This site presents the images from the ebook *High: Advanced Multipitch Climbing*, by David Coley and Andy Kirkpatrick. In order to keep the cost of the book to a minimum most of these were not included in the book. Although they work best when used in conjunction with the book, most are self-explanatory.

Please use the following links to buy the book: Amazon USA (kindle) / Amazon UK (kindle) / itunes / kobo

Many people are resistant to the idea of climbing in a three. However, once you know how to do it efficiently, it doesn't take much longer than climbing in a two and can be a great deal of fun. Having two rescuers to help get a casualty down a face also makes a lot of sense.

Depending on the terrain, using cordelettes or other forms of powerpoint for belays and everyone carrying daisies can really help in a team of three.

Climbing in a three will be faster than climbing in two pairs, and climbing as two teams of three faster than climbing in three teams of two.

The chapter also briefly looks at climbing in a four.

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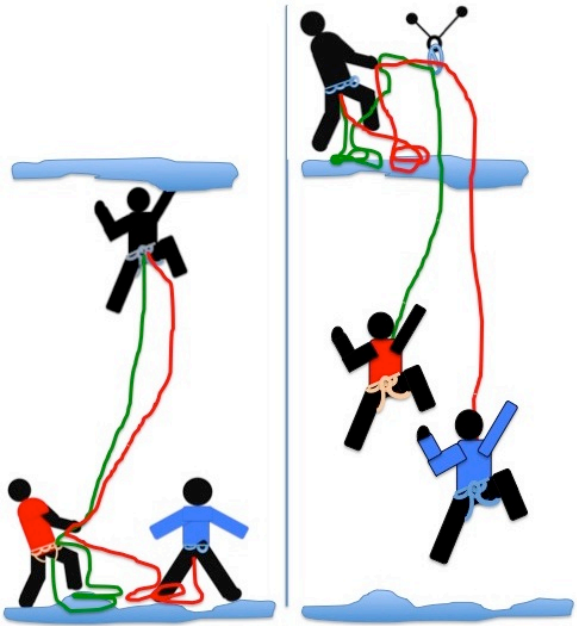
Contents

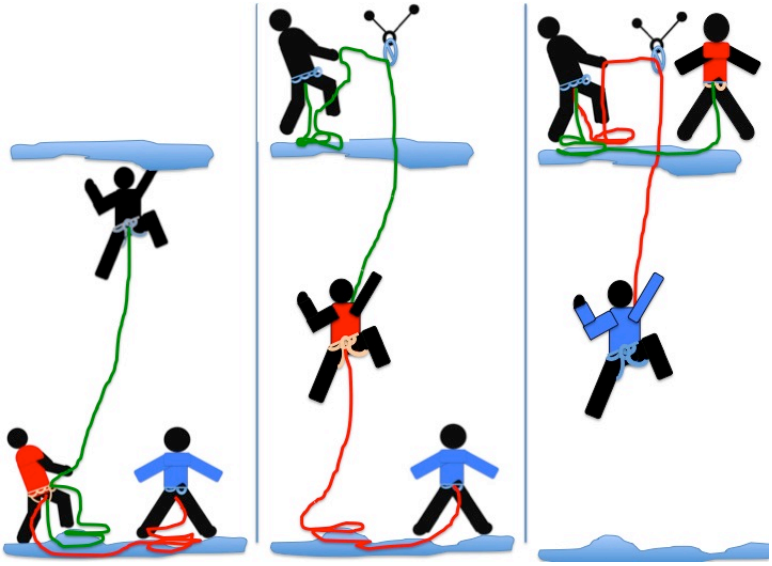
French Alps: The weather can always change. In a three you need to have your systems even more dialled, particularly at the belay, in order to move at a reasonable pace.

