

# Rigging for Fly Fishing



Fly Rod - select weight & action (slow, medium, fast) based on where you are fishing & fish you expect to catch

Fly Reel - should be rated for weight fly rod & fly line you intend to use

Load reel with BACKING, FLY LINE, LEADER & TIPPET

BACKING choices: Dacron, Gel spun polyethylene (smaller diameter than dacron), 20 or 30 lb test, various colors

FLY LINE choices: Floating, Sinking, Sinking Tip, various head lengths & tapers, “speciality” lines, other features

LEADER choices: Tapered hand-tied, tapered knotless, tapered furred, nylon, fluorocarbon

TIPPET choices: Nylon, fluorocarbon, other co-polymers, various sizes depending on size flies fished

## Critical Knots/Connections

Backing to fly reel

Fly line to backing

Leader to fly line

Tippet to leader

Fly to tippet

# Fly Rod/Line Size by Fishing Situation

- 1 – 3 Weight: Small streams, creeks & ponds, tiny dry flies & nymphs, brook trout or small panfish.
- 4 Weight: Small to medium rivers, streams & ponds, slightly larger flies & nymphs, trout or panfish.
- 5 Weight: Considered the best all-around size for trout on lakes & rivers, small dries to streamers, can also handle light bass and panfish duties.
- 6 Weight: Larger rivers, bigger flies, and windier days. Excellent for smallmouth bass, stocked rainbows, light steelhead or bonefish in saltwater flats when conditions are calm.
- 7 Weight: Smallmouth and largemouth bass, steelhead, and light saltwater applications, moderate-sized streamers, poppers, in mild wind.
- 8 Weight: Bass, northern pike, bonefish, stripers, redfish, and smaller snook, added power helps punch big flies and handle wind.
- 9 Weight: Pike, musky, salmon, striper, and larger saltwater species like permit, baby tarpon, larger flies in strong winds, can pull hefty fish from heavy cover.
- 10 Weight: Large salmon, big stripers, jacks, and smaller tarpon, large flies, can battle hard-pulling species.
- 11–12 Weight: For serious saltwater and big game fishing e.g. tarpon, giant trevally & offshore species like sailfish, massive flies, can punch through wind.
- 13–14 Weight: Used almost exclusively for the largest offshore species—marlin, tuna, sharks.

## Fly Rod/Line Weight & Fly Hook Size Range

	Fly Rod - Fly Line Weight											
Fly Hook Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
28												
26												
24												
22												
20												
18												
16												
14												
12												
10												
8												
6												
4												
2												
1/0												
2/0												
3/0												
4/0												
5/0												

(Source: backcountrychronicles.com)

# Backing

- Long, 20- or 30-lb test, BRAIDED LINE that CONNECTS FLY REEL to FLY LINE
- Used to INCREASE FLY REEL ARBOR DIAMETER, which REDUCES FLY LINE CURLING, PROVIDES FASTER LINE RETRIEVAL & EXTENDS FLY LINE LENGTH for fighting powerful fish
- OPTIONS are DACRON or GEL-SPUN POLYETHYLENE (PE)
- GEL-SPUN PE is stronger per diameter than DACRON, so provides MORE BACKING LENGTH PER SPACE ON REEL

# Fly Lines

- MADE by COATING BRAIDED CORE line with POLYVINYL CHLORIDE (PVC) or POLYURETHANE(PU)
- ADDITIVES (e.g. hollow glass beads, tungsten powder) to PVC or PU COATING DETERMINE if LINE FLOATS or SINKS
- Available in VARIETY of TAPER DESIGNS, HEAD LENGTHS & SINK RATES
- BUILT IN LOOPS at BOTH ENDS MAKE RIGGING EASIER
- OUTER TEXTURE & COATINGS designed to IMPROVE CASTING DISTANCE
- CLEAR TIP OPTIONS to IMPROVE STEALTH
- COLOR CODING DISTINGUISHES HEAD from RUNNING LINE

# Fly Line Tapers

The taper of a fly line describes how its diameter and weight change along its length. The taper directly affects casting performance and fly presentation. The main taper types are:

- **Weight Forward (WF):** The most common modern taper, with most of the line's weight concentrated in the first 30–40 feet. WF lines are versatile, easy to cast, and great for distance casting or casting in wind.



