

Component Parts of Fly Fishing Equipment

by
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At a recent casting practice session I was talking to some of our members about component parts of our fly fishing equipment – rod, reel, line, leader, tippet and fly. There is an enormous amount written about each in books and magazines. To some of our newer fly fishers it's not easy to understand how all this fits. I hope the following will help as a starting point.

1. There are two books that I highly recommend to those new to our sport. The most basic is L.L. Bean's Fly-Fishing Handbook by Dave Whitlock. The second is Orvis' Fly-fishing Guide by Tom Rosenbauer and is more detailed.
2. Our modern fly rods will cast a wide range of line sizes. Use the manufactures recommendation of line weight as a starting point. You should practice casting a range of line weights and designs using the rods you fish most often. You may find that a double taper (DT) casts better at fishing distances under 50'. If you are only casting at 20' or less you might want to consider using one weight heavier fly line. Most beginners are surprised at the difference in the feel while casting sinking lines compared to floating lines.
3. When you practice you should consider what you will be doing while fishing. Make casts for accuracy (at a range of fishing distance – 15' to 60'), for delicacy, for slack, for mending, etc.
4. The leader you use can have an enormous effect on your fishing success. It can make casting easier, help the presentation of the fly and help avoid break-offs. Just because you purchased a leader doesn't mean it will work well with your fly and fishing situation.
5. I like to assemble my fishing outfit in the following manner:
 - a. First, I start by considering the fish I am targeting. Is it likely to be big, fast, powerful, with sharp teeth, in a river, stream, pond, lake, in cover, on the surface/shallow, deep, etc. You get the picture, know your prey.
 - b. Second, select your flies to target fish you hope to catch. If you are not sure of the flies to use talk with one of our experienced members or our better tackle stores.
 - c. Third, you can select your leader. This selection needs more discussion than can be put into this article. Additional information will be presented next month. Just keep in mind the "Rule of 4" when selecting a tippet size. It gives a recommendation of the upper size you use. Simply divide the hook size by 4 and that will give the tippet size in terms of "X size". Thus a #16 hook would take a 4X tippet and a #12 a 3X. I often find members that are having trouble are using leaders that a too long and too light.
 - d. Fourth, you select the fly line that will give a good presentation to your fly. This is also a subject that will take more space than we have in this article. For most beginners this is an easy decision because they have only one or two lines, a floater and sinker.
 - e. Fifth, you select the fly rod to match you fly/leader/line combination. (Review the article "**How to Choose A Fly Rod**" in the December 2007 newsletter.) Last comes the selection of the reel. For most of us this only becomes critical when we target large, powerful and fast fish.
6. Even if you have done all this in a reasonable manner you still need to know "how to fish" the combination selected. This has filled volumes and will continue to supply much for future writings. If you are new to the sport, take advantage of our more experienced fly fisherman and learn how they do it. A word of caution, many fly fisherman don't care if they catch a lot of fish or even big fish. They may really enjoy fishing a dry fly all day while others are thrilled fishing only nymphs and still others love the swing of a streamer. Don't forget, it's what makes you happy at the end of the day that counts. There is plenty of room for all styles. This is a great sport. Enjoy it!