

Introduction
Rigging fly lines and leaders
For freshwater trout fishing
By John Hogg
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Still water fishing – lakes, ponds, backwaters

1. **Surface presentation of a dry fly** – use this when you see regularly rising fish.

Weight forward floating line, 5 to 7 wt, with 12* butt section

12' – minimum total leader plus tippet length

9', 3x leader (attach to butt with blood knot or perfection loop to loop.)

2', 4x tippet (tie on with surgeon knot)

2', 5x or 6x tippet (tie on with surgeon knot)

Fly of choice (tie on with improved clinch knot)

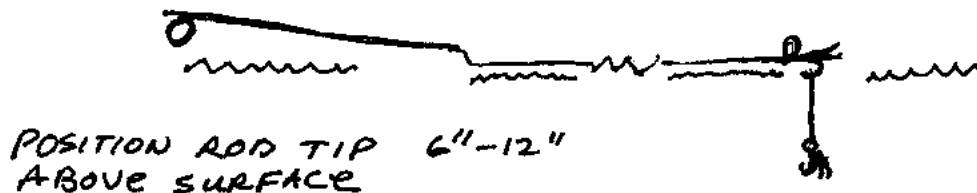
Tips: Fly – match to hatch – priorities for fly choice are size, shape color.

My favorite lake pattern is a Quigley cripple – (partially submerged mayfly pattern with hair wing post for visibility).

Fly needs to be presented at a adequate distance from angler (float tube or wading, 35-40 feet; from a boat, 50 to 60 feet.

Rod tip held low, about 6 to 12 inches above the water surface – do not allow slack to form in line between fly and rod tip.

2. **Surface presentation of dry fly with a dropper** - use this when you see regularly rising fish and sporadic rises.



Use same formula as #1 except you may want to shorten leader/tippet to first fly to 10'/11' to minimize casting tangles.

Dry fly must be of sufficient size to support the dropper. Add dropper as follows

14" to 18" of 5x or 6x tippet (tie to bend of dry fly with improved clinch knot)

#16 to #20 Small nymph pattern (improved clinch knot)

Tips: Cast with open loop, and minimize false casting.

Check flies often to make sure they are not tangled.

I have never had any luck with the dropper being a second dry fly.

3. **Chironomid Setup** - Use when rises are sporadic or non-existent. Most effective over muddy lake bottom.

Line and leader: This will be a two fly setup with a strike indicator.

WF floating line

9', 4x leader

2', 5x tippet (surgeon knot)

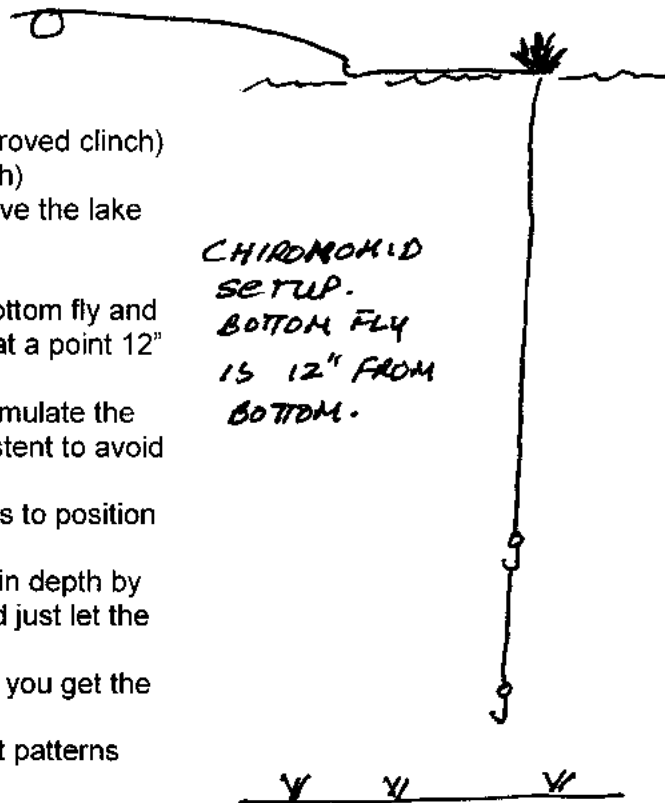
First Chironomid pattern fly (improved clinch)

14", 5x tippet (attach to bend of hook with improved clinch)

Second Chironomid pattern fly (improved clinch)

Attach strike indicator so that bottom fly rides 12" above the lake bottom.