- **Double Taper (DT):** Symmetrical and gradually tapers to both ends. Double taper lines excel at delicate presentations and roll casting. When one end wears out, you can reverse the line for extended use.



- **Shooting Taper (ST) or Shooting Head:** A short, heavy front section followed by a thin running line. These are designed for distance casting and are popular for salmon, steelhead, and saltwater fishing.



- **Level Line:** Uniform diameter and weight across the entire length. Rarely used today due to lack of casting control and presentation finesse.



# RIO Fly Lines (per Feather Craft 2025 Catalog)

Description	Fly Line Weights Offered														
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
RIO BLITZ - 26-FOOT DUAL DENSITY INTERMEDIATE Sink-Tip									X	X	X				
RIO ELITE "TROPICAL" OUTBOUND SHORT 15-FT HOVER/15-FT INTERMEDIATE Sink									X	X	X	X	X		
RIO ELITE "TROPICAL" OUTBOUND SHORT Floating									X	X	X	X	X		
RIO ELITE "TROPICAL" OUTBOUND SHORT FULL INTERMEDIATE Sink - 1.5 ips									X	X	X	X	X		
RIO ELITE "TROPICAL" OUTBOUND SHORT INTERMEDIATE Sink-5/Sink-7									X	X	X	X	X		
RIO ELITE BONEFISH Floating							X	X	X	X					
RIO ELITE FLATS PRO Floating								X	X	X	X	X	X		
RIO ELITE FLATS PRO STEALTH TIP - 6-FOOT CLEAR INTERMEDIATE Sink-Tip							X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
RIO ELITE FLATS PRO 15-FOOT CLEAR INTERMEDIATE Sink-Tip								X	X	X	X	X	X		
RIO ELITE FLATS PRO FULL INTERMEDIATE									X	X	X	X	X		
RIO ELITE GOLD - Std Wt, Std Pwr - Floating					X	X	X	X	X						
RIO ELITE GOLD XP - 1/2 size Heavy, Extra Pwr - Floating				X	X	X	X	X	X						
RIO ELITE GOLD MAX - Full size Heavy, Extra Pwr - Floating					X	X	X	X	X	X					
RIO ELITE INDICATOR Floating						X	X	X	X						
RIO ELITE LEVIATHAN 26-FOOT SINK TIP - offered in 7 grain sizes (250 - 750)															
RIO ELITE PERMIT Floating									X	X	X				
RIO ELITE PREDATOR Floating						X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
RIO ELITE PREDATOR Sink-Tip - 10-Foot Hover/10-Foot Intermediate Sink(1-2 ips)						X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
RIO ELITE PREDATOR Sink-Tip - 10-Foot INTERM (1-2 ips)/10-Foot Med INTERM (2-3 ips)						X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
RIO ELITE PREDATOR Sink-Tip - 10-Foot FAST Sink (4-5 ips)/10-Foot EX FAST Sink (5-7 ips)							X	X	X	X	X	X			
RIO ELITE SALMON/STEELHEAD Floating							X	X	X	X	X				
RIO ELITE SINGLE HANDED SPEY Floating				X	X	X	X	X	X						
RIO ELITE SMALLMOUTH BASS Floating							X	X	X						
RIO ELITE STILLWATER Floating						X	X	X	X						
RIO ELITE SUBSURFACE CAMOLUX INTERMEDIATE Sinking (1.5-2 ips)					X	X	X	X	X						
RIO ELITE SWITCH CHUCKER Floating					X	X	X	X	X	X					
RIO ELITE SWITCH INDICATOR Floating						X	X	X	X						