1. Series or Parallel?

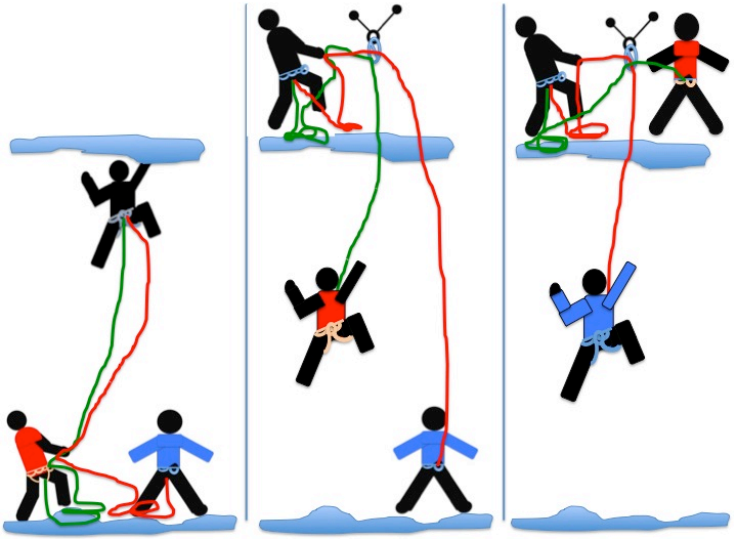
The first thing to decide is whether to climb in series or in parallel. Most of the time parallel will be far quicker.



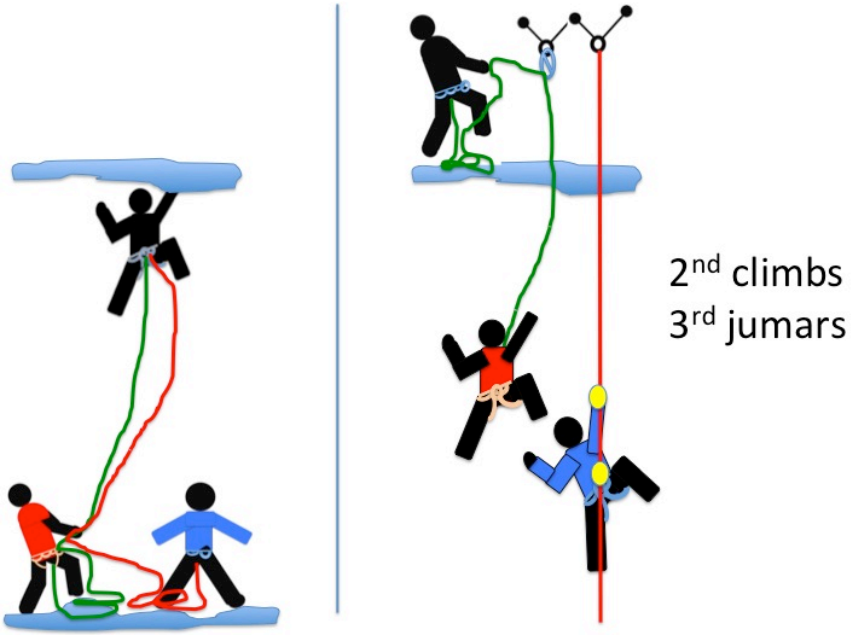
Climbing in parallel: both seconds climb at the same time belayed by a Reverso in guide mode.



Climbing in series. Only one second climbs at a time. This is slower and therefore best avoided.

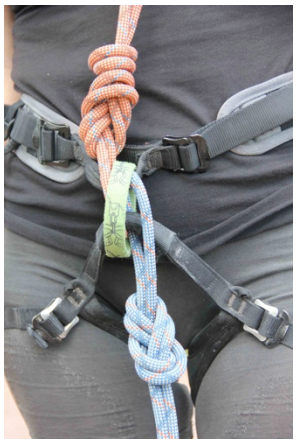


One can also climb one at a time (i.e. in series) but with the leader taking up both ropes. This can be useful on the crux pitch if the seconds might struggle, or if terrain suggests it wouldn't be sensible to have both climbers on the pitch at the same time, e.g. traverses or loose rock.

