

Chapter 2: Introduction to Slings of the World

A sling is composed of a pouch, a release cord and a retention cord. The retention cord is attached to the slinger's hand, the pouch holds the ammunition and the release cord is released during the throw: allowing the ammunition to roll out of the pouch. A simple sling is shown in Figure 1. While all slings contain these three basic components, there are a lot of variations in the design and materials used to make slings.

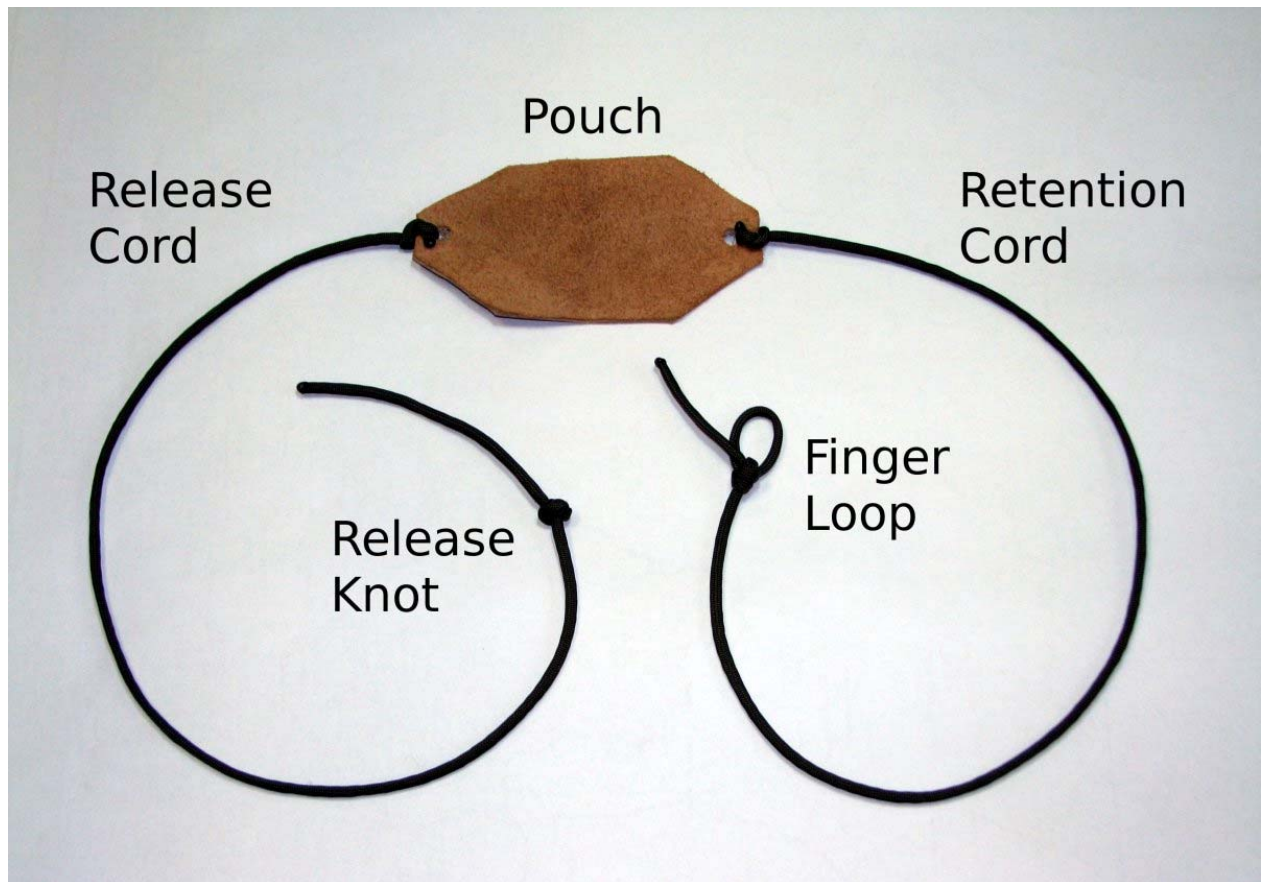


Figure 1: Components of a sling.

There are a few main types of pouches: solid, split, and net.