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Description	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
RIO ELITE TARPON Floating										X	X	X	X			
RIO ELITE TECHNICAL TROUT Floating				X	X	X	X									
RIO ELITE WARMWATER PREDATOR Floating							X	X	X	X	X					
RIO ELITE XTREME INDICATOR Floating						X	X	X	X	X						
RIO EURO NYMPH Shorty Floating - one size only																
RIO FIPS EURO NYMPH Floating - 6-Foot Orange Tip both ends - one size only																
RIO IN TOUCH VERSITIP II - 4 interchangeable 15-foot tips (FL, CL-INT, T3, T6) + running						X	X	X	X	X	X					
RIO PREMIER 24-FOOT DENSITY COMPENSATED Sink Tip - offered in grain sizes (150 - 400)																
RIO PREMIER BANK ROBBER Floating						X	X									
RIO PREMIER BONEFISH Floating							X	X	X	X						
RIO PREMIER BONEFISH QUICK-SHOOTER Floating						X	X	X	X	X						
RIO PREMIER CREEK Floating	X	X	X	X	X	X										
RIO PREMIER FATHOM Sinking - Type 3 (3 ips)						X	X	X	X							
RIO PREMIER FATHOM Sinking - Type 5 (5 ips)						X	X	X	X							
RIO PREMIER FATHOM Sinking - Type 6 (6 ips)						X	X	X	X							
RIO PREMIER FATHOM Sinking - Type 7 (7 ips)							X	X	X							
RIO PREMIER FLATS CLEAR TIP (6-ft) Floating									X	X	X					
RIO PREMIER FLATS FULL CLEAR Floating								X	X	X	X	X	X			
RIO PREMIER GOLD - Std Wt, Std Pwr - Floating					X	X	X	X	X							
RIO PREMIER GOLD XP - 1/2 size Heavy, Extra Pwr - Floating				X	X	X	X	X	X							
RIO PREMIER GOLD MAX -Full size Heavy, Heavyweight Pwr - Floating					X	X	X	X	X	X						
RIO PREMIER LIGHTLINE DOUBLE-TAPER Floating			X	X	X	X										
RIO PREMIER LIGHTLINE WEIGHT-FORWARD Floating			X	X	X	X										
RIO PREMIER MIDGE-TIP - 3' intermediate sink (1.5 ips)						X	X	X	X							
RIO PREMIER MIDGE-TIP Long - 6' intermediate sink (1.5 ips)						X	X	X	X							
RIO PREMIER OUTBOUND SHORT Floating						X	X	X	X	X	X					
RIO PREMIER OUTBOUND SHORT Hover (15-Foot)/Intermediate (15-Foot) (1-2 ips)						X	X	X	X	X	X					

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	Fly Line Weights Offered														
Description	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
RIO PREMIER OUTBOUND SHORT INTERMEDIATE Sinking - 15-Foot CLEAR tip (1-2 ips)							X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
RIO PREMIER OUTBOUND SHORT Sinking - Type 3 (17-Foot)/Type5 (13-Foot)							X	X	X	X	X				
RIO PREMIER OUTBOUND SHORT Sinking - Type5 (17-Foot)/Type7 (13-Foot)							X	X	X	X	X				
RIO PREMIER OUTBOUND SHORT Sinking (Type7)							X	X	X	X	X				
RIO PREMIER REDFISH Floating								X	X	X					
RIO PREMIER REDFISH XP Floating - Extra Pwr									X	X	X				
RIO PREMIER STREAMER TIP - Clear-10-FOOT IntermediateTip (2 ips)						X	X	X	X						
RIO PREMIER STREAMER TIP - TYPE-6 - 10-FOOT Sink-Tip (6-7 ips)						X	X	X	X						
RIO PREMIER STRIPER 30-FOOT DENSITY COMPENSATED - offered in grain sizes (250 - 450)															
RIO PREMIER STRIPER Floating									X	X	X				
RIO PREMIER STRIPER INTERMEDIATE (1.5-2 ips)									X	X	X				
RIO PREMIER TARPON (10-Foot) CLEAR TIP Floating											X	X	X		
RIO PREMIER TARPON QUICKSHOOTER Floating											X	X	X		
RIO PREMIER TECHNICAL TROUT Floating				X	X	X	X								
RIO TECHNICAL EURO NYMPH Floating - one size only															
RIO TECHNICAL EURO NYMPH SHORTY (20-FOOT) Floating - one size only															
RIO TECHNICAL TROUT Floating				X	X	X	X								