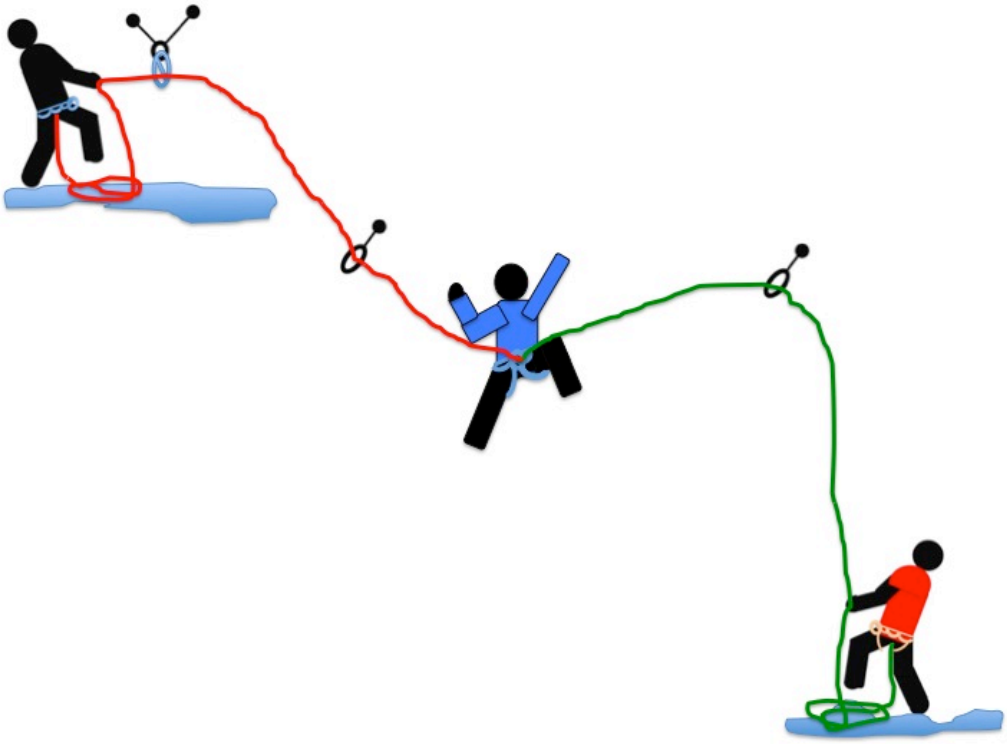


Another possibility is for the second to climb and the third to jumar up the rope, or climb on a mini-traxion. Either the leader or the second can take up the third's rope. This can work well on any route, but is often used on two-day routes if the leader takes a very small pack (or no pack), the second a small pack and the third all the rest of the equipment. This might mean there is no need to haul, which if the terrain is complex could save a lot of time.

Climbing in a parallel (Ailefroide, France.) The gap between the climbers that develops will depend mainly on their relative speed.



When climbing in series with the second taking up the third's rope, always tie the third's rope into the second's harness, don't just clip the rope into the rear loop, or worse a gear loop: you might forget it's not attached to anything structural and you won't be able to create a baby bouncer (see below) if needed.



A baby bouncer, or back belay, can be useful with a nervous second and a difficult traverse, and is a good reason to sometimes climb in series.

