

How to Tame Your Kayak Cart

If you use a kayak cart on a regular, or even occasional basis, you know how irritating and time consuming it can be to fasten your kayak securely to the cart. Most kayak carts come with a single sixteen foot strap, and unless you thread the strap around the cart frame members very carefully, the first rock, root, or pothole you hit, the cart can collapse or twist. Then you have to start all over again, usually when you are blocking the path for the people behind you. And how many trips have you been on when you or someone else realizes that they have forgotten their strap. I now carry a spare strap for others to borrow in my kayak all the time.

But wait! There is a simple solution to these problems! And if you call right now... well you'll have to do this yourself, but it couldn't be easier.

This article uses a WheeEZZ® cart, but many other manufacturers such as Malone, Sea to Summit, Seattle Sports, Harmony, and others make a nearly identical cart, and the general concept can be used for almost any cart.

The parts required are shown below:



They consist of two straps, four 7/16"-20 x 1/2" hex nuts, the corresponding four nylon insert lock nuts, and eight flat washers. The fasteners should all be 316 stainless steel, which you can find at West Marine and other boating supply stores. Most regular hardware stores stock fasteners of 304 stainless steel, which while fairly corrosion resistant and less expensive, is not rated for salt water. You will also need some tools to tighten the nuts and bolts, and finally an awl.

The next question is how long should the straps be? Place the widest vessel in your fleet that you will be hauling on the cart. You always want to position it so that it is slightly bow heavy. You don't want to have to be pushing the bow down while you are pulling the kayak. Measure from three to four inches below the front frame member, across the cockpit rim, to an equal distance beyond the front frame member on the opposite side.

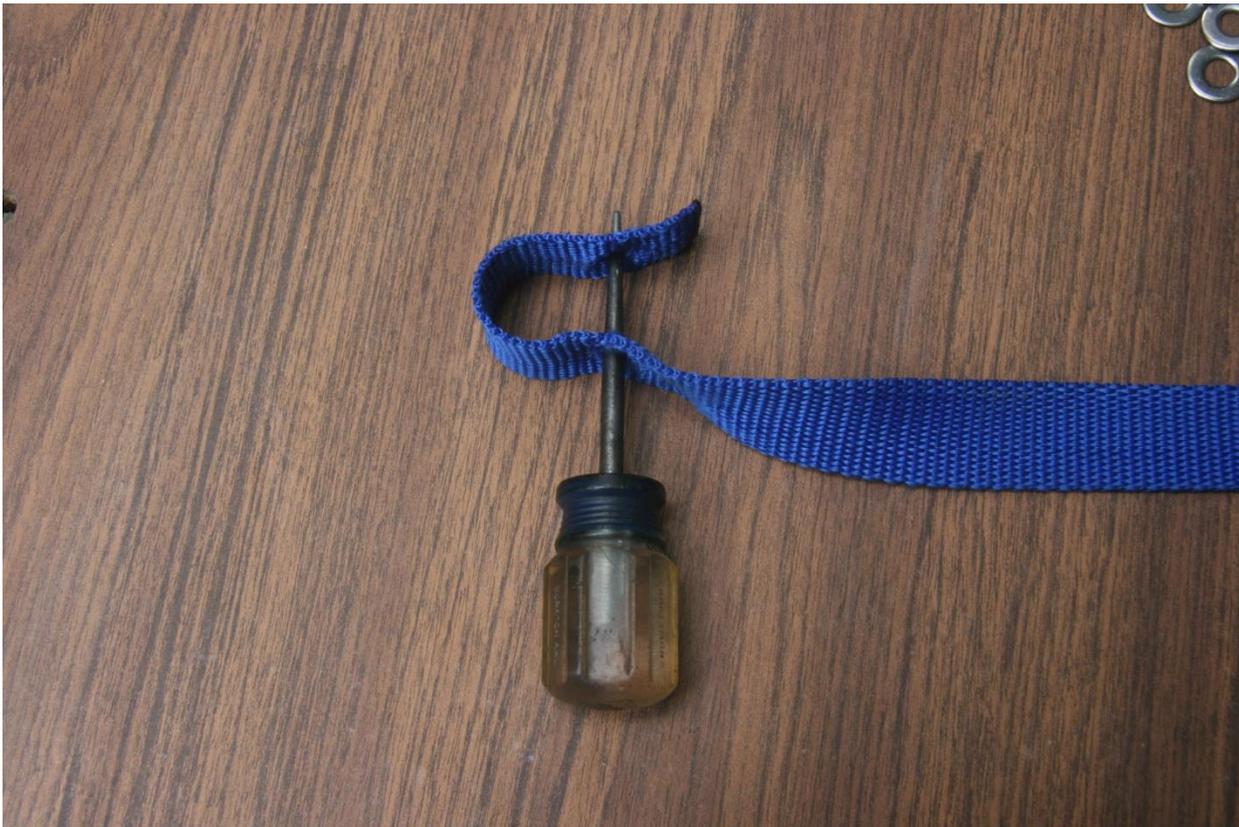


Do the same from the top of the back frame member. Add at least 12" to whichever measurement is longer. In this case, the bow measurement was the longest, and is about 5 feet. I found a store that sold straps in pairs for less than buying single straps, and bought a pair of 6 foot straps. You want to have a bit of extra length, not only to join what will be the two pieces of strap together, but you give you some adjustment if you have to shift a kayak back or forward if it is loaded with gear. A bit longer is always better than too short.

The next step is to take the buckle end and run it from the top of the front frame member to a bit past the center line of the kayak in front of the cockpit rim.



Pass the strap around the front frame member, and cut the excess about 2" beyond it, about where Sue has her right index finger. Use a match or lighter to heat seal the cut ends to prevent fraying. Next, making a loop which will fit around the cart frame, use an awl or other sharp implement to make a ¼" hole through the straps. Be sure to make to loop big enough.



A drill or punch can be used to make the hole, but these tend to cut or shred the strap fibers, rather than force them apart. Attach the strap to the frame using the nut and bolt, with washers on each side. Be sure to place it such that the buckle faces the right way without twisting the strap. Repeat this process on the other side of the kayak and the corresponding front top frame member with the remaining piece of cut strap, making the loop in the cut end and leaving the beveled end to go through the buckle. Repeat this process with the other strap on the top of the rear frame member and around the aft cockpit rim. If either of the non-buckle strap ends is too long, they can be further trimmed at the non-beveled ends, but generally, you can just throw these free ends in the cockpit and out of the way when hauling. As mentioned, a little too long, is always better than too short. Someone else with a wider boat may need to borrow your wheels.



Secure both straps firmly around the cockpit rim, front and back. With this method, much faster than using one long strap, the cart cannot collapse or twist. The cart will stay firmly attached if the kayak has to be carried for a short stretch or even if it tips over.

When are done with the cart, the straps stay with the cart and pack up neatly. No more lost or forgotten straps.



A final tip if your cart has pneumatic tires, always check the tire pressure before leaving on a trip where you anticipate using it. Small tubeless pneumatic tires are notorious for losing pressure over time. A cart with a flat tire is no fun. Most of these tires require 14-30 psi. Go by the cart manufacturer's recommendation or the information on the tire. The information on the tire is the maximal allowable pressure, not necessarily the recommended pressure.