

## 15 Ways To Improve Your Fly-Tying

Author: Dave Engerbretson

If you are an "average" fly-tier now, follow these 15 steps to perfect your creations.



Fly-tiers sometimes find themselves in a rut. Novices may find that they are not making much progress in learning the skills needed to produce top quality flies. More experienced tiers may find that their tying has reached a plateau, and their flies never seem to improve. That's a shame, because tying high quality flies is well within the grasp of every tier. In an effort to help remedy both situations, here is my list of fifteen ways to improve your fly-tying.

1. Use high quality tools and materials. Only a few tools are required for fly-tying and the difference in the total cost between quality and inferior tools may be only a few dollars. But, there is simply no way to place a value on the difference in performance between the two.

You cannot tie a decent fly if your vise allows the hook to slip, your hackle pliers cause the hackle to break, and the points of your scissors won't clip an

individual hair. Remember, it is more expensive to buy inadequate tools and later discard them than to buy the good tools you should have purchased initially.

By the same token, you cannot tie a proper fly without top quality hackle and other materials. Many beginners feel that it is best to start out with low quality materials while they are "just learning." But, how can a person expect to learn to tie a high quality fly if an experienced tier cannot do a decent job using inferior tools and materials?



2. Use as fine a tying thread as possible. Most tiers tend to use thread that is entirely too heavy. A fine thread will actually tie a stronger, as well as a neater, fly. A fine thread allows you to take more turns around the material for added strength, but it doesn't build up unsightly bulk. Size 8/0 thread is certainly adequate for almost any dry fly and 6/0 is about right for most other things.

A beginner often feels that he or she should use heavy thread so it won't break as often, but beginners always break thread. It is best to learn to tie with the proper thread right from the start.

3. Always tie a fly to the proper proportions and

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strive for uniformity. Each style of fly has certain basic proportions which should be maintained relative to the hook size. For example, in most dry flies, the tail should be the length of the hook shank, the hackle one and a half to two times the width of the gap of the hook, and the wings about one quarter longer than the hackle. The wings should be placed a quarter to one third of the length of the hook shank behind the eye of the hook. These proportions should be considered at each step of the tying process. An experienced tier's flies are consistently well proportioned and uniform, whereas a beginner may well have a size 12 tail and size 10 wings all on a size 14 hook.

4. Always have a good visual background and adequate light at your tying station. Depending upon the materials being used, a piece of white or black paper behind your vise will greatly improve the visual contrast, and will allow for a greater degree of precision in your work. It will also prevent eye fatigue during long periods of tying.

5. Brush up on your basic tying techniques. It's easy to get lazy, and try to take shortcuts that may detract from the quality of the finished fly. I often find that some of the best flies I tie are those done as demonstrations. Why? Because I concentrate on doing each step properly, and on using good basic techniques.

6. Detect "problems" when they occur. Why wait until the fly is fished to discover that the tail is too long? If you are critical of each step, errors can be corrected as they develop, and the finished fly will be greatly improved.

7. The fly is not finished just because it is out of the vise. Often the only difference between a good fly and an excellent one is a little judicious trimming after the fly is out of the vise. This does not mean to clip the wings, tail, or hackle to the proper length, but to look for stray hackle or tail fibers that protrude at odd angles, bits of dubbing that produce a lumpy body, or fibers caught under the thread windings of the head. Inspect each finished fly, and make

minor trimmings where necessary.

8. Be very critical of each finished fly. Ask yourself, "What is wrong with this fly?" Compare it with a fly tied by an experienced tier, and ask for criticism from others. How can you improve your next fly if you don't know what was wrong with the last one?

9. Watch others tie and ask a lot of questions. Books are helpful, but there is no substitute for watching an experienced tier. Almost always the better tiers will be more than happy to help in any way they can, but you must go to them; don't expect

them to offer advice until asked.



10. Join a fly-tying club or start one yourself. No matter where you live you should be able to find

others who are interested in fly-tying. Even a loosely organized group can promote an interchange of ideas and techniques that are certain to help each member improve his or her fly-tying ability.