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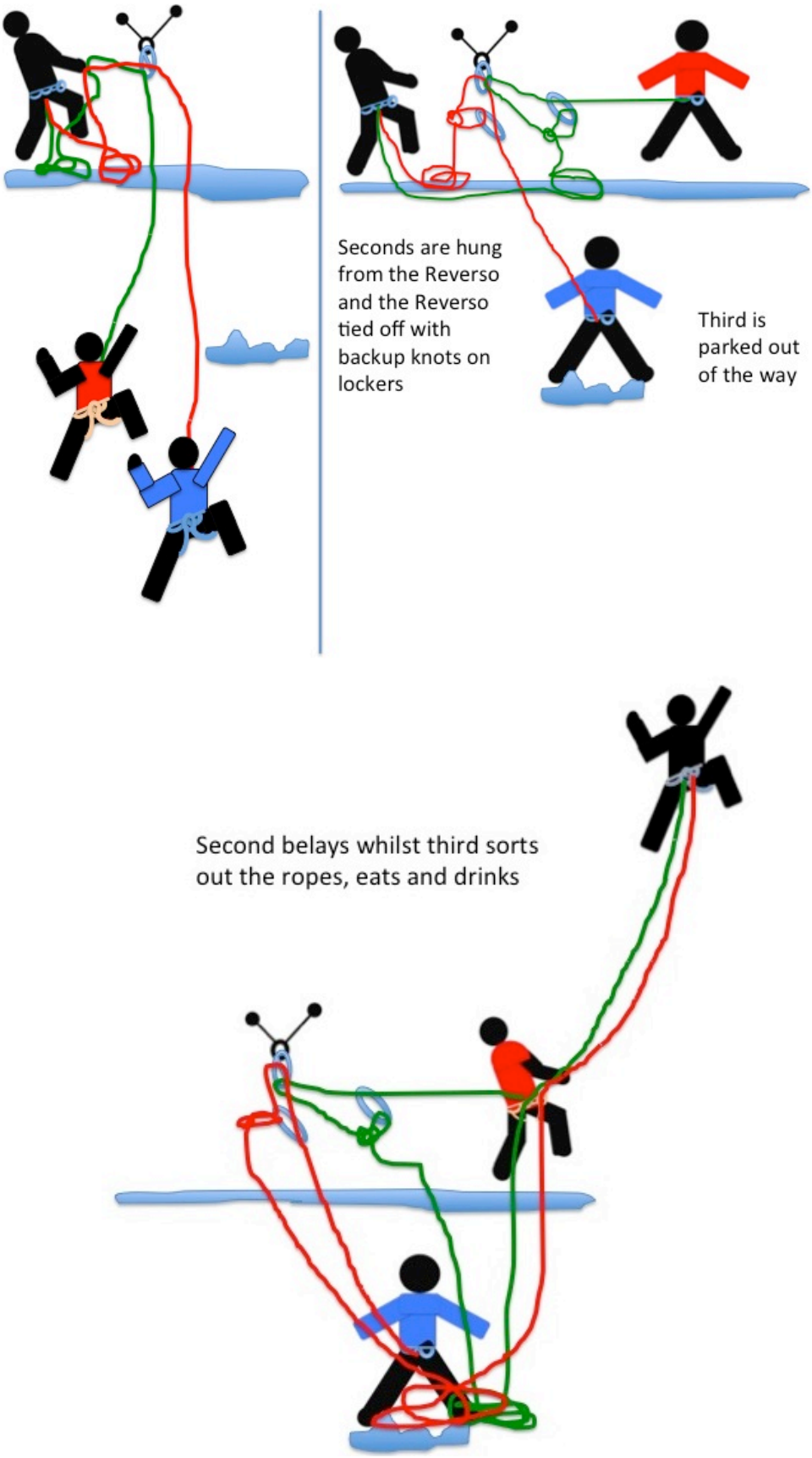
2. The Stance

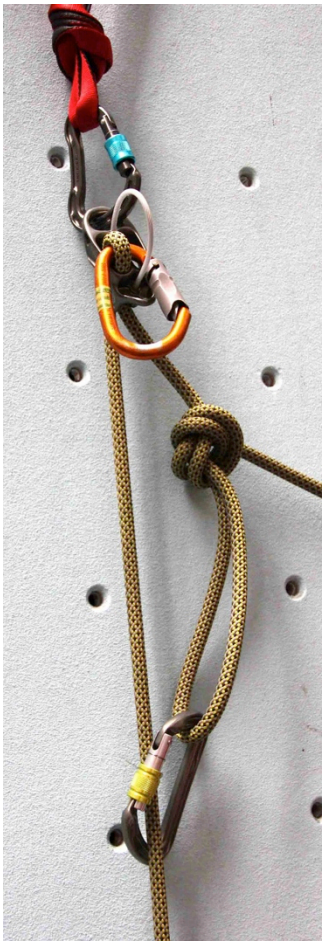
It often makes sense to park (see Chapter 6) the second below and off to the side of the main stance when there isn't enough room.

