

Rigging a Canoe

By Marilyn Kali



Wink Arnott uses his weight to stretch the rigging cord around a coconut tree.

Preparing our outrigger canoes for racing and practice takes skill and hard work.

There are three main parts to a canoe (wa`a or hull, `iako or boom and ama or float) and by lashing them together we produce a stable, catamaran-type vessel.

Outrigger Canoe Club is lucky to have a number of experienced members who can rig a canoe that will hold strong in all conditions. It's a skill that comes through practice, practice and more practice.

Since we store and transport our canoes in pieces to the race site each week, it's necessary to rig and unrig each canoe

on the beach.

"We generally take two canoes to each regatta," says paddling and rigging veteran Walter Guild. "We look at the conditions for the day, and decide how to rig the ama to provide the most buoyancy. We may change the rigging during the day if conditions change."

Outrigger's koa racing wa`a are the *Kakina*, *Leilani* and *Kaoloa*. Each of the wa`a has its own specially made ama and `iako.

We use canoe twist rigging cord which is a 3/16 inch poly/cotton mixture to bind the wa`a, `iako and ama together.

To rig the ama to the `iako, you need about 50 feet of cord, or as Head Coach Willie Gacutan says, "about eight arm width spans." To rig the `iako to the wa`a, you need two boats lengths, or approximately 80 feet of cord.

After the cord has been cut, the riggers will wrap the cord around a tree and stretch it as hard as they can. By eliminating the stretch before the rigging, it helps the rigging not come loose when the cord gets wet.

The most important thing when rigging is to ensure that throughout the entire process you are keeping tension on the cord and holding it tight. Because if it's not tight, when the cord gets wet it loosens, and your canoe could fall apart.

Before the rigging starts, the riggers measure from the gunnel to the center of the ama. This establishes the balancing point. The shorter the distance between the ama and the canoe, the faster the canoe will go; however it is less stable. The wider the ama is set, the more stable the canoe will be; but will go slower.

All canoe clubs rig their canoes a little differently. What we're showing in these photos is the Outrigger style.

Rigging the Ama to the `iako



Set the `iako on the ama, matching the male and female knob slots.



Wind the cord around the knob and then through the front hole on the ama. Pull it tight.



Wrap the cord around the knob a second time and through the back hole on the ama. Keep the cord out of the sand.



Repeat the wrapping three more times. Tighten each wrap. Wrap them orderly so each wrap lies flat next to each other (not on top of each other).



Wrap the cord around the base of the `iako four times, tightening with each wrap.



Wrap the remainder of the cord around the `iako, keeping tension on it. Tie off the cord. Secure loose end with duct tape.

Rigging the `iako to the Wa`a



Lay the `iako above the wae, between the two pepeiao.



Fold the cord in half and wrap the closed end around the wae. Tie a knot to anchor it. Split the cord.



Step 1: Pull the cord tightly through the front hole in the hull. Do the same on the opposite side.



Step 2: Loop the cord around the `iako, and into the back hole. Pull tight. The cord will now be inside the boat. Repeat on opposite side of the boat.



Step 3: Pulling tightly, cross the cord, and exchange with your partner.



Repeat steps 1, 2 and 3, pulling the cord tight each time.



Repeat the process four times, pulling the cord tight after each wrap. Make sure the cord lies flat next to each wrap so it won't loosen when it gets wet.



Holding the rope tightly, wrap the cord around the middle of the `iako and the wae four times. Tighten with each wrap.



Tie off the center cord. Finish by wrapping duct tape to secure the loose ends.

Tips From the Experts

- Keep tension tight on the cord throughout the whole process. It helps if you use wooden dowels as tools to tighten the cord.
- Use four people if possible to rig the canoe: two strong people to keep the tension, and two to feed the cord through the puka and keep it free from tangling and sand/debris.
- Always check the rigging bag before leaving the Club. It should contain: rigging cord, level, weights, red and white plastic tape, self tension straps, screw driver, rubber pads, dowels (for tensioning cords), spare void/ama plugs, pencil or magic marker, bow sock, pocket knife, scissors and gloves.