

## **Introduction to Cross Wrap Designs**

**By BD Ehler**  
**Cross Wrap 1**

Decorating fishing rods with thread designs has been around for many years. To the new rod builder and some of the experienced rod builders the process of placing a cross wrap design on the butt section of a rod can be intimidating. The goal of this series of articles is to help remove the confusion from doing cross wraps by explaining how these designs are created. Our hope is to stimulate builders to try this form of decoration.

This series of articles will include definitions of thread art terms (with pictures as examples), the types of processes that can be used in wrapping, the layout methods of starting the cross wrap, and eventually the process of creating cross wrap designs using charting tape.

These articles will be posted on the main forum for all builders to copy/print for future use. Any questions about an article are invited to be posted on the main forum in hopes that various rod builders can give their answers, which will provide a variety of methods from which the builder can choose. Due to my phone modem connection and limits on our forum page, these articles will be short (one page). There will be many articles, so print them, save them and you should have a good resource for your attempts at rod thread art.



This is an example of a chevron cross wrap shaded from right to left by using three shades of green regular A thread and three shades of green metallic A thread finished with 2 threads of metallic silver. Notice on the right side of this photo two vertical cracks in the finish. This was caused by breaking the rod blank by high sticking the rod on a crappie, which is embarrassing with Don Morton in the boat with you. Fortunately, the rod was repaired (stronger) and the cross wrap

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### Cross Wrap 2

What do you need to begin a cross wrap? For starters, pick a piece of a rod blank, an old blank or even a wooden dowel available from the hardware store. Some rod builders put five or six designs on a three foot dowel and have them to show the potential rod purchaser. The diameter of the piece chosen to work on can be any size because you will soon learn to size your design to fit the rod. The best design size is one that shows the whole design when viewed from above. This photo shows different size diameters and designs. Notice the top design is a six point star which is too large for the rod because the design wraps around the rod and cannot be seen without turning the rod.



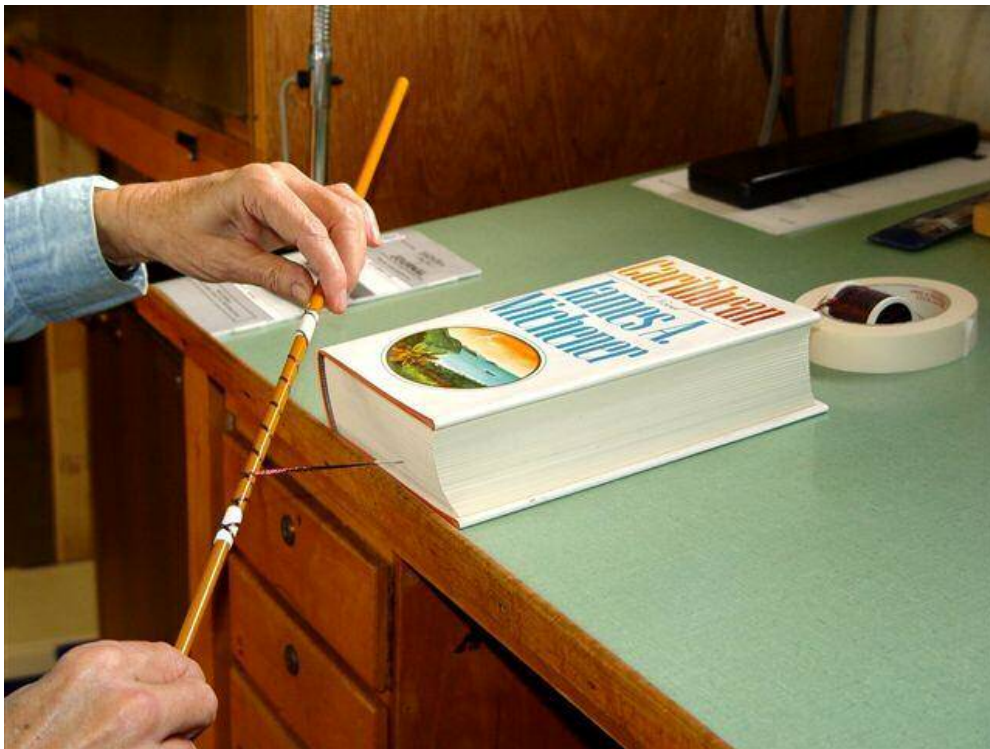
Take home lesson: Choose design that fits the rod

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### Cross Wrap 3

Do you need a rod lathe to do cross wraps? The answer is no! After doing cross wraps by hand holding the rod for 25 years, a rod lathe was finally added to my tools. If you hold the rod by hand then you need to provide tension on the thread while spiraling the thread up and down the rod. For regular thread you may use a tension device that the thread is pulled through. Or you may use a large book to give the tension you desire. Need more tension? Move the thread down more pages in the book. Both of these methods require something to hold the spool of thread while wrapping. A cup, bowl or the center of a spool of masking tape can corral the spool while turning. A small dowel mounted vertically that fits into the center hole of the spool will hold the spool adequately. If you are using metallic thread the tension needs to be applied to the spool instead of the thread so the metallic thread does not come apart. A threaded bolt with spring and wing nut will hold the spool with variable tension available.

If you wrap holding the rod by hand you will also need room for the tip section especially on 7 foot, one piece rods. When spirally the thread up the rod the tip of the rod is pointed forward (in front of you) and when spirally the thread back down the rod, the tip of the rod is pointed rear-ward (behind you). You need enough space for this type of wrapping. Here is an example of hand held wrapping –



Take home lesson: cross wraps can be done without expensive tools.

