



# Beginners' Fly-Tying Notes

SESSION 1



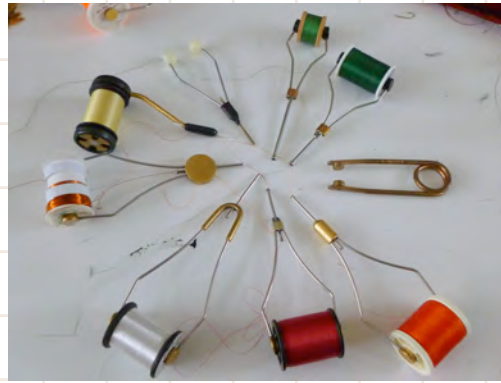
# Tools

Vice

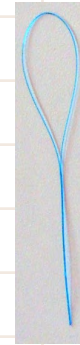


- ① Check that:
  - the jaws hold the sizes of hooks you want to tie on; and
  - the stem is long enough to allow you to work around the vice.
- ② Clamp vs. pedestal stand
- ③ Desirable but not imperative: rotating and adjustable angle for the head.

Bobbin holder



Threader  
(for dental floss!)



Bodkin/ Dubbing  
needle (hat pins!)



Scissors



- ① Check that they are:
  - Sharp;
  - cut right to the tip; and
  - have a fine point.
- ② A serrated-edged blade is useful for cutting thicker materials.

Whip finish and  
half-hitch tools



See also <http://www.flydressersguild.org/Pages/JustStarting.aspx>



# Hooks and Threads

## Hooks

- ① Probably the most important component of a fly.
- ② If using hand-made hooks, it's good practice to do the "ping test" before tying anything onto the hook:
  - Set the hook in the vice.
  - Apply light downward pressure on the eye, then release.
  - If it "pings", it's a good 'un. Otherwise dispose of it safely.
- ③ The ping test is not typically required for modern hooks due to improved manufacturing processes

## Threads

- ① Choose thread of thickness and breaking strength appropriate to fly being tied:
- ② For the flies we will be tying, select any 'standard' polyester thread of about 70 denier. For example, Uni-Thread 8/0 or Sheer 14/0 (different manufacturers use different scales!).

## Spin/ torque

- ① Every turn of thread around the hook will put a twist in the thread - eventually weakens it and can cause it to break.
- ② Good practice to take the spin out of the thread from time to time

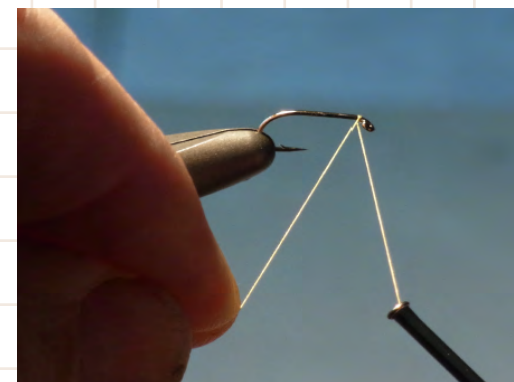
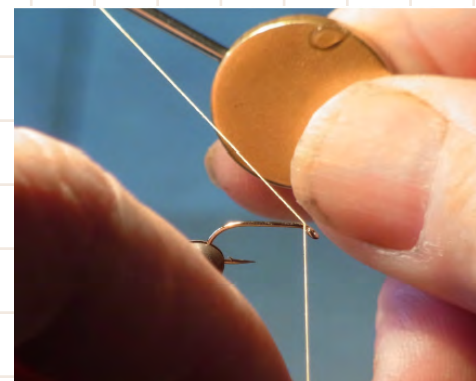
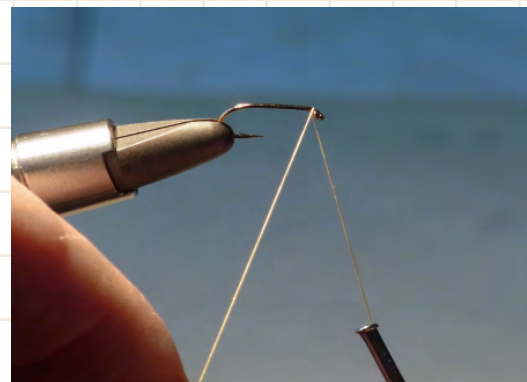
See "Hanging by a Thread" on [http://www.sussexflydressers.org.uk/hintsandtips\\_PDavis.html](http://www.sussexflydressers.org.uk/hintsandtips_PDavis.html)



