

NKFF Beginner's Gear Handout

- Fly Lines

- Modern fly lines have a coating of **plastic over a braided dacron** (usually) core and come in sizes from 1 to 15 with the smaller numbered lines being very small/light and the larger numbered lines being bigger/heavier. The heavier the fly line, the bigger a fly it can cast. The lines come in three shapes (level(L), double-taper(DT) & weight-forward (WF)). Most flyfishing COMBO OUTFITS come with a WF line.
- Modern fly lines come in floating, sinking and combination(sink tip). **For most beginner's the most appropriate line is a double-tapered line ONE SIZE HIGHER than the line marked on their fly rod.** So if you buy an 8-foot #5 rod, buy an floating, double-taper #6 line.
- Level lines are the least expensive and the hardest with which to learn to cast. Double Taper lines are easier to learn to cast but cannot be used easily for very large flies. When one end of a level L or double-taper DT line wears out, you can turn it around and use the other end. **A fly line, if cared for properly, will last you for several years so don't be put off by the expense of the DT or WF lines. It is SMARTEST to scrimp on rod and reel cost and BUY A REALLY GOOD fly line.**

There are three basic types of fly lines all of which are usually 90 feet long :

LEVEL LINES have the same diameter across their entire length. These lines are the **LEAST EXPENSIVE** to make and therefore cost the least. They are also pretty hard to find and they are the most difficult to learn to cast.



DOUBLE TAPERED lines are level lines that have the same taper on both ends. This makes casting and “presenting” very small flies in a delicate manner (i.e. no line slap on the water) much easier. These are more expensive to manufacture so they cost more. One great advantage of level and double tapered lines is that when the front end wears out you can just turn the line around on your reel and you have a new casting end.



WEIGHT FORWARD lines are the most common today, the most expensive to make and therefore they cost the most. They are probably the easiest to learn how to cast ... but when the front end wears out ... you have to buy a new line.



If you are learning to cast with just the front 25 feet of line, there is probably no difference between casting a double-taper or a weight forward line. Since there is no “taper” on the end of a level line, you have to build it by tying on a tapered leader with a very heavy butt section.

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- Fly Rods –

- Fiberglass - 6-foot to 8-foot are okay - longer ones are too heavy
- Graphite of low (30,000) to medium (42,000) tensile strength fibers are best for beginners. Most of these rods will flex in the medium range (i.e. will bend thru the middle / ferrule of the rod). The super stiff higher modulus will not help you learn to cast properly. These rods will vary in cost from as little as \$35 or \$40 to as much as several hundred dollars. Beginners should try a few friends (NKFF members) or club rods before they buy one for themselves. NOTE – SOME Ultralight Spinning rods will cast several different weights of fly lines quite nicely.

AN EXPENSIVE ROD WILL NOT COMPENSATE FOR POOR CASTING.

Travel rods are three or four and are convenient for travelling flyfishers, but cost more because of the extra steps it takes to finish more ferrules. If you plan to fly and take a fishing trip make sure your fishing gear can go on the plane with you (plus one change of clothing and your shave kit). That way even if your luggage goes elsewhere you can fish and walk around in public.

ANY FLY ROD SHOULD BE ABLE TO CAST THE LINE IT IS SPECIFICALLY DESIGNATED FOR, A LINE ONE SIZE BELOW ITS DESIGNATED WEIGHT AND A LINE ONE SIZE ABOVE ITS DESIGNATED WEIGHT. So your 5-weight rod should be able to handle a #4 and a #6 line too.

- Why so many - Do I need all of these?

- You do not want to flyfish for bluegill with a 9-weight, nor for tarpon with a #2. Decide which fishing you will be doing and tackle-up in accordance. A good all-around mix would be a 7-foot #4 (small trout & panfish), and 8-foot #6 (medium bass and trout) and a 9-foot #8 or #9 (large fish -, muskie and steelhead or salmon). Or just a #5 rod (for #4, #5 & #6 lines) and a #8 (for #7, #8 & #9 Lines). This way you can cast the smallest flies and all except the very biggest flies).