It is often easier to not tie the second and third into the belay directly, but to leave them hanging from the Reverso that was used to bring them up. This is because it automatically creates tethers of exactly the right length. A backup knot is required and the team needs to understand that removing the Reverso from the anchors at the wrong time could prove fatal. The approach ONLY works when climbing in parallel. (Coronation Street, Cheddar Gorge, England.) The seconds need to carry daisies or cow's tails so they can quickly clip into the anchors rather than hang on the Reverso if the Reverso needed to be removed.

Darren is plate hanging (i.e. hanging off the Reverso), not tied into the anchors, and a backup knot has been used. This is a common approach when climbing in a three (Coronation Street, Cheddar Gorge, England.). The images below show the sequence.



Top and bottom: Plate hanging and parking the third.



Tying off a Reverso when plate hanging

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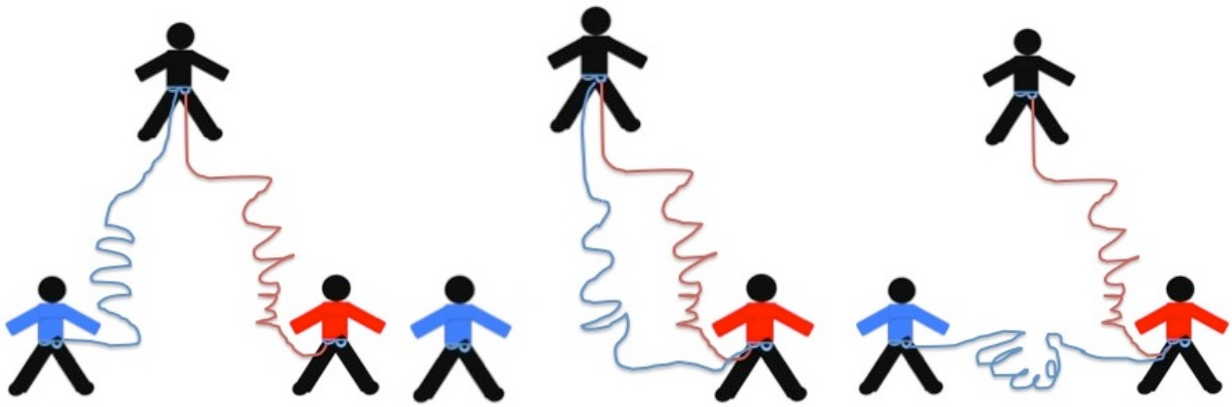
3. Swapping Ends

Unless the same person is going to lead the whole climb, you will need to swap over at some point. This will mean either re-stacking the ropes at the stance so the new leader's ropes are on top or untying and retying into the ropes. If you are climbing in parallel some retying is compulsory, as the new leader needs both ropes. This makes the following complex looking routine more sensible than it appears. Note: because of the need to untie, when climbing in a three everyone should have a cow's tail or daisy.



Swapping the leader in a three. The black climber led the last pitch, the red climber will be leading the next. Everyone is clipped into the belay with a cow's tail whilst doing this.

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4. Protection

Sometimes both ropes need to be clipped to the same runner in order to protect both seconds. The above photos show various possibilities. With the bottom two a few draws of this form can be specially prepared and carried ready to deploy. The bottom right-most might be inappropriate with smaller carabiners if it could lead to leverage on the carabiner clipped to the piece, and requires the use of very thin extenders to help reduce this.

Left, one way NOT to clip a piece for two seconds: the ropes could possibly damage each other as they will not always share runners and hence in a fall a moving rope could rub against a non-moving one. It is worth noting that although such double clipping has always been seen as bad practice some very good climbers are regularly seen climbing on half ropes and sometimes clipping them to the same carabiner (like twins) and then splitting them and clipping them to different piece of gear (like double ropes), then bringing them back together as twins. This is interesting in part because these are the type of people who fall off a lot. However until more testing is completed it would seem sensible to always keep the ropes on separate carabiners. Right, another poor approach. The two snap gates could twist undone (although this is unlikely), and the bottom carabiner is unfortunately back clipped.

