

First, Choose the Right Line

Question: What do fly fishing and singles bars have in common?

Answer: Your success depends on the line you use.

Any fly fishing outfit consists of a fly, leader, fly line, reel, rod & case, each component being chosen such that the outfit is *balanced* and *suited to the type of fishing* intended for it.

To assemble a suitable outfit we must first select a fly line, and three factors are most important:

- *Line weight* – This is the actual weight of the forward 30 ft (the end attached to the leader & fly). Weights are numbered from 1 to 12, with 12 being heaviest. The lightest lines are best for tiny flies, short casts and delicate presentation. Heavier lines handle larger flies, windy conditions and longer casts. I'd choose a line in the 4 – 8 weight for trout fishing and 8 – 10 weight for salmon fishing on large, windy rivers like the St. Mary's using big flies.
- *Line density* – This determines whether your line floats on the water surface or sinks below it. If you choose a sinking line, you also must decide how fast you need the line to sink. A sink tip line is a floating line with a sinking tip. Floating lines are easiest to handle, and are best for surface or near-surface fishing. When you need to get down to reach fish that won't rise to your fly, or to fish a fly slowly in fast current, a sinking or sink tip line is the answer.
- *Line design* – Most modern fly lines are either weight-forward taper or double taper designs, and each has advantages and disadvantages. Our diagram shows both designs. Weight-forward tapers are currently the choice of most fly fishers because they are designed for longer casts. Double tapers can be reversed on the reel when they wear out because each end is the same. A double taper may be more comfortable to handle as well, and less likely to tangle.

A label of **DT-8-F** means **Double Taper**, **8** weight, **Floating** line. Likewise **WF-9-S** means **Weight Forward**, **9** weight, **Sinking** line. **WF-7-F/S** means **Weight Forward**, **7** weight, **Floating/Sink tip** line.

Having selected our line, we need a reel sized to hold the line plus some line backing to accommodate larger fish that may take long runs before surrendering. If we plan to have more than one line in our outfit (e.g. a floater & a sinking line), we may want a reel and a spare spool that fits the reel. Our fly rod must be designed to handle the line weight we've selected. Each rod's label shows the line weight needed for optimum performance. Other factors in choosing a fly rod are length and number of pieces (usually 2 – 4).

Leader selection is important too. Our leader must be able to present your fly to fish at the proper depth. Heavy leaders are required large flies, while a light leader is needed to present and fish small flies. A long leader is suitable for surface or near surface fishing, a short leader being more appropriate for sinking line or sink tip fishing. Also, sinking leaders are now available. They cost about \$10.00, making them good, inexpensive alternatives to sink tip lines and spare spools. Leaders should make a fly

appear natural and lifelike, and leaders made from the new fluorocarbon material are actually invisible in water.

But first we must choose a case to protect our outfit from accidental breakage, the most common threat to expensive fly outfits. I like a case that holds the rod with reel mounted, ready to fish when the rod is pieced together. The easier we make it for ourselves, the more likely we are to habitually use the case. A case is like a seatbelt – don't transport the outfit unless it's buckled up. It protects our rod in storage also, so if it falls over and our spouse steps on it in the dark it may even save a marriage, know what I'm sayin?

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