# Leaders

- MADE from NYLON (floats), FLUOROCARBON (sinks) or CO-POLYMER MONOFILAMENT
- TAPERED (fat butt – skinny tip end) by DESIGN to EFFICIENTLY TRANSFER CASTING ENERGY
- OPTIONS include: HAND-TIED (decreasing diameter mono pieces knotted together, KNOTLESS TAPERED (usually ending with 2-3 ft built-in tippet), FURLED TAPERED (with tippet ring or micro-swivel at skinny tip end)
- SPECIALIZED LEADERS may have a COLORED SIGHTER SECTION (for Euro Nymphing) with a tippet ring or a SHOCK TIPPET or Coated, BRAIDED WIRE at the tip end

# RIO TAPERED LEADERS (per Feather Craft 2025 Catalog)

Description	Length	Tippet End Strength							
		7X	6X	5X	4X	3X	2X	1X	0X
RIO POWERFLEX PLUS TAPERED	7.5 ft	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-
RIO POWERFLEX PLUS TAPERED	9 ft	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-
RIO POWERFLEX PLUS TAPERED	12 ft	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	-
RIO POWERFLEX TROUT TAPERED	7.5 ft	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
RIO POWERFLEX TROUT TAPERED	9 ft	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
RIO SUPPLEFLEX TROUT TAPERED- Co-polymer	9 ft	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	-
RIO INDICATOR TAPERED - Orange butt	10 ft	-	-	X	X	X	X	-	-
RIO FLUOROFLEX TAPERED - Fluorocarbon	9 ft	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Description	Length	8 lb	10 lb	12 lb	16 lb	20 lb	25 lb	30 lb	40 lb
		lb	lb	lb	lb	lb	lb	lb	lb
RIO FLUOROFLEX STEELHEAD/SALMON TAPERED - Fluorocarbon	9 ft	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	-
RIO BASS TAPERED	9 ft	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-
RIO SALTWATER TAPERED	10 ft	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
RIO LIGHT SALTWATER SHOCK TAPERED - with 15 lb Shock Tippet	10 ft	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
RIO LIGHT SALTWATER SHOCK TAPERED - with 25 lb Shock Tippet	10 ft	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
RIO LIGHT SALTWATER SHOCK TAPERED - with 40 lb Shock Tippet	10 ft	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
RIO BONEFISH TAPERED	10 ft	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-
RIO FLUOROFLEX BONEFISH/SALTWATER TAPERED	9 ft	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	-
RIO REDFISH/SEATROUT TAPERED	9 ft	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	-
RIO STRIPED BASS TAPERED	7 ft	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	-
RIO TARPON TAPERED - with 2 ft Fluorocarbon Shock Tippet (60 lb)	12 ft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
RIO TARPON TAPERED - with 2 ft Fluorocarbon Shock Tippet (80 lb)	12 ft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
RIO BIG NASTY TAPERED	6 ft	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	-
RIO TOOTHY CRITTER TAPERED - with Braided Wire Shock Tippet (15 lb)	7.5 ft	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
RIO TOOTHY CRITTER TAPERED - with Braided Wire Shock Tippet (20 lb)	7.5 ft	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
RIO TOOTHY CRITTER TAPERED - with Braided Wire Shock Tippet (30 lb)	7.5 ft	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
RIO TOOTHY CRITTER TAPERED - with Braided Wire Shock Tippet (45 lb)	7.5 ft	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
RIO EURO NYMPH TAPERED -pink/yellow sighter - with tippet ring	11 ft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RIO EURO NYMPH TAPERED - black/white sighter - with tippet ring	11 ft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RIO TECHNICAL EURO NYMPH TABERED - pink/yellow sighter - with tippet ring	14 ft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RIO TECHNICAL EURO NYMPH TABERED - black/white sighter - with tippet ring	14 ft	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