# Starting the Thread

## *Starting the thread (right handed)*

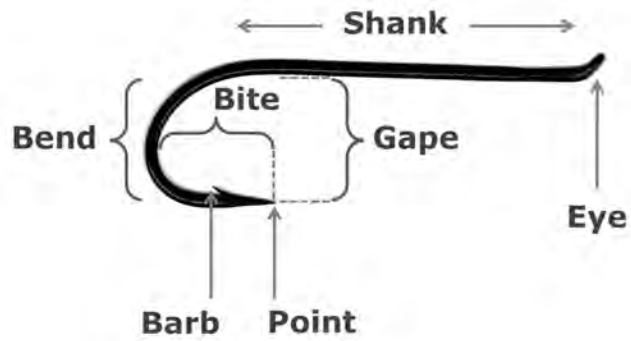
- ① *Take bobbin holder in right hand and loose end of thread in left.*
- ② *Hold the thread behind the eye of the hook, with the bobbin holder at the bottom.*
- ③ *Draw the bobbin holder up towards you and then over the hook to trap the loose length of the thread beneath it. Repeat two more times, keeping the tension on both ends of the thread tight at all the times.*
- ④ *Then holding the loose end of the thread at a 45 degree angle, carry on wrapping the thread down the length of the hook shank in touching turns - the slope of the loose end will make sure each turn sits right next to the last one.*



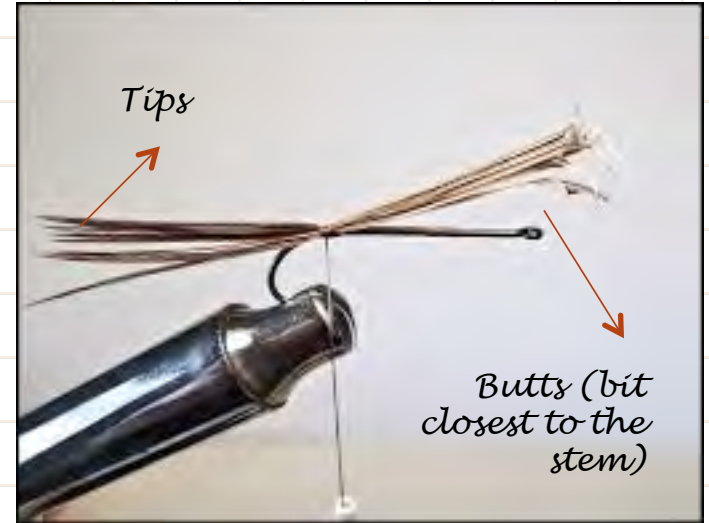


# Common terms

## Hooks



## Fibres, herl





# Working with materials (1)

## ❖ Tie on and tie off materials on the top of the hook

- Gives a good sense of proportions.
- Unless specified, tie on materials so that the "working length" hangs off the back of the hook.
- To tie off, hold the material up vertically and wrap thread tightly round the hook where the last wrap of material crosses over the top of the hook.

## ❖ Can add a dab of varnish to bed of thread before tying in any materials

## ❖ Don't "comfort wrap"!

- Three turns of thread will hold most materials in place.

## ❖ Work with a comfortable length of material

- When wrapping materials, work with a length of 8" or less to avoid tangles.

## ❖ Wind materials in same direction as thread

- To create a flat, tight body, wind the body material in the same direction as the way you wind your thread. That way, when you tie them down, you are tightening the wraps.



# Working with materials (2)

## ✧ Wherever possible, push-cut rather than snip:

- Open scissors to a small "V", hold the material you want to cut tight and push the scissors against it without closing the blades - slice through rather than cut.
- Avoids cutting through other materials by mistake.

## ✧ Tying with wire

- Direction depends on pattern and personal preference:
  - If wound in the same direction as the body material, the rib will be less obvious, but to ensure the body material is properly trapped, need to make one turn less of wire than of the body material.
  - If you want the rib to stand out, wind it in the opposite direction to the body material.
- Pull the wire tightly as you wrap it round the hook shank - you need to hear it squeak or sing.
- Do not cut wire with your best scissors - use an old pair or hold it close to the tying off point and wiggle it around in circles until it snaps. (Keep tension on thread whilst doing so).

