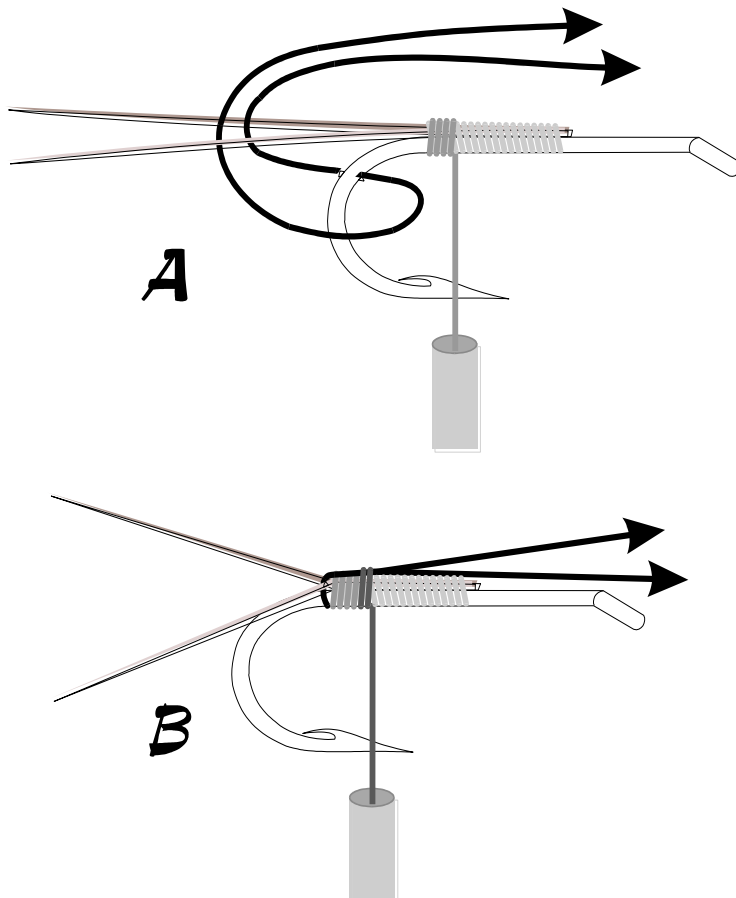


Forking Tails with Scrap Thread

Wayne Luallen - (Revised June 1997)

The following method of forking tails on a dry fly was shown to Al Beatty at the Federation of Fly Fishers 1989 Conclave. While Al was demonstrating fly tying at the event, an observer told him about a way to use a scrap piece of thread to achieve what I believe is the simplest method I have ever seen.

When initially applying thread to the hook, make sure to save the waste piece of thread trimmed after the Jam Hitch is secure. This piece should be about ten centimeters (4") long. Proceed with the fly as usual. When applying the fibers of material making up the tail, wind the thread over them from the direction of the hook eye toward the hook bend. Once the tail material is anchored in the correct position, wind back toward the hook eye a very few (2-4) wraps. (Be sure that all thread wraps over and under the tailing material are flat and smooth. A rough surface of twisted and-or randomly placed thread may not allow the tails to separate evenly.) Take the



piece of waste thread and loop it around the inside of the hook bend (see drawing A) Separate the tail fibers right and left with your fingers just enough to make an opening that will accept the two strands of thread. (Marvin Nolte suggests pressing down on the tails with a fingernail to separate them. The pressure of the nail against the bend causes the fibers to separate.) Lift the thread strands up between the tails and lay them on top of the hook shank toward the hook eye. Secure the strands in place with two snug (not tight) wraps of thread (see drawing B) Now you can pull each of the thread ends toward the hook eye. As the pressure of the thread loop pulls up between the tails, the fibers will begin to separate. The degree of split can be adjusted by the amount of pull on the thread ends. Once the proper amount of split is achieved, secure the waste ends with firm wraps of thread winding toward the hook eye before trimming the waste.

This method works equally well with 3 tails. The difference being simply that the middle tail has a thread on either side of it. As the thread ends are pulled toward the hook eye, the middle tail is not affected.

Materials of choice for using this method of tailing include any hard material (i.e., Microfibtets, spade hackle barbs, guard hairs, etc.) Softer materials (i.e., duck body feathers, neck hackle barbs from a hen or cock, etc.) are a poor choice for tailing on dry flies. They do not have the strength to function properly when the thread ends are pulled to the hook eye. If intended to support the fly on the water, they lack the rigidity necessary to do the job. Some materials can be bolstered in strength by tying in more than one fiber for each tail member, then coating each group of fibers with Dave's Flexament or thinned Goop.