- Tips:
- To adjust the indicator, attach hemostats to bottom fly and lower to lake bottom. Then attach indicator to leader at a point 12" below the surface.
 - Chironomid patterns must hang vertically to simulate the chironomid larvae. Stripping must be slow or non-existent to avoid flies being drawn to a horizontal position.
 - After a cast, it can take 60 -90 seconds for flies to position properly.
 - It is possible to fish chironomids 25 to 40 feet in depth by attaching the same leader setup to a full sink line, and just let the whole rig sink until it hangs vertical.
 - Change one fly at least every 10 minutes until you get the "right" pattern
 - If there are sporadic rises, set indicator so that patterns hang about 5 feet below the surface.



4. Using sinking lines in still water.

Sinking lines are categorized as "Type 1" to "Type 7". The number indicates the sink rate in inches per second – (it is only an approximation)

The most versatile is the Type 2, which is called an intermediate line. It is a clear colorless line, (like monofilament leader), and will sink between 1 and 2 ips, depending on brand.

Line and leader: This will be a two fly setup. (Patterns are just suggestions)

9', 3x leader

First Fly – #12 wooly bugger (tie on with ICK)

16" 5x tippet (tie to bend of hook with ICK)

Second fly- #18 beadhead Prince nymph (tie on with ICK)

Important: Tip of fly rod must be in the water when fishing sinking lines



- Tips:
- You will be stripping in line or trolling so that flies are move horizontally under water.
 - Adjust your depth by doing a countdown before beginning to strip.
 - Adjust your stripping speed from very slow to very fast on different casts.
 - Pay attention and note depth, retrieval speed, and location, when you get a hit.
 - Start with one large fly and one very small fly. Change location and flies regularly until something begins to work.
 - If float tubing, let line out until fly is a minimum of 50 feet away from you.

Faster sinking lines

Fishing at the right depth can be critical. Faster sinking lines like type 3 to type 7 will put you down deeper faster. Also, at a deeper depth they will pull the fly more horizontally, rather than upward. For instance if you fish at 20' with an intermediate line, it is going to take a long time to sink to that depth, and when you retrieve, the fly will be pulled upward toward the surface which is unnatural.

If your buddy is catching fish, and you're not – all things being equal, switch to the same line type that he is using.

Note: for the most part, full sink lines are used in still water – not moving water. Sink tip lines which have 10 to 24 feet of sinking line attached to a floating running line are used in moving water.

Stream Fishing – Trout to 20 inches

Dry flies in fast riffly water – typically you will be presenting a larger, #10 to #16, high riding, impressionistic fly. Hair wing patterns are very popular because they float well, and are easily visible to the caster.

Use a floating line, and shorter leader. You can attach a nymph dropper if desired.

Floating line

7.5', 3x leader

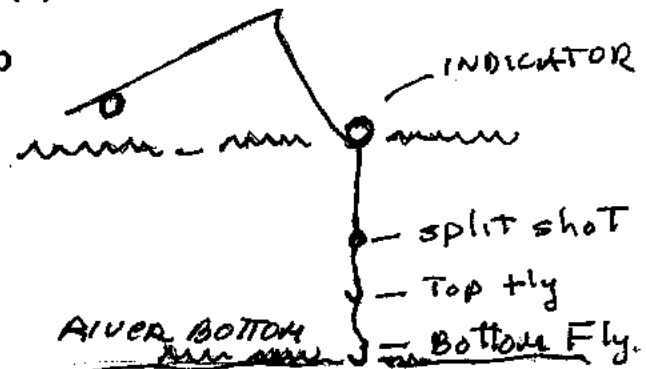
2', 4x tippet

Fly of choice (search with a #14 tan elk hair caddis to start!)

Tip: In fast moving water, the trout has little time to make a decision, if you see a refusal, and then no response after a few more casts, change flies or move. If you hook up, move fish down from riffle, release it, and then fish same riffle with same fly. Drift must be drag free (exception – at night in a heavy caddis hatch, fly can be dragged across current, as an alternate presentation.)

Dry flies in slow water, back eddies, and deep pools – fish as a still water situation.

Nymphing Rig – Quick and dirty setup



Nymphing is fly fishing sub-surface, drag free, in a moving current. The flies are fished on the bottom of the river, or very close to it.