## Feather-Craft Tapered Furled Leaders

Description/Type	for Line Wt	End	Length								Sink Rate (ips)
			2'	3'	4'	5'	6'	7'	9'	12'	
Light Trout - Uniform Sink - Type 2	3 - 4	Ring	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	1.75 - 2.25
Trout - Uniform Sink - Type 3	5 - 6	Ring	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	-	2.75 - 3.25
Trout - Uniform Sink - Type 4	5 - 6	Ring	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	X	3.5 - 4
Heavy Trout - Uniform Sink - Type 5	7 - 8	Ring	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	-	4.25 - 4.5
Steelhead/Salmon - Uniform Sink - Type 6	9 - 10	Ring	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	-	4.75 - 5
Streamer	3 - 4	MicroSwvl	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
Streamer	5	MicroSwvl	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
Streamer	6	MicroSwvl	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
Streamer (Salmon)	7 - 10	MicroSwvl	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
Streamer (Saltwater)	7 - 10	MicroSwvl	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
Power Streamer	5	MicroSwvl	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Power Streamer	6	MicroSwvl	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Power Streamer	7	MicroSwvl	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Power Streamer	8	MicroSwvl	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Power Streamer	8 +	MicroSwvl	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Light Trout	0 - 2	Ring	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	-	-
Light Trout	3 - 4	Ring	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	-	-
Trout	5	Ring	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	-
Trout	6	Ring	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	-
Steelhead/Salmon	7 - 10	Ring	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	-	-
Bass	7 - 9	Ring	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-
Bonefish (Clear)	7 - 9	Ring	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	-
Heavy Bonefish/Permit	8 - 10	Ring	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-
Sinking Bonefish (Fluorocarbon)	7 - 9	Ring	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	-	N/A
Saltwater	7 - 10	Ring	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
Heavy Saltwater	10 - 14	Ring	-	-	X	-	X	-	-	-	-
Sinking Saltwater (Fluorocarbon)	7 - 10	Ring	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	N/A
Bullwhip	7 - 10	Ring	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-
Sinking Bullwhip (Fluorocarbon)	7 - 10	Ring	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	N/A

(Recommend adding 2 - 3' of tippet to complete leader.)

# Tippet

- Monofilament (usually) TERMINAL END of LEADER where FLY is ATTACHED
- Generally WEAKEST POINT (break strength-wise) in FLY FISHING RIG (assuming good knots)
- OPTIONS include: NYLON (floats), FLUOROCARBON (sinks), CO-POLYMER
- Should MATCH TIPPET BREAK STRENGTH to HOOK SIZE (smaller hooks - smaller diameter tippets)

## Fly Size and Recommended Tippet Size

Fly Hook Size	Tippet Size	Diameter (")	~Break Strength (lb)
22, 24, 26, 28	8X	0.003	1.75
18, 20, 22, 24	7X	0.004	2.5
16, 18, 20, 22	6X	0.005	3.5
14, 16, 18	5X	0.006	4.75
12, 14, 16	4X	0.007	6
6, 8, 10	3X	0.008	8.5
4, 6, 8	2X	0.009	11.5
2, 4, 6	1X	0.01	13.5
1/0, 1, 2, 4	0X	0.011	15.5
5/0, 4/0, 3/0, 2/0	-	0.012	18.5
5/0, 4/0, 3/0, 2/0	-	0.013	20
5/0, 4/0, 3/0, 2/0	-	0.015	25

(Source: [howtoflyfish.orvis.com](http://howtoflyfish.orvis.com) )

Rule of Thumb: Divide Hook Size by 3 = Tippet Size to Use

Heavier fly - use a heavier tippet

## Fly Line Cleaning & Replacement Recommendations:

Fly lines, especially floating lines, need to be cleaned periodically & eventually replaced when they no longer perform.

300 to 400 hrs on the water or 3 to 5 years hanging out on a fly reel is typical life of a fly line.

If the surface of the line is cracked, the fly line should be replaced.

If a floating line sinks, it needs to be cleaned or replaced.

If it doesn't cast as well as before, it needs to be cleaned or replaced.

Most fly line manufacturers make line cleaners & line dressings (e.g. towelettes (RIO), cleaner pad (SA)) or you can make your own cleaning solution (non-detergent soap & warm water).

How often should you clean? Depends on how clean the waters you fish are and how often you fish them. If the waters are fairly clean, at least once or twice a year. If not, every 3 to 6 outings. For saltwater use, rinse off after every outing.

Treat line with line dressing after cleaning to keep casting performance optimal.