11. There are few right or wrong fly-tying methods. There are many different techniques for achieving the same end result. Therefore, don't have a closed mind; learn as many new methods as you can, and use the ones that work best for you.

12. Experiment with new techniques and study the insects you want to imitate. You will usually find that the best fly-tiers are not content to do things in the "old way." They constantly look for new ways to improve their flies, new materials, and better imitations.

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13. Don't worry about tying speed. It is better to produce one great fly in thirty minutes than a dozen poor flies in the same time. When I tie, I'm often asked, "How can you tie so quickly?" My answer is, "Don't worry about speed." As your tying improves you will discover the little tricks that lead to faster tying, but first, concentrate on quality.

14. Don't be satisfied with "good enough." Good enough may catch fish, but your tying will never improve if you settle for anything less than your very best. You must constantly try to make each fly better than the previous one. My saying is, "Good enough isn't."

15. Practice! Finally, as in most endeavors, improvement comes only with thoughtful practice. Tie as often as you can, and make a serious effort to improve your results. Then one day you will look at last year's flies and think, "Did I tie those ratty looking things?" Then you'll be well on your way to gaining a reputation as a fly-tying expert. Good luck!

## ENCTU WINTER ANGLING CLASSES

BY KEN EIGENBROD

Each year, our Chapter conducts the three basic core classes in its Angling Arts Program: Introduction to Fly Fishing, Beginning Fly Tying and Beginning Rod Building. We also offer Intermediate Fly Fishing, Intermediate Rod Building and Advanced Fly Tying. Further, we occasionally include specialty classes like Fishing the Four Seasons and Winter Fly Fishing Techniques.

We offer the classes for two basic reasons: (1) to advance the fishing skills and interests of our membership, and (2) to attract more people into our chapter. Generally, classes are presented between January and May primarily in the Kanawha Valley, although we have conducted Introduction to Fly Fishing classes in Putnam County the past two years and will continue to consider that option.

The 2015 classes are quickly approaching. We want your suggestions.

In addition to the three basic core classes, do you want us to continue the Intermediate classes noted above? What areas of fishing interest you? What classes would like presented in 2015?

What specialty classes, like Fishing the Four Seasons, Winter Fishing, Wilderness Fishing, etc., would you like to attend?

It would be very helpful if you would take a minute and email your suggestions to us. Tell us what classes you would like presented this coming year. Please send your suggestions, and comments to:

[ENCTUClasses@gmail.com](mailto:ENCTUClasses@gmail.com)

Thanks for your help.  
Charlie Krepps & Ken Eigenbrod

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**ENCTU ANNUAL BANQUET 3-10-15**  
**Save the Date!!!**

The Ernie Nester Chapter of Trout Unlimited will hold its Annual Banquet on the evening of Tuesday, **March 10th, 2015**, at the Elks Club in Charleston, WV. The banquet committee is once again developing a good group of prizes and sponsors for the upcoming event. So far the team has received these great commitments.

- **Custom built bamboo fly rod by Randy Lemon**
- **2 filled fly boxes by Charlie Krepps**
- **3 New Fly Fishing books donated Harry Moran**
- **2 - Paula Clem's Fishing Fly Embroidered Shirts**
- **Financial Planning Session – Heritage Investment Group**

Other great prizes and guided trips are in the works but need your help filling the list. Last year we had nearly 50 prizes with many of you asking your contacts to help the chapter raise \$6000. Many chapter members actually made or donated items for prizes or were sponsors.

Obviously all fishing items, lodging at fishing lodges/camps and guided trips are the most desirable. Other great prizes given in the past have been gift certificates from restaurants, bed and breakfasts, other outdoor events and trips, such as for skiing, golf, whitewater. Tickets to sporting or musical performances are welcome. Fish art has been a big part of our prizes too. WV handcrafted wines, beers or spirits would be a nice addition also!!!