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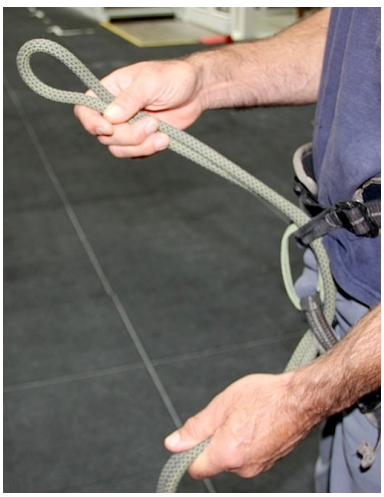
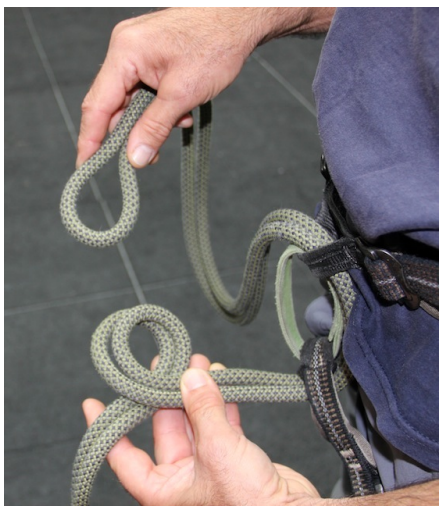
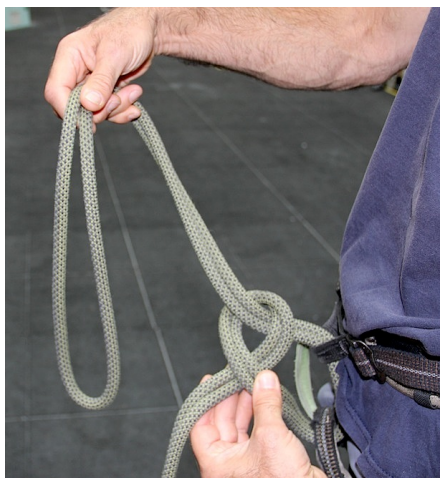
5. Tying into the Middle of the Rope

With ropes getting ever longer (or with a standard 100m half rope) there is often the need to tie into the middle of the rope – leaving an end for each second. Use a bowline on a bight. (The knots appendix shows a close-up on the knot.) This takes no longer than a normal bowline with stopper and leaves a very small knot.







Thread the bight through the tie-in points and form the hole of the bowline as normal. The rabbit goes up the hole, but instead of going around the tree and back down the hole, pass the loop over your head and then under your feet. Finally adjust the knot to bring it close to the harness

The bowline on a bight shown above requires the leader to step through a loop of rope and is therefore a bit awkward to do in a cramped situation. An alternative is to use a re-threaded overhand finished with half of a double overhand as a stopper. I (DC) cannot find any pull test data for this knot and it could get cross-pulled in a fall with runners on both ropes, hence the stopper knot is probably compulsory.

An alternative to tie into the middle of the rope is to use a re-threaded overhand finished with half of a double fisherman's as a stopper.

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6. Climbing in a Three on Easy Terrain

On easy terrain and when climbing on a single rope one of the seconds can just be tied into the single rope in front of the other second. They need to be tied near the end of the rope and the other second, because as soon as they reach the belay the leader will not be able to take in any more rope; or you need to be able to quickly put a Munter on the third's rope. The safest way to tie-in mid-rope is to form a large loop using an alpine butterfly, thread the end of the loop through the belay loop and over your head and under your feet. This will leave a girth-hitch on the belay loop.

Alternative methods of tying in mid-rope on easy terrain: always use two locking carabiners.

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