Solid pouches are made of one single piece of material. The cords may be attached to the pouch at either end or may sometimes be incorporated into the edges of the pouch. The pouch may be flat, or shaped to better hold the ammunition. Typically pouches are made from leather, tough cloth or woven fibres. Sometimes leather pouches will have slits cut into them to allow the pouch to better conform to the ammunition.

Split pouches have a slit in the middle, and usually consist of two cords, though in some cases three cords are used. The cords of these pouches will wrap around a rock to grip it. The sides of the pouch can move apart, changing the pouch width, allowing for different sized rocks to be held. However, smaller rocks may fall through the slit. A simple split pouch may consist of two braided

lines that join into single lines at either end of the pouch or a solid leather pouch with a large slit cut down the middle. More complex split pouches are built from multiple strands that are woven together.

Netted pouches use a mesh net, made from multiple strands knotted together, to hold the ammunition.

The retention cord remains attached to the slinger during the throw¹. Usually it is attached to a finger by a finger loop on the end of the cord. The finger loop may be a simple loop knot, or in the case of a braided sling may be formed by joining the two ends of a short braid together. Alternatively, a sling may use a wrist loop, which is large enough to fit around the slinger's hand, or may not have any loop at all and be retained by wrapping the end of the cord around the slinger's hand. Finally, some slings have a wooden toggle on the end of the release cord, which is held in the palm of the hand with the cord passing out between the slinger's fingers.

The release cord is let go of during the throw, allowing the ammunition to roll out of the pouch. The release cord may have a knot, bead, or tab on the end to facilitate gripping the cord during the throw, though some cords may be gripped directly. If using a wooden bead on the cord, care should be taken that it is light since it could hit the slinger in the eye during a throw. Some slings have tassels on the end to produce a whip like crack during the throw.

Sling lengths are measured from the centre of the pouch to the release knot (or equivalent). This measurement reflects how much the sling increases the length of the thrower's arm. Sling lengths can vary from 40cm to 200cm (about 15.5" to 78.5"), though the exact length used depends on the size of the slinger and the throwing style used. Two good general sling lengths are the distance from the slinger's fingers to shoulder (arm length), and fingers to the centre of their chest. Generally shorter slings are used for accuracy shooting (and underhand throws) and longer slings for distance, however, many world record sling distance throws have been conducted with 130cm slings.

Slings are made from a wide variety of materials. Release and retention cords can be made from synthetic cordage like parachute cord (also called paracord or 550 cord) or nylon string or natural fibres like wool, hemp or sisal. Narrow cords may be twisted or braided together to form thicker cords. Pouches are made from leather, woven fibres (or cloth) or cords. A sling can be made from any material that is at hand and people have made slings from braided shopping bag plastic or duct tape.

Some sling construction methods are indicative of certain geographic regions. South American (Peru and Bolivia) slings are generally braided from llama wool and have a woven split pouch. The braiding of these slings may use 16 or more strands and create very intricate patterns. Slings from Tibet are also braided from many strands of sheep or yak hair and have a diamond shaped woven solid pouch and a wrist loop. Slings from the Balearic Islands (Spain) are traditionally made by braiding sisal fibre into a two strand split pouch. The pouch and finger loop of these slings are lined with leather. However, even in these regions, there is variation in sling construction methods and many different designs and materials are used.

The following photos illustrate some of the different ways that people construct slings.

¹ But not always as demonstrated by stories of slings flying into lakes



Figure 2: Bolivian Sling, 16 and 24 strand braids, woven split pouch, finger loop (photo Rueben Schulz).



Figure 3: Tibetan Sling, 16 strand braid, woven solid diamond pouch, wrist loop (photo Rueben Schulz).