If you are interested in providing a banquet prize for our raffles and auctions or being a sponsor please contact Jeff Nelsen at (304) 768-3933 or his email: [jeffnelsen@suddenlink.net](mailto:jeffnelsen@suddenlink.net)

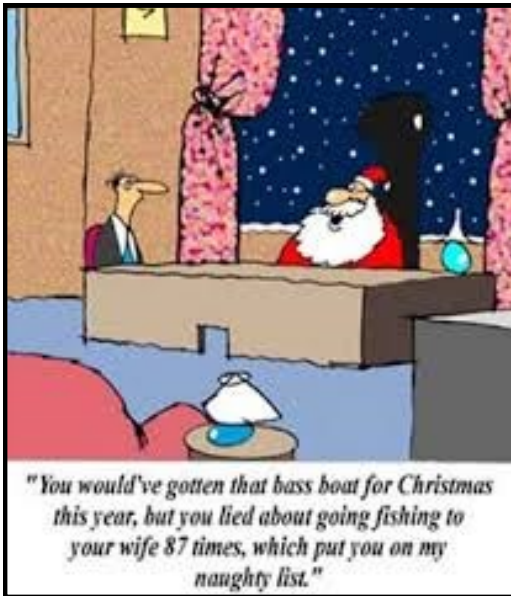
The banquet serves as our annual fundraising event and also recognizes our chapter members and others, who contribute to our mission to protect, conserve and restore the trout fisheries of WV.



Did you know about the exciting and growing collaborative effort between West Virginia Rivers Coalition and West Virginia Council of Trout Unlimited to train and coordinate volunteers to monitor our headwaters? It is critical that us as West Virginians who depend on clean water for trout fishing remain vigilant about potential impacts to the resource. One of our chief concerns today is the impacts to our headwaters from shale gas exploration.

**This weekend, Saturday, December 6 there will be a free training workshop at the Summersville Public Library starting at 10:00 am and lasting until 3:30 p.m.** you are interested in helping with the WV-VA Water Quality Monitoring Program please consider attending this training. Please pre-register for the event by contacting Jake Lemon, Eastern Shale Gas Monitoring Coordinator at [jlemon@tu.org](mailto:jlemon@tu.org) or call **814-779-3965**.

This workshop is a great opportunity to network with other conservation minded anglers, learn more about threats to our water resources and what you can do to help ensure that our waters remain cold, clean and fishable.



## **2015 Hunt Show**

### **ENCTU Gun Raffle**

**Remington Model 870** Wingmaster 20 Gauge, 26 Inch Vent Rib Barrel, High Polished Blue Finish, 3 Inch Chamber, American Walnut Stock High Gloss Finish

Proceeds go to the **Ernie Nester Chapter of Trout Unlimited** supporting conservation, restoration, preservation and reconnection of coldwater streams

**Provided by and Pickup Location:**

Spring Hill Rod & Gun  
4901 MacCorkle Ave SW  
South Charleston, WV 25309  
304-768-2090

Anyone under 18 must be accompanied by parent/guardian

**\$1.00 per ticket, Tickets available at the October Membership meeting**

**6 tickets for \$5**  
12 tickets for \$10  
18 tickets for \$15  
24 tickets for \$20  
30 tickets for \$25  
36 tickets for \$30  
42 tickets for \$35  
48 tickets for \$40  
54 tickets for \$45  
60 tickets for \$50

**Winning ticket to be drawn at 5:00 PM January 25<sup>th</sup>**  
(Need not be present to win)



## UPCOMING ENCTU EVENTS

**December 9th**, Membership meeting SCPL 7:00PM– 9:00PM

**There will be no board meeting for December**

**January 13th**, Membership meeting SCPL 7:00PM-9:00PM, Speaker will be Glenn Nelson from the Environmental Protection Agency

**January 23-25th**, WV Hunting and Fishing Show, Charleston Civic Center.

**January 27th**, ENCTU Board meeting, SCPL, 6:30 PM– 8:30 PM

**February 10th**, ENCTU Membership meeting, SCPL 7:00 PM– 9:00 PM Bring gear and demonstrate your fly tying tips and tricks

## December's Program

If you have been naughty, well, better hang on to your old gear. However if you have been good all year and Santa will be bringing you lots of new toys, bring in the used stuff. The December program is scheduled to be a swap meet.

