

TIPS FOR TYERS

by Tom Deschaine



Anyone who has been tying for a while gradually picks up tips and tricks to make your tying easier. Many of these tips you collect from what other tyers have written or shared with you. Others you develop yourself, by accident or out of necessity.

Many of the tips I'm about to share with you are not necessarily my own. And regretfully I don't know who originally developed them, so that I can give them the appropriate acknowledgement in this article --- for that I am truly sorry. Many of the others are my own. But whether or not the tips are mine or someone else's, it has been my experience that fly tyers everywhere enjoy sharing. I hope you find these tips helpful.

► Organization

- Dedicate a small area in your home where you can store your equipment and tie flies. This sure beats going looking for everything each time you want to do some tying.
- As money permits, purchase or build a tying chest for the storage of tools, threads and materials. Once organized, you'll know right where everything is; you'll know what you have on hand and what you need to order.
- Consider a cedar lined storage chest. This will prevent an invasion of insect pest.
- Check out your local general merchandise stores (K-Mart, Wal-Mart, etc), they have a good selections of large and small plastic storage containers.



► Tools

- Use pipe cleaners to clean out you bobbins.
- Egg cartons have *many* uses, storage of flies, dispensing dubbing and as many other uses as your brain can think of.
- Save old tooth brushes and combs, they're great for combing out under hairs and for that final groomed look on flies.
- Check with your local jeweler --- purchase from him/her a pair of fine point jeweler's tweezers. They're great for plucking out 'individual hairs' on your presentation flies.
- Soda straws (in multiple sizes) work as the best hackle guards I've even seen. I keep it right on my bobbin --- then just slide it onto the hook and push all the materials back so that I can tie off the head.



► Materials

- Use small film canisters or old pill bottles, with holes punched in the top. Add moth balls or whole cloves to the containers to keep insects out of your natural materials. Cedar wood works well also, just keep it sanded every couple of years to refresh the cedar smell.
- Use electrical tape to seal all of your fly tying fluid bottles --- thus preventing evaporation and thickening.
- Head cement can be thinned using denatured alcohol.
- Another way to protect your fly tying materials from insect invasion is by sealing your materials in plastic zip lock bags.

► **Tying**

- Use permanent markers to color bleached quills.
- Need fly tying lacquer --- use straight hair spray --- remove the pump sprayer and dip in a paint brush.
- Use Kool Aid for dyeing materials.
- Soak quills in cooking oil prior to wrapping them (or glycerin and water solution) --- it keeps them from splitting when you wrap them.
- Stripping quills? Three things you can do; use bleach --- works great --- but it only takes a few seconds, so pay attention. Second method, use a pencil eraser. Third method, run your quill through the eye of a hook --- strips it right off.
- The use of a depilatory (hair removal cream) has also been suggested for stripping quills.
- Use Chap-Stick as a dubbing wax.
- Use clear nail polish as a lacquer.
- Use colored nail polishes as a lacquer for the heads on your flies.
- Perfect wings every time! Cut your wings to shape, then apply 'flexament' to both sides and allow to dry *before* tying them on to your fly.
- Lacquer your tails and bodies --- *before* tying on you wings.

► **General**

- Get you spouse involved in fly tying. It will give you something you can both do together. The greatest thing you'll ever do!
- Visit sewing and fabric stores for threads, needles, and other materials.
- All thumbs on the water --- try tying your knots using hemostats, instead of your fingers.
- Old, limp, tired flies can be revived by steaming them. I use a tea kettle, and use forceps to hold the fly into the steam.

See you on the water.....