting edges for their boat knives, recommending them for ropes, and offers marlin spikes and rigging kits:  
<http://www.grohmannknives.com/pages/r3s.html>

### "Canoe" Knives

"Canoe" knives are not meant for using in a canoe, but are knives that look like a canoe, most often used for whittling or utility, perhaps. They are not watersport or marine knives. Here is one example of such knives:

- [KnifeCenter.com's Canoe Knife Inventory](#)

### Marine and Mariner Knives

Marine knives often refer specifically to a branch of the US Armed Services (and the best known knives of this type are the Ka-Bar USMC combat knives). Otherwise, the term "marine" or "mariner" is synonymous with "maritime," and entails any knife that could be used on a boat or under water: fishing knives, certain Swiss-Army knives, conventional rigging knives, multi-tools, divers knives, and sea or rescue knives.

- [Nautic Expo's "Marine" Knives](#)

### Nautical Knives

Some companies prefer this term to describe any type of maritime knife; it is perhaps the most common general term used, and it would include rigging knives and many non-rigging knives as well.

- [WorldKnives.com's Nautical Knives](#)

### River, Whitewater or Watersport Knives

Many of these knives reduce or eliminate a truly sharp tip, as do rigging knives, but clearly there is not a need for a marlin spike in these cases:

- [AllAboutRivers.com has several river knives.](#)
- [Whitewater knives](#) of several types are available, and this is where a neck lanyard becomes increasingly relevant, whereas most sailors would be frightened by a neck lanyard, and for good reason.
- [Watersport knives](#) are generally the same category as rafting, kayaking, or whitewater knives.

### Sailor or Sailing Knives

Either term refers to about any knife under the sun that can be considered for use in any maritime context. Therefore, these terms refer to multi-tools, rescue knives, or rigging knives, and about everything else, making them comprehensively useless as terms:

- [Landfall Navigation "Sailor" Knives](#)

### Sea or Seafaring Knives

This is a less commonly used term, but can apply to nearly any type of nautical knife, to include rigging knives.

- *Farol “Seafaring” knives* have several characteristics common to rigging knives, but these knives are advertised as “seafaring” rather than by a more common term:  
<http://www.cutlery2go.com/farolknives.html>

### Seamens Knives

This term refers to about any type of nautical knife, but only a few manufacturers use the term. Sheffield from Great Britain is one widely known example.

- *Sheffield Seamans Knives*  
[http://www.sheffieldknives.co.uk/acatalog/Seamens\\_Knives.html](http://www.sheffieldknives.co.uk/acatalog/Seamens_Knives.html)

### Spike or Marlin Spike or Marlinspike Knives

Knives that are labelled in this way are most likely to be folding rigging knives. This is perhaps the one alternative label for folding rigging knives that refers specifically to folding rigging knives. Fixed-blade rigging knives are not called spike knives.

### Watersport Knives

These are likely the same as whitewater, rafting, or kayak knives.

### Yacht, Yachting, or Yachtsman Knives

This term remains about as loosely defined as any term, and can refer to well-defined multi-tools in the Swiss Army class, or to folding rigging knives of British origination. The following two examples illustrate the use of “yachting” knives:

- *Shefftek yacht knives* originate from the British Army heritage.
- The Wenger Alinghi Yachtsman knife originates from the Swiss Army heritage, as do the Victorinox marine knives. These are cited in the section *“Multi-tools” on page 6*.

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## Conclusion

### Why This Document?

This document started as a short weekend product search with morning coffee. It became apparent early that there was not one *folding* rigging knife that achieved what shoppers were told to seek. It is not difficult to itemize the five core requirements, but not one single author (until now) took the time to prove that there is not one folding knife *on the planet (and in production)* that achieved each of these five core requirements.

Major findings or contentions of this document are as follows:

- Sailors need a dedicated and fixed or locking rigging knife, to include a marlin spike and a shackle key very close at hand, if not incorporated into the knife design.
- Two more core elements are a lanyard loop and one-handed operation. That's it—nothing more. These five core criteria immediately above are few and sustainable.
- While fixed-blade rigging knives deliver to a very high standard, folding rigging knives fail this simple list of criteria—for no apparent reason.
- A two-fold solution is needed: (1) prove that no folding rigging knife currently addresses the five basic rigging requirements, and (2) suggest a solution.
- The solution is to include five known features into one design —nothing more.