## ✧ Tying with pheasant tail fibres and peacock herl

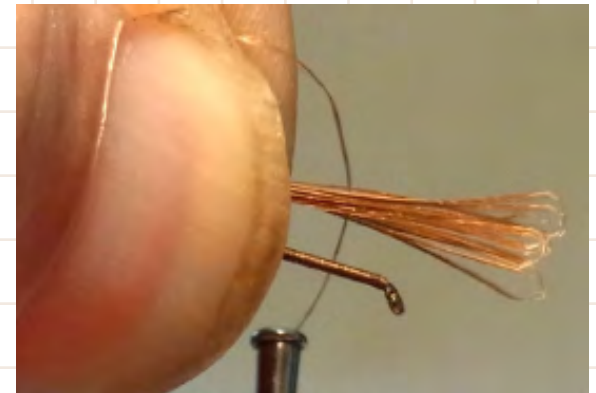
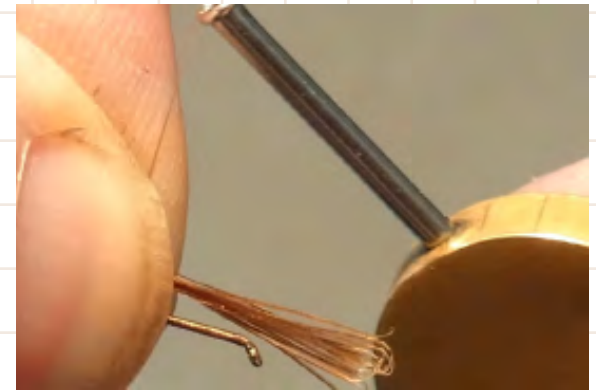
- Cut 0.25" off the tips of pheasant tail fibres to eliminate weak spots. If tying them in for a thorax cover, cut 0.5" to 0.75" off the tips, to get a wider cover.
- Cut 1" off the tips of peacock herl before tying it in.



# Pinch and loop

## ❖ A good way to ensure materials do not wander around the hook shank

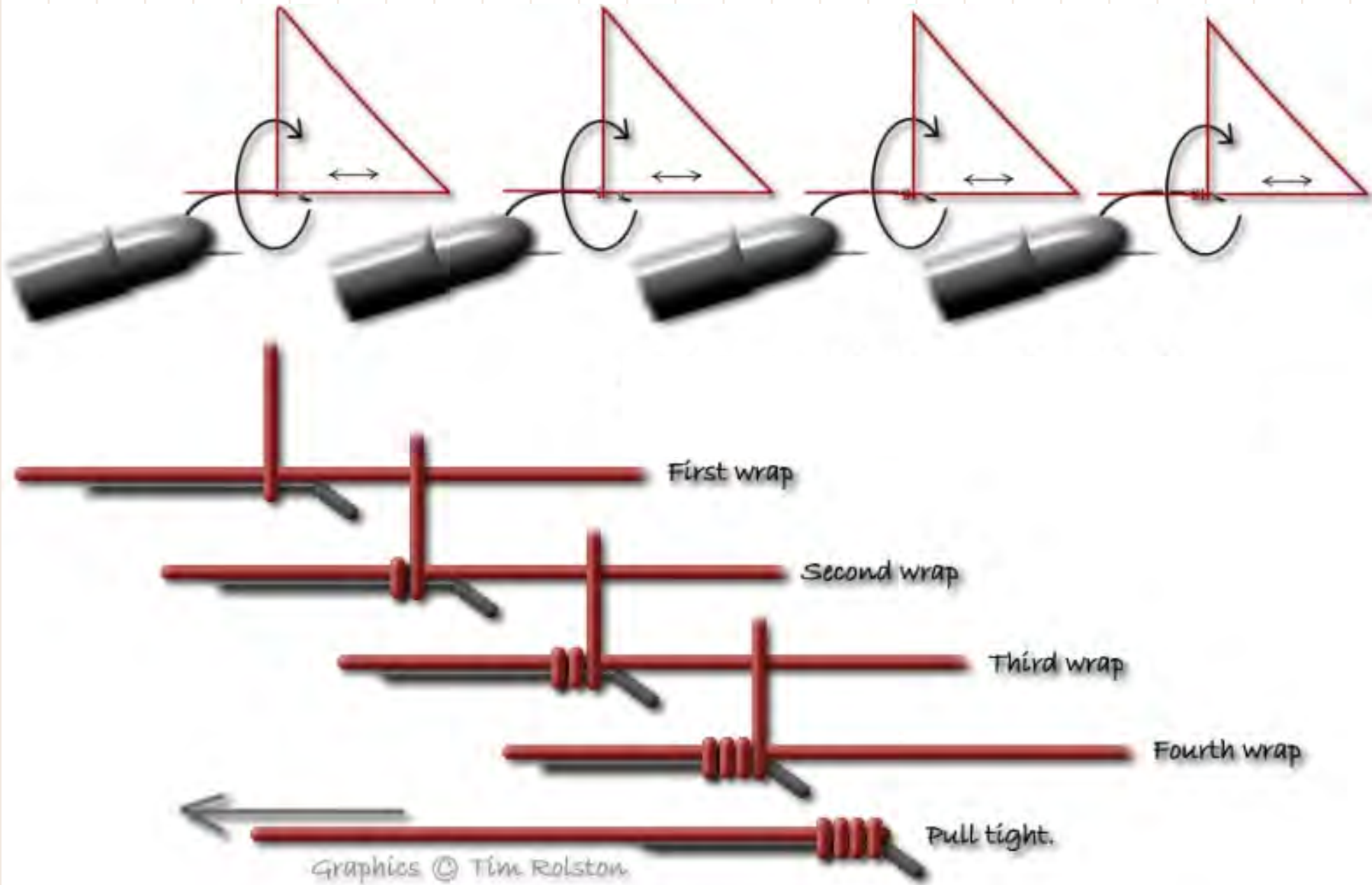
- Hold the materials on top of the hook shank between your thumb and index finger in the position where you want to tie them in.
- Take the thread up vertically and trap it between your thumb and finger.
- Loop the thread over the materials loosely and then take it down vertically, again trapping it between your thumb and finger.
- Repeat the step again, then while still holding the materials in place, take the thread round the bottom of the hook and pull it up vertically whilst releasing the pinched loops.
- The loop will compress vertically down onto the materials, securing them tightly on top of the hook shank.