It doesn't have to be only what you want to dispose of, if you would like to share your interests, travel or trip pics, rod collection, etc. bring them to the meeting to show everyone.

We had a similar meeting several years ago and some of our members hobbies and craftsmanship were very impressive. You might just walk away with something new.

<p><b>ENCTU Officers</b></p> <p><u>President</u> Steve Young, Ph.: 304-941-6955 <a href="mailto:shy1wv@suddenlink.net">shy1wv@suddenlink.net</a></p> <p><u>Immediate Past President</u> Jeff L. Nelsen, Ph.: 304-768-3933 <a href="mailto:jefflnelsen@suddenlink.net">jefflnelsen@suddenlink.net</a></p> <p><u>Vice President Programs</u> Bill Todd, Ph.: 740-645-7835 <a href="mailto:Dutchstar37@yahoo.com">Dutchstar37@yahoo.com</a></p> <p><u>Vice President Fund Raising</u> Homer Sweeney, Ph.: 304-722-3825 <a href="mailto:tu166@suddenlink.net">tu166@suddenlink.net</a></p> <p><u>Vice President Environmental</u> Mike Sayre, <a href="mailto:mike.sayre@hotmail.com">mike.sayre@hotmail.com</a></p> <p><u>Vice President Membership</u> Tom Moody, Ph.:304-744-4083 <a href="mailto:scpeebo@yahoo.com">scpeebo@yahoo.com</a></p>	<p><u>Secretary</u> Paula Clem, Ph.: 304-757-3384 <a href="mailto:kittycatclem@gmail.com">kittycatclem@gmail.com</a></p> <p><u>Treasurer</u> Alice Riffée, Ph.: 304-586-4125 <a href="mailto:alicer138@frontier.com">alicer138@frontier.com</a></p> <p><u>Newsletter Editor</u> Dennis Cottrill, Ph.: 304-562-3549 <a href="mailto:denniscottrill@gmail.com">denniscottrill@gmail.com</a></p> <p><u>Stocking Coordinator</u> Steve Sattler, Ph.: 304-872-1633 <a href="mailto:ssatler90@yahoo.com">ssatler90@yahoo.com</a></p> <p><u>Youth Liaison</u> Larry Riffée, Ph.: 304-586-4125 <a href="mailto:larryr138@frontier.com">larryr138@frontier.com</a></p> <p><u>TIC Trout in Classroom</u> Jack Williams, Ph.: 304-776-2566 <a href="mailto:JackWilliams814@gmail.com">JackWilliams814@gmail.com</a></p>	<p><u>Board of Directors</u></p> <p><u>Terms Expiring - 2015</u> Ken McDaniel, <a href="mailto:kdmcdan@sudenlink.net">kdmcdan@sudenlink.net</a></p> <p>Bill Murray, Ph.:304-343-6025 <a href="mailto:wildbill1013@yahoo.com">wildbill1013@yahoo.com</a></p> <p>Paul Skaggs, Ph.: 304-552-8895 <a href="mailto:paulskaggs@suddenlink.net">paulskaggs@suddenlink.net</a></p> <p><u>Terms Expiring- 2016</u> Harry Moran, Ph., 304-965-7770 <a href="mailto:hemoran@suddenlink.net">hemoran@suddenlink.net</a></p> <p>Rhonda Mullins, <a href="mailto:rmiller78@msn.com">rmiller78@msn.com</a></p> <p>Steve Garrett, Ph.:304-927-5328 <a href="mailto:sgarrett113@gmail.com">sgarrett113@gmail.com</a></p>	<p><u>Terms Expiring—2017</u> Phil Clem, Ph.: 304-757-3384 <a href="mailto:oatsvilleslim@gmail.com">oatsvilleslim@gmail.com</a></p> <p>Ralph Douglas, Ph.: 304-776-6462 <a href="mailto:rdouglas38@suddenlink.net">rdouglas38@suddenlink.net</a></p> <p>Brian McClung, Ph.: 304-353-9003 <a href="mailto:brian.mcclung@morganstanley.com">brian.mcclung@morganstanley.com</a></p>
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