- Reels

- For most of us, the fly reel is simply a very convenient place to store the fly line when we are not actually fishing. Before and after we get to the stream, pond or whatever, on our way to another pool in the stream, etc - it's just very handy. In most instances around here and abroad you will rarely have more than 35 to 45 feet of fly-line off of your reel when you are fishing. The basic 'click pawl' drag system in most fly reels is really nothing more than a way of preventing spool overrun (which could create a 'birdsnest' mess) when you pull the line off the reel when preparing to cast. Other reels have 'internal' spools (no palming rim) and better than average 'drag' systems (Pflueger Medalist reels are an old stand-by of this type). Most fly are 'single action' reels that is one turn of handle takes up one spool circumference worth of fly line. There are 'multiplier' fly reels which have gearing inside that allows one turn of the handle to take up to three times the circumference of the spool worth of line but they are expensive. There are also 'automatic' fly reels which are spring loaded. These reels are heavy (requiring a heavy rod to properly balance them) and have a very limited line capacity (no room for any line backing at all).

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- **All reels and lines should be cleaned on a regular basis.** Even our local freshwater streams and ponds have algae, dust and moss that stick to the line and turn them into little sandpaper ropes. These can turn chromed guides and rod tip-tops into sharp-edged line slicers. Reels gather dirt in their lubricating substance (oil, grease or graphite, etc) which can then damage spindles, braking mechanisms, etc. Attend to your tackle regularly and it will last you a lifetime.

- **Freshwater vs Saltwater Usage**

For occasional saltwater/normal-sized-fish use, your freshwater reel and lines will work with no problems if you wash them thoroughly in soapy water at the end of each day's fishing. We usually take rod and reel into the shower and clean them along with ourselves.

If, however, you are going to fish a lot in the salt and/or in extremely hot conditions and/or for extremely large fish you are going to plan on using guide's and their gear or your will have to invest in the much higher cost of oversized, specially made saltwater reels that are designed to handle several hundred yards of backing, are corrosion resistant and have braking drag systems that would stop (or at least slow down) a Kenworth Freightliner and in the special lines that are designed for the hot weather - which are virtually useless up here in the 'cold').

- **Leaders**

- Monofilament connection between fly and fly-line. It's sole purpose is to keep the thick (and usually brightly-colored) fly line away from the fishes sight.
- Usually come in 7 1/2 foot and 9 foot lengths. A good Rule of Thumb is that the leader is as long as the rod. Then shorten it if the water is murky or lengthen it if the water is very clear.
- Leader must be stiff enough to turn the fly over at the end of the cast yet limber enough to allow the fly to move naturally on/in the water.
- Diameters are measured in thousandths of an inch and are expresses by an X-designation. The smaller the x the larger the diameter.

Fly Line Size	Leader X-Designation	Tippet Diameter	Leader Strength	Fly Size(s)
#8 - #15	0X	.011	10# - 18#	Very Large (#7/0 - 1/0)
	1X	.010	9# - 12#	Large (#1/0 - #8)
#6 - #9	2X	.009	7# - 10#	
	3X	.008	6# - 8#	Medium (#8-#18)
#4 - #7	4X	.007	5# -7#	Small (#16-#26)
#2 - #5	5X	.006	4# - 6#	Very Small (#24-#32)
#1 - #3	6X	.005	3# - 5#	
	7X	.004	2# - 3#	

If we BUILD it, they will BUY it! - There are more gadgets, do-dads, gizmos and whatsits for flyfishers than in any other sport. If you want something, some manufacturer will make it if it isn't already being made. A lot of these things look neat and are then never used. **Save yer bucks!**

Remember WHO is telling you that you MUST have this equipment or that equipment. If it is a person or company whose livelyhood depends on selling that equipment, chances are pretty good that they will tell you just about anything to get you to buy their product. **Choose wisely and TAKE CARE of what you do buy and it can last you a lifetime even if it is NOT expensive gear.**

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Waders/Hippers:

- **Do you need waders at all?** Not if you are only going to be fishing in the summer months in our local streams. Invest in a good pair of wading boots with felt soles (and maybe studs if you plan on fishing the Smokie Mountain streams) and wade 'wet'.

