

TIPS FOR BEGINNERS---Developed by Charles August, SVTU

1. Before you start, make sure you have good light.
2. Tape a small paper bag to the side of the table top for your trash. Have a sticky roller handy to clean up your lap and the tying surface when you're finished. Your spouse will appreciate this if you tie in shared space.
3. Keep a cotton dish towel in your lap while you tie. It will catch the trash you create and also anything (e.g. tools, beads, or hooks, etc.) that you will inevitably drop.
4. You may want to buy some high powered reading glasses (1.50--2.25+) at the drugstore for tying small flies. If you already wear glasses with some degree of magnification you may use a relatively low power reading glasses and just wear them in front of your regular glasses. Play with the glasses at the drugstore before you buy them. The distance between your eyes and the fly you are tying ought to be 12-14 inches.
5. Organize your tools on the tying table. The easiest way to do this is with a tool caddy which can be purchased.
7. Essential tools are:
 - a. Vice: start with one you borrow or test in class. If you decide that fly tying is something you really want to do, purchase the best one you can afford.
 - b. Scissors: get one pair with fine tipped points. Also get a second sturdy pair for cutting heavy or tough materials more crudely.
 - c. Bobbin: Some have ceramic inserts so that wear and tear by the metal tube will not end up cutting your thread.
 - d. Hackle pliers: essentially a clamp to grip hackle feathers as you wind them around the hook shank.
 - e. Head cement. A cheap and simple product is clear nail polish (I like Sally Hansen 'Hard as Nails').
 - f. Half Hitch tool – There is a tool for this or half a ball point pen with the ink cartridge removed is a very serviceable half-hitch tool.
 - g. Bobbin Threader - Dental floss threaders may be used to thread your bobbin. No need to buy an expensive tool from a fly fishing shop.
 - h. Bodkin: Comes in most kits or can be made by coating the eye end of a needle with epoxy resin and shoving it into the base of a cork. Then apply a drop of epoxy at the entrance site. Alternatively, you could use a soft wooden dowel instead of the cork for a handle.
 - i. Whip finishing tools. Several are available. I like the Matarelli best. A good YouTube video exists to teach you how to use it.
8. Instructional Texts:
 - a. Randall Kaufmann, "Fly Tying Made Easy for Beginners", 2002, Western Fisherman's Press.

- b. Paul N.Fling & Donald L. Puterbaugh, “The Basic Manual of Fly-Tying” Revised Edition, 1992, Sterling Publ Co., Inc.
- c. Dick Talleur, “L.L. Bean Fly-Tying Handbook”, 1998, The Lyons Press.
- d. If you haven’t already bought one, the “Guide to Maryland Trout Fishing” by Charlie Gelso and Larry Coburn is a classic! The last chapter contains recipes for flies which are successful on Maryland’s waters.

All of the fly fishing magazines out there have articles about fly tying. However, most are pricey. A real bargain is the “Mid Atlantic Fly Fishing Guide”, which is free at many fly shops. This monthly publication always has at least 2 excellent fly tying columns, “Pattern of the Month”, and “From the Vice”, by A.K. Best, one of the giants of the fly-tying world. If you save these 2 columns regularly, in a couple of years, you will have created quite a set of references for yourself. If you are planning to visit one of the local fly shops (see list below) only to pick up a “Mid Atlantic Fly Fishing Guide”, call first to be sure they have them.

A large number of instructional videos exist on the internet. Google “YouTube fly tying, then the name of the fly you want to learn how to tie, for example, “YouTube fly tying Adams dry fly” and check out what comes up. The Orvis website has some excellent fly tying videos as well. Go to their website and follow links to “fly tying”, and then “videos”.

Finally, some words about fly shops where you can buy tools and materials.

Beaver Creek Fly Shop on the banks of Beaver Creek near Hagerstown, is well stocked both for tied flies and fly tying stuff. The BCFS also sponsors tying lessons and demonstrations by expert tiers. This is a local shop which I encourage all fly anglers and tiers to patronize. The owner, James Harris, supports SVTU activities and opens the shop to an occasional SVTU chapter meeting.

Hunting Creek Outfitters is in the restored section of downtown Frederick.

Bass Pro Shop in Arundel Mills has fly tying materials.

Finally, for those of you who venture up to the Gunpowder River, “Backwater Angler” in Monkton is a full service fly fishing, tying, guiding, and teaching shop quite close to the river itself. Check out its website, [www.backwaterangler.com].

GENERAL RULES FOR STARTING TO TIE A FLY

1. Mount hook in the vise (with or without a bead head).
2. Flatten the barb with a smooth jawed needle nose pliers or simply by closing the vice over the barb.
3. Thread your bobbin with thread of the desired weight (mostly 6/0 Uni-thread) and color. Tip: white thread may be used and colored with Sharpies.
4. Prepare a thread base.
5. Wind on weight (or not). Good rule of thumb: diameter of the weight should approximate the diameter of the hook shank. Use non lead weight—tin or tungsten. Weight may be flattened with needle nose pliers as above to give nymphs a flattened body appearance.
6. Tie on tail (or not).

7. Tie in other material just in front of the tail; the first to be tied in is the last to be wound around the shank.
8. Wind the materials you have just tied in around the shank for the desired distance, which may vary depending on the fly you are tying. Stop winding materials at the hook's "shoulder". Try to leave the last hook eye length of the shank bare.
9. Tie a thread head in the empty space you have provided for yourself in #8. Finish the head with two double, half hitches or a 6-7 turn whip finish.
10. Apply head cement sparingly with your bodkin.