

RIGGING FOR NYMPH FISHING WITH STRIKE INDICATORS

By Pete Koistinen

There are many types of strike indicators available, each with advantages and disadvantages. Remember that almost every tackle selection presents a compromise. At first it appears difficult to choose, but with just a little experience you'll be able to figure out which is best for a given situation. I can't list all the types of indicators, but here are some characteristics that "good" indicators have in common. I limit this discussion to *floating* indicators.

In order of importance:

1. ***Easy to adjust*** up and down the leader. I can't emphasize this enough. You must adjust the indicator height when fishing different water depths and current speeds. By easy I mean be able to adjust in 10 seconds or less. If it takes any longer you probably won't adjust often – and you *will* need to adjust often.
2. Buoyant enough to suspend your fly/weight.
3. Forms a 90 degree bend in your leader (leader above the indicator lays horizontally, leader below indicator hangs vertically).
4. *Something* or *someway* to show whether the leader below indicator is hanging vertically, not "leaning" upstream or downstream. (Most often you want it to hang vertically).

Could this order of importance change or would some characteristics matter not at all? Certainly, for some situations. But in general, for streams and rivers, these are good guidelines. I usually use Float Master indicators, www.floatmasterco.net. Similar products are available in the local shops.

Next I'll list some common knots and their application to our nymph fishing rig. Knots in **bold** type are ones I use all the time

Nail knot – fly line to leader.

Perfection Loop – to make a loop on the end of your leader, for loop to loop connections.

Blood knot – to join leader sections, or leader to tippet. Very useful because the leftover tag end can be used for a dropper fly.

Surgeon's knot – leader to tippet. The tag on this knot can also be used for a dropper fly.

Orvis tippet knot – same application as a Surgeon’s knot, but supposedly stronger, equally easy to tie.

Non slip mono loop knot – tie on a fly with a loop so the fly is free to wiggle. Easy to tie, very important, please learn this knot.

Figure 8 knot – use this to create a “bump” or “stopper” on your tippet to keep your split shot weight from slipping down. A simple overhand knot does the same thing but the figure 8 is stronger.

The best way to learn these knots is practice. Try to find time at your bench or in the garage to become proficient tying these knots. If you’re going fishing, set up your leader before you leave the house. It doesn’t take long, and you’ll be glad you did it at home instead of on the river (more time fishing, less time knot tying). During practice, if you have trouble visualizing the knot, start out with a thick piece of cord so you can see what you’re doing.

Now I will describe the setup I use for trout nymph fishing with a floating indicator. My fly line has a loop, so here goes:

Start with 7- 9 feet of 2X or 3X mono or fluorocarbon, with a perfection loop to attach to my fly line. My indicator goes somewhere on this section, **depending on the situation.**

Next I’ll use a blood knot to tie on 3X or 4X fluorocarbon tippet. I leave a 5” tag to tie on a dropper fly.

4-6” below blood knot is my figure 8 knot to keep my split shot from slipping down. I’ll start

with 2 BB size split shot and **add or subtract split shot as required.**

8-14” below the weight is my main fly.

Remember to tie on your flies using a non-slip mono loop knot. With this knot you can generally use heavier tippet and still have good freedom of movement for your fly.

Notice that on this setup my “dropper” fly is above my main fly, and is on a 90 degree angle to the leader.

Again I’ll say that this is not necessarily *the* setup, it’s just the one that I use.

As far as weights go there are many types available, some better than others for a given situation. Whatever you like is fine as long as the amount of weight is, once again, **easily adjustable**. I use size BB removable split shot, and keep the bag on a little key chain hanging outside my vest so it's easily accessible.

Do you notice a theme here about "ease of adjustment"? Adjusting your indicator height and amount of weight is critical. Every time you move to a different piece of water you must adjust. Usually you want the flies to "tap" the bottom, but not get snagged. In general, adjust indicator height to water depth, and amount of weight to current speed. It may seem mysterious at first but once you get on the water and start making adjustments you'll quickly (1st day) learn the proper combinations. A good start is one or two BB split shot, with indicator set for the water depth, or maybe a little deeper. If you don't think your flies are getting down deep enough, or too deep, make an adjustment. Again, if you think the problem is water depth, adjust the indicator. If the problem is water *speed*, adjust the weight.

I highly recommend an excellent book called "Nymph Fishing" by Dave Hughes. (I recommend *anything* written by Dave Hughes) Before reading this book nymph fishing with strike indicators was very mysterious and frustrating for me. After reading it and applying the principles my success rate (and fun) went up dramatically. It's available in most fly shops and on line.