- Materials**
- Older styles are canvas or **rubberized canvas**. These are very heavy and usually pretty hot in the summertime. Newer styles are all types of materials from lightweight nylon, to Gore-Tex, to **Neopreme**, to Hypalon, Supplex, etc. Newer styles are easier to wear, can be cooler (Gore-Tex or other "**breathable**" types) or warmer (Neopreme).
 - Neopreme is very easy to walk in, fits tighter but stretches enough to climb in) but is often too hot for summer wear.
 - Generally the lightweight types cannot take as much punishment (briars & brambles) as the heavier materials.
- Style**
- Hippers are fine for low-water use, but waist-high or chest-high give you more flexibility in being able to cross deeper waters. Chest-highs can generally be rolled down to be worn as waist-highs (not the rubberized canvas type).

- Boot-foot**
- Boot is attached - some come with felt liners others require you to wear extra pairs of socks to fill out the boot.
 - generally only whole MEN's sizes are available (although a few companies are starting to market women's/children's sizes)
 - Soles are either lug style (for soft bottoms - sand/mud) or felt (for rocky bottoms, freestone, etc) - some come with cleats or studs imbedded in the felts.

Advantages:

- easier to put on and get off than stocking-foot
- generally less expensive than stocking-foot plus cost of separate boot

Disadvantages:

- do not generally fit as well as a laced boot, so walking in them any significant distance can be a problem (blisters)
- can't be turned in-side-out to dry
- do not fold as compactly as stocking-foot, so transport can be awkward

- Stocking-foot**
- Boot is separate and does not come with the waders
 - generally come in MEN's and WOMEN's whole shoe sizes (may have to order larger size if wearing with neopremes)
 - Soles are either plain felt or felt with cleats or studs imbedded in the felts.

Advantages:

- more comfortable to wear for long periods. Separate boot fits foot better and gives more support.
- pack down compactly and are usually lighter in weight
- can be turned in-side-out to dry
- can wear just the boots with shorts/jeans/etc in warm weather to wade wet and still have the support and safety of the felt soles

Disadvantages:

- are generally more expensive than bootfoots
- if sand gets between wader & boot, it can 'hole' the waders

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- Boots**
- Leather (or man-made simulation) uppers with laces offer more support & protection
 - Buy at least ankle-high boots, higher tops are better for more support
 - Cordura Nylon type take forever to dry, but they are lighter to carry & wear

- Flats Booties**
- Just another kind of wading boot, but they are designed to be worn without waders. Uppers are usually neoprene, with a heavy side zipper. Most have felt soles.

Advantages:

- generally cheaper than regular wading boots
- pack down compactly and are usually lighter in weight
- can wear just the boots with shorts/jeans/etc in warm weather to wade wet and still have the safety of the felt soles

Disadvantages:

- do not have the support of a laced hard-upper boot.
- sand or muck can get down in them if you step into an area deeper than the height of the bootie

- CAUTION**
- **Stay away from Velcro Strapped Boots** - They can be unstrapped by heavy current and pulled right off your feet.

OTHER GEAR:

WADING BELT - ALWAYS WEAR ONE WITH CHEST WADERS even neoprene.

- Wading staff**
- whether you make one out of a broom or mop handle or but a collapsable one, the wading staff is a VERY SMART THING TO USE.
 - The collapsable ones are kept out of your way (in a holster) when not being used to cross a stream or prod dark water for deep holes.

- Wading Jacket** - handy if you fish in bad weather a lot. Most are water-proof so they work as a rain jacket and vest all in one. Make sure you get one with an extra large hood (to fit over your hat). Cheap (\$1.19 or so) plastic ponchos are small and lightweight and will generally last thru one storm (you can buy a lot of them for the \$40 to \$90 you will spend on a good wading jacket).
- or cheap poncho**

- Flotation Devices - VERY SMART** when wading unknown waters
- SOSpenders - Suspenders for your waders with built-in, CO2-cartidge-activated, may-west-type float collar.
 - Stearns makes a flotation vest with pockets for fishing gear.

Cost Guidelines -	Canvas/Rubberized	Neoprene	Nylon	Breathable
Hippers- Lug soled	\$20-\$35	\$35-\$65	N/A	N/A
Hippers- Felt-Soled	N/A	\$45-\$75	\$35-\$70	N/A
Waders- Lug soled	\$50-\$85	\$65-\$200	\$55-\$150	\$150-300
Waders- Felt-Soled	\$65-\$95	\$65-\$350	\$55-\$150	N/A
Boots- Leather Uppers/Laced/Felt-soled	\$50-\$165			
Boots- Nylon Uppers/Laced/Felt-soled	\$35-\$90			