A nymph rig is usually constructed with a strike indicator, and split shot for weight to get the flies down. "High sticking", and "short-lining" are terms for drifting nymphs in close proximity to the wading angler, (6 to 20 feet.)

Weight forward floating line, 5 to 7 wt, with 12" butt section

9' to 12' – leader plus tippet length

9', 4x leader (attach to butt with blood knot or perfection loop to loop.)

14" to 16", 5x or 6x tippet (tie on with surgeon knot and put split shot above knot)

Fly of choice (tie on with improved clinch knot)

Nymph Rig – Quick and Dirty continued

Add a second fly

14" to 16" 5x to 6x tippet (tie to bend of hook with ICK)

Fly of choice. (tie on with ICK)

Note: Add split shot above knot between leader and first piece of tippet;

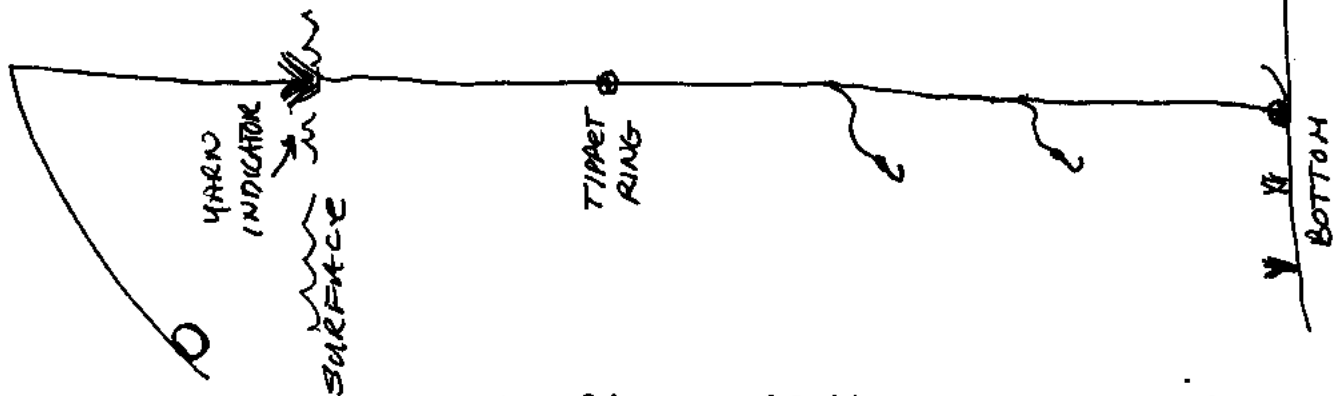
Add strike indicator at point on leader that is 1.5 to 2 times the depth of water.

Tips: Most nymphers do not use enough weight. (Indicator should show you are bouncing on the bottom – or you pull up debris on re-cast.)

Use two flies instead of one – then you offer two different patterns, at two different depths

Dropper Nymph Rig – How the Pro's do it

(This specific setup I attribute to my friend Joe Libeu, Master Certified Casting Instructor and Guide)



TURN PAGE SIDEWAYS TO VIEW DIAGRAM

This is a nymph rig where the weight is on the bottom, and the flies are hung on droppers above. This rig is time consuming to tie up, and even with practice can take upward of ten minutes to prepare from scratch. But it's worth it...

Because the flies are kept off the bottom, there are fewer hangups, and loss of flies is reduced by 80%. Fish response is improved, because flies drift more naturally.

Weight forward floating line, 5 to 7 wt, with 12' butt section

6', 4x leader (Add a **yarn** indicator at point on leader that is 1.5 to 2 times the depth of water)

Tippet ring

3', 5x or 6x tippet

First dropper – tie on a short piece of same size tippet – create a tag end 4 inches in length.

(Use a quadruple surgeon knot); trim other end to knot.

Top fly – tie to dropper

Second dropper - tie on another short piece of same size tippet, and create dropper as above.

Make sure that droppers are separated by enough distance so they can't tangle (more than 8 inches)

Maintain tippet for another 14" below second dropper. Tie a double overhand knot to retain split shot, and place shot above knot.

Note: Because the droppers are short, you will have to replace them after changing flies 2 or 3 times. Here is a simple way. Tie a perfection loop in a like size piece of tippet material. Attach by passing the tag end of new dropper around the main tippet line just above the quad surgeon knot. Then put tag through the perfection loop and tighten down. It will hold just fine.

Sinking Tip Lines in moving water

We'll cover that some other time.