Brief history
Rope has a long history dating back to prehistoric times when it was used as an essential tool for hunting, pulling, fastening, attaching, lifting, carrying, and climbing. The prehistoric ropes were believed to be long pieces of twisted and braided vines.

In the Middle Ages, Europeans constructed long ropes that reached 300 yards or more using the rope walk method and were designed to be used for large ships.

It was only by the late 1700s that people started using machines in rope-making and in the 1950s that synthetic materials began to be used for making ropes.

Overview
Natural Ropes
Are made from environmentally friendly products and don't produce chemical by-products during the manufacturing process. This type of rope is a much better choice if you are worried about the effect that your new rope may have on the environment. Of course, there are many different pros and cons that you will need to consider when opting for a rope made of hemp, sisal, cotton, or other natural fibres.

While natural rope tends to be strong, it is not nearly as strong as synthetic rope and can easily be damaged by water, mildew, mould and UV rays. Unlike synthetic rope, however, the natural rope isn't damaged by exposure to high heat and will only burn if exposed to actual flames.

Unfortunately, natural rope tends to shrink when it gets wet and can be very difficult to work with once it has become wet and then dried out. Natural rope is ideal if you need to package items or want a rope that has a greater grip. Because natural rope is biodegradable it can decompose naturally and is not as difficult to dispose of as synthetic rope.

Natural Hemp
Overview:
Natural hemp rope – was traditionally the rope of choice. Stronger and more rot resistant than other natural ropes, this rope is suitable for a wide range of applications. Unlike Manila and Sisal, Natural hemp is easy on the hand & good to handle. This gives it the edge over other natural fibre ropes. This rope is widely used as a climbing rope in schools, sports halls and gyms.

Plus points: Nice texture and ideal for Gym work & indoor climbing – guaranteed not to give rope burns if climbing or sliding. Best for Gym climbing & indoor projects. Also popular in macrame, arts & crafts.

Minus points: Very slight earthy agricultural smell. Will rot if left outside in the wet.

Manila
Overview:
Manila rope is very durable, flexible, and resistant to salt water damage, traditionally it was used in rope hawsers, ships' lines, and fishing nets. It can be used to make handcrafts like bags, carpets, clothing, furniture, and hangings. Manila rope does however shrink when it becomes wet.

Plus points: Inexpensive

Minus points: Tends to smell & can give you nasty splinters if handled without gloves
Best for: Garden & outdoor projects

Cotton
Overview:
Cotton rope is very popular for use in craft & interior projects & making children's toys. It's also commonly used for Macrame but has a few pros and cons that you need to consider before using it in any other application. Cotton is not nearly as durable as synthetic ropes and is very easily affected by humidity and water. This means that it will mildew and become damaged; however, cotton is not nearly as problematic in warm environments as cotton will not stretch or slip.

One reason to choose cotton ropes for toys is that it is disposable, which means that it will eventually break down and decompose over time. The fibres in cotton rope tend to be softer and ventilated, which means that they are much softer on the skin. If you do use cotton in wet or damp environments, be prepared for knots that tighten and are impossible to release and for mould and black spotted mildew.

Plus points: Very soft & pliable. Frictionless won't burn the skin. Good for Interior design, toy & craft work projects, Macrame. Can be used in association with drapes & soft furnishings.

Minus points: Poor strength, not to be used for heavy lifting or loads.
Really only suitable for indoor use.

Sisal
Overview:
Sisal rope is a natural fibre twisted rope. It is not manufactured with any oils or chemicals and is biodegradable and economical in price. It is however quite rough & hard on the hand.

Plus points: Inexpensive
Minus points: Quite rough to handle & easily tangles
Best for: Cat scratching posts and rustic indoor projects and surprisingly the official rope for Tug of War!

Synthetic ropes
Are generally made out of materials such as nylon, polyester, and polypropylene, although there are other materials that can be used to construct these ropes. They tend to last a lot longer than natural ropes do, which is one reason why they are so popular.

Synthetic ropes often have a lifespan that is 50% longer than natural ropes and are much stronger when they are wet and as they age. Synthetic ropes also are less likely to be damaged by mildew, water, and UV rays, which makes them great for outdoor use.

Additionally, synthetic ropes are much less likely to shrink when they get wet but exposure to high enough heat can cause the rope to melt, which can compromise its strength.

They are much more shock-absorbent and more elastic, which makes them better for towing and lifting applications, but it can be tricky to keep knots tied in synthetic rope from slipping.

Unfortunately, one of the major downsides of synthetic rope is that its production tends to create dangerous by-products and the final product is not renewable or reusable. This means that if you want a more environmentally sustainable option, then you are much better off opting for a natural rope if it will meet your needs.

Polyhemp
Overview:
If you want the classic look and feel of a hemp rope without all of the drawbacks that come with a natural rope, then Polyhemp is a great synthetic alternative. Not only will it look great for long periods of time, even in wet or damp weather, it will not shrink.

This means that you don't have to worry about unsightly mould or mildew on the rope. Additionally, Polyhemp is generally resistant to a number of different chemicals and feels much smoother in the hand than manila rope does. You can enjoy the nautical and natural look without having to worry about the negative points of natural ropes when you choose Polyhemp rope instead.

Polyhemp is easily our bestselling rope.

- For outdoor & garden projects look to use: 24mm, 32mm or 36mm.
- For indoor projects: 8mm, 10mm, 12mm or 16mm

Plus points: Extremely strong, Natural looking, Good for outdoor projects – will not rot. No smell

Minus points: Synthetic and made of plastic – possible environmental issues.
Not suitable for climbing or gym ropes as can give rope burns if descending quickly.

Best for Outdoors - Garden Projects, BBQ & Decking areas, Swings & Hammocks
Indoors – Decorative use, rope bannisters etc