Refer now to the section titled "[How the Myerchin P300 Changed Things?](#)" on page 5.

Hopefully, this document provides sailors with an accurate review of the current status, and a way to make an informed decision.

### Three Common Rigging Knife Approaches

Presuming that separate tools and multi-tools are available, there are three common ways that sailors procure and carry rigging knives:

- Choose a fixed-blade, combined with separate marlin spike and shackle key.
- Choose a rescue knife, whether fixed-blade or folding (with locking blade), combined with a separate marlin spike and shackle key.
- Choose a folding rigging knife, but knowing that you do so at the expense of (1) not having a locking blade, or (2) not having a locking marlin spike, or (3) not having a shackle key included on the knife, or (4) not having one-handed operation. The exception to this compromise is the newly announced [Myerchin P300](#).

Advantages and disadvantages for any type of knife are established in this document.

## Legality Resources

The following resources may help to confirm the legality of carrying fixed-blade or folding knives. Perhaps one reason why locking blades can be more difficult to find for folding knives is that Europe often outlaws them.

- **USA:** Bernard Levine’s “[State Knife Laws](#),” created in 1996 for Blade magazine
- **USA:** [KnifeLawsOnline.org](#)—active summary of current legal restrictions
- **International:** CutlersCove.com’s “[Knife Web Guide: Knife Laws](#)”
- **International:** ILP’s “[From Swiss Army Knife to Chinese Army Knife](#)”
- **International:** BladeForums.com’s “[General Knife Discussion: Knife Laws](#)”

Countless additional resources are available online. These often include published laws for specific jurisdictions, likely to include your own. Furthermore, any online retailer who ships such products might have some familiarity with legalities for your location.

## Document Revision Tracking

**Table 4: Revisions After Initial Publication on September 10, 2008**

Date	Description
9/10/2008	Initial publication of this document in complete form.
9/13/2008	Enhanced the section “ <a href="#">Five Characteristics of a Modern Rigging Knife</a> ” to cite the historical research and design of Sam Cox for the <i>Spirit of South Carolina</i> tall ship project.
9/21/2008	Added examples of standalone marlin spikes in the section “ <a href="#">2 - Marlin Spikes</a> ” on page 14.  Added boating knives and rigging kits from Grohmann Knives in the section “ <a href="#">Fixed-Blade Rigging Knives</a> ” on page 19.
10/12/2008	Added citation of the <a href="#">Myerchin P300 Series</a> (newly announced in late September 2008) in the following relevant locations of this document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “<a href="#">Synopsis</a>” on page 1.</li> <li>• “<a href="#">How the Myerchin P300 Changed Things?</a>” on page 5.</li> <li>• “<a href="#">Shackle Pliers by Myerchin, Inc.</a>” on page 15.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Table 3, “Standard-Sized Folding Rigging Knives,”</a> on page 22 (the Myerchin P300 is newly cited on <a href="#">page 27</a> of Table 3).</li> <li>• “<a href="#">What More is Needed from the Makers of Folding Rigging Knives?</a>” on page 30.</li> <li>• “<a href="#">Why This Document?</a>” on page 34.</li> <li>• “<a href="#">Three Common Rigging Knife Approaches</a>” on page 34.</li> </ul>

## About the Author

**Vince Francis** has no presence whatsoever in either FaceBook or MySpace, and has been a senior technical writer or a manager of technical publications for over 12 years. Extensive technical authoring experience includes software, database, and internetworking technologies. The author's latest and current emphasis is IEEE 802.11 wireless networking.

The author is an actively crewing sailor and cyclist, to include working with and using world-class electric bicycles. He is available to support conferences and public awareness events in green technology, whether as an exhibit worker or supporting presenters.

Contact Vince Francis at [Vince@FranciscoResearch.com](mailto:Vince@FranciscoResearch.com).