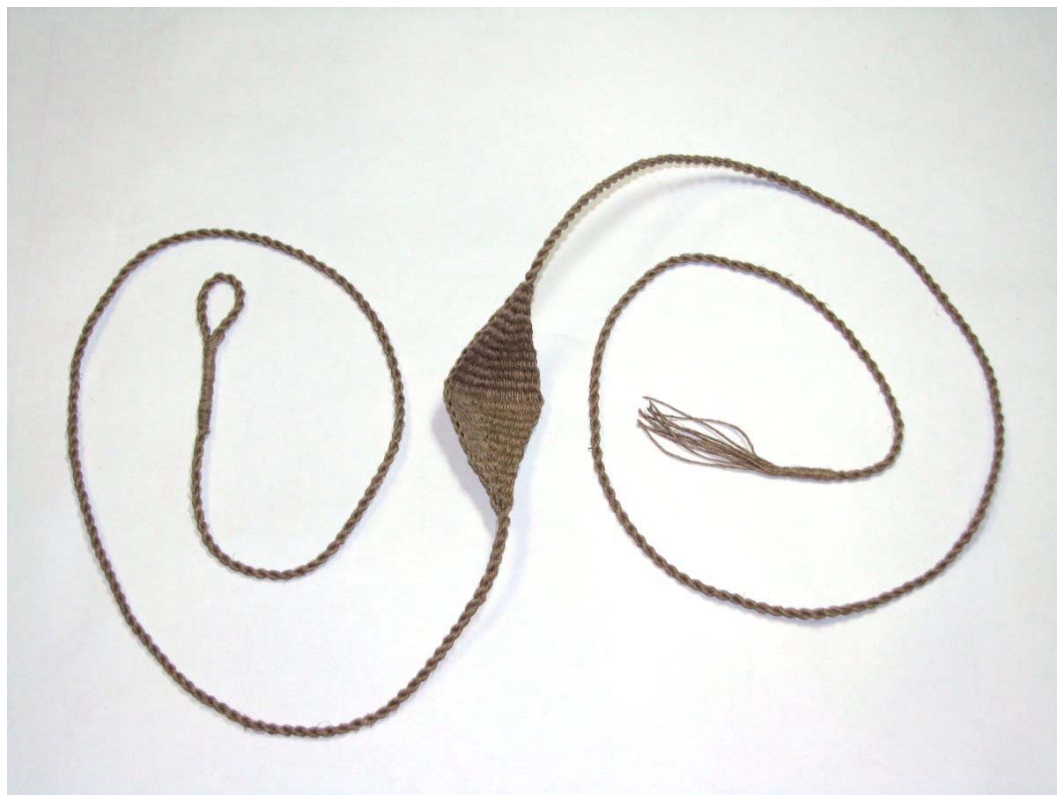


Figure 4: Reproduction of sling found in King Tutankhamun's tomb, woven linen solid pouch, finger loop (photo Marcin Misiorny).



Figure 5: Spanish Balearic sling, braided sisal fibre, split pouch with leather reinforcement (photo Peter Odvarka).



Figure 6: Solid leather pouch sling, braided cord, retention toggle, release tab (photo Jaegoor).



Figure 7: Woven split pouch sling, braided cord, retention finger loop, release tab (photo Jaegoor).



Figure 8: Aussie pouch sling, pouch made from two pieces of synthetic belting (photo Jauke de Haan).

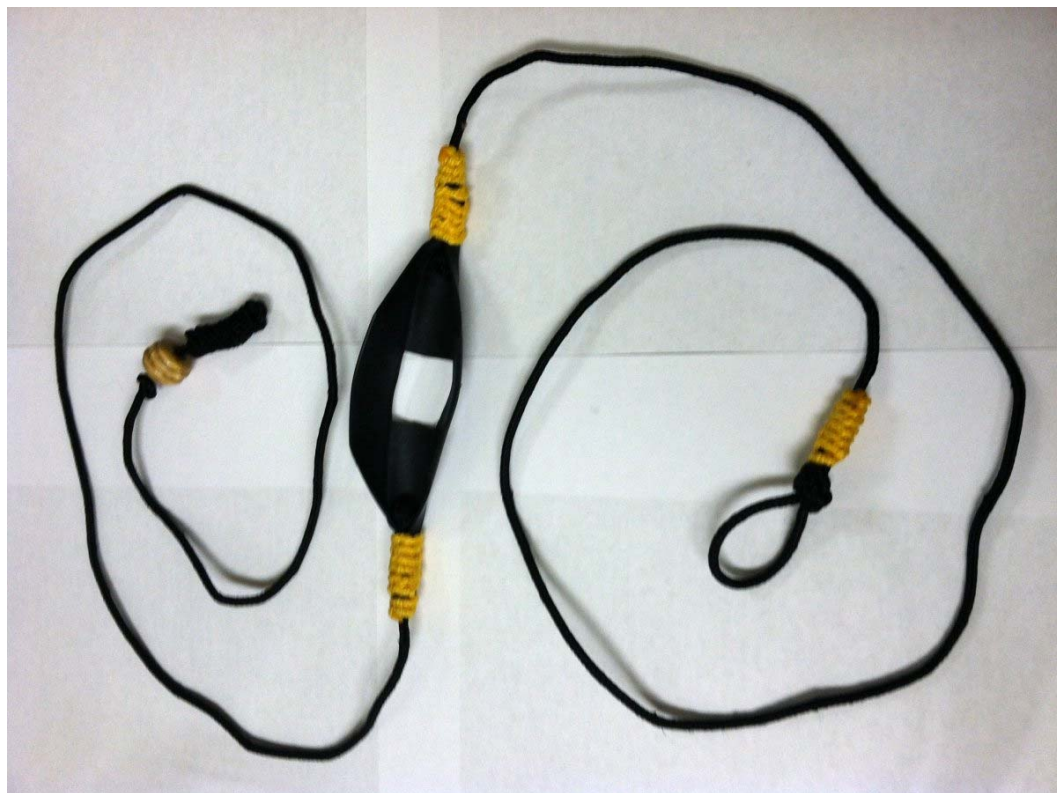


Figure 9: Sling pouch made from rubber tire tube, wooden release bead (photo Jonathan).



Figure 10: Braided sling with woven pouch (photo David Morningstar).

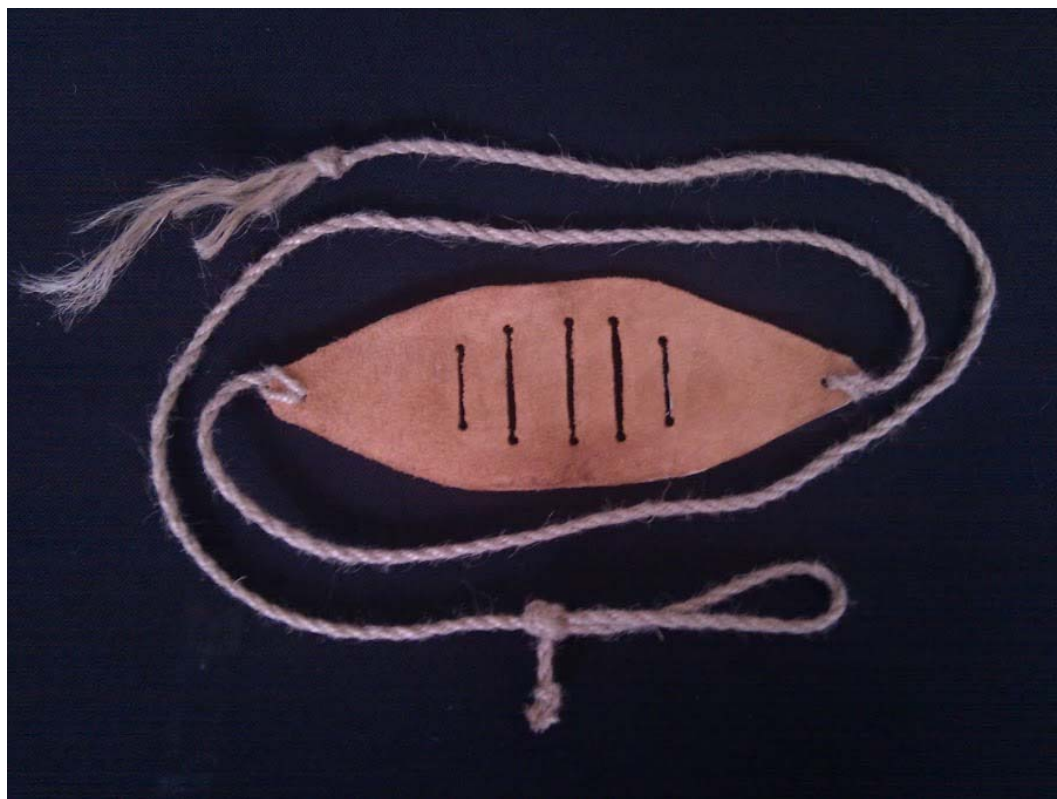


Figure 11: Leather pouch sling with slits (photo David Morningstar).



Figure 12: Split pouch sling woven from paracord (photo William W.).



Figure 13: Apache sling, braided with leather pouch (photo used without permission from MonSlinger).



Figure 14: Five strand sheep shank paracord sling (photo used without permission from peacefulljeffrey).