# The Whip Finish





# Cove Pheasant Tail variant

- Hook #6-12 wet fly
- Thread Black
- Body c. 4 cock pheasant centre tail fibres
- Wing case c. 6 cock pheasant centre tail fibres
- Thorax Red single strand wool
- Head Whip finish and varnish

1. Place your hook in the vice and secure your thread. Continue in touching turns to a point level with the mid point between the point and the barb.
2. Tie in the pheasant tail fibres (use a pinch & loop to keep them on top of the hook shank).
3. Wrap the body forwards in touching turns along c. 2/3 of the length of the hook shank. Tie off and cut off the excess waste.
4. Tie in the wing case (use a pinch and loop)

where you tied off the pheasant tail fibres. Then tie in the red wool in the same place.

5. Wrap the wool forwards, stopping 2-3mm short of the eye, wrap it back for one turn less and wrap it forwards again for one turn less, so you end up with a ball-shaped thorax.
6. Pull the wing case forward and hold it down with your thumb. Tie it down with a couple of tight wraps just behind the eye of the hook. Then lift up the fibres and take a couple of turns immediately in front to lock the ends.
7. Cut off the excess close to the thread wraps and bury the cut ends under 2-4 wraps of thread - cut a few fibres at a time to avoid a steep "step".
8. Finish the fly with a whip finish or two half hitch knots and varnish the knots and the wing case.



# Hot Spot Peacock Nymph

- Hook #6-12 wet fly
- Thread Black
- Rib Fine copper wire
- Body 2 strands of peacock herl
- Wing case 2 strands of peacock herl
- Thorax Red single strand wool
- Head Whip finish and varnish

1. Place your hook in the vice and secure your thread. Continue in touching turns to a point level with the mid point between the point and the barb.
2. Tie in the copper wire, then the peacock herl (use a pinch & loop to keep them on top of the hook shank).
3. Wrap the body forwards in touching turns along c. 2/3 of the length of the hook shank. Tie off and cut off the excess waste.
4. Then bring the rib forwards in open turns,

and tie off where you finished the pheasant tail body. Trim off the excess.

5. Tie in the wing case (use a pinch and loop) where you tied off the copper wire. Then tie in the red wool in the same place.
6. Wrap the wool forwards, stopping 2-3mm short of the eye, to form a slim thorax.
7. Pull the wing case forward and hold it down with your thumb. Tie it down with a couple of tight wraps just behind the eye of the hook. Then lift up the fibres and take a couple of turns immediately in front to lock the ends.
8. Cut off the excess close to the thread wraps and bury the cut ends under 2-4 wraps of thread.
9. Finish the fly with a whip finish or two half hitch knots and varnish the knots and the wing case.