

# To Tie and How Not to Tie

By Estelle Leyshon

Now the season is warming up more and more people will be transporting their kayaks to the water. Safety is a concern for many, so here we offer simple steps.

We recommend the purchase of a solid roof rack. Inflatable roof racks are available for those on a tight budget, and are great for short journeys. But a solid roof rack offers a more stable base to tie your kayak, particularly in windy conditions.

Having purchased your roof rack you need to consider how to secure your kayak on it. It is important to take into account the weight, length, shape, style and number of kayaks you wish to carry before making this decision.

Option 1

Upside down on your roof rack. This is quick and easy, but it depends on your kayak's deck shape and the clearance between the roof rack and your car. Generally it allows you to carry only one kayak. An exception is when one boat is secured on top of another. Take care, slippage will occur if you don't tie them down correctly.

Option 2

Uprights/Fold-a-Poles for a kayak on its side. You'll have space on the roof rack for other kayaks, bikes or even a roof box. The fold down uprights can be fitted permanently because they are quick and easy to put up or down with a simple push button system. Depending on the overall height of the vehicle with them on you'll get into your garage or a multi-storey car park. They clamp onto your roof bars with a bolt system, so taking them off completely takes a little time.

Option 3

J Bars. These cup the kayak more securely than simple uprights, preventing slippage on the roof bars. They are great when it's windy. An extension arm makes carrying two kayaks easy, and if there is space four kayaks when set up in pairs. Attaching your straps is easy. They are incredibly solid with little movement and fold down to a degree, but not as cleanly as the fold-a-poles.

Option 4

Kayak Cradles - probably one of the most popular ways to carry kayaks in New Zealand. Manufacturers and styles vary; many will fit a variety of roof bar shapes, including those from other manufacturers. Standard fixed cradles tend to be loaded from the rear. Side flip cradles mean you can load from the side. As the kayak rolls over the cradles they flip into position. These are great. They take a little bit of adjustment to get them in the right place to fit the hull but generally are very easy to use. Some have a simple twist action to release them from your roof rack so they are ultra easy to take on and off. Great when you're in a hurry! Foam cradles are quick and easy too but are not as secure and do not always suit the hull shape. Above all, cradles help protect the hull from damage in transit.



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Tying the kayak down safely is the most important part of transporting any kayak. Done poorly it can lead to disaster. First invest in some decent tie down straps. Bungy straps are definitely not suitable. They aren't secure enough and allow too much movement.

**Step 1**

Pass a tie down through each roof bar or upright and lie them down the front or back of your car ready for securing.

**Step 2**

Load your kayak(s) so it is positioned centrally on both roof bars and is balanced.

**Step 3**

Take both ends of the strap over the top of the kayak(s). Do not pass one end of the strap under and the other over. Ensure the buckle end is hanging down over the boat about half way. Take the other end of the strap under the roof bar before taking it back up the boat and feeding it through the buckle on the other end of the strap. Pull down firmly. If you find yourself pulling up to get tension, you'll need to re-position the buckle so it hangs over the kayak. The straps should be firm enough so that the kayak doesn't move in any direction but not so tight that it dents your boat. Tie off with two half hitches at the buckle before tidying the loose ends. These loose ends may be long enough to tie off your paddle too. Alternatively you can use a multipurpose carrier for your paddles, rods etc.

**Step 4**

When a kayak overhangs, and regardless of the accessories used to mount it, **you must tie the bow to the front of the car and the stern to the back** to prevent the kayak from lifting in the wind. There is a huge leverage at the end of a kayak which could well rip your kayak off! And no, this will not be covered by warranty.

If the over-hang exceeds a metre you must hang a visible flag on the boat's stern.

**Step 5**

Do a final check of your kayak. Ensure straps are neatly away so they don't bang on the roof of the car and test for any movement.

If happy, start your journey.



*Left: The cradle moulds to the shape of the hull.*

*Below: 'J' Bars cradle the kayak on its side leaving room for other gear.*



## Top Tips

- To prevent humming from roof rack straps put a twist in the strap first, this should stop them from being irritatingly noisy.
- A 3 m strap will be enough for one kayak. A 5 m strap ensures there is enough to cover two kayaks coupling on their sides or one on top of the other.
- When securing two kayaks side by side on a roof rack you will need a pair of straps for each boat. It is not recommended to use one long strap to do both. Do not load kayaks this way if two kayaks are too wide for your roof bars.
- Remember, roof racks have a loading weight. Generally this is 75 kg, but the roofs of some cars are recommended, by their manufacturers, to take lighter loads. Be sure to follow your car manufacturer's guidelines.
- Regularly check your roof rack is secure on your car. Many people leave it on permanently and while checking that the kayaks are strapped securely on to the roof rack, they forget to check that the roof rack is still secure. This can be an expensive mistake!



*Left: Ensure the buckle end is hanging down over the boat about half way.*

*Below left: Tie down the the kayak to the front of the car.*

*Below: These Bonnet Ties are an inexpensive solution to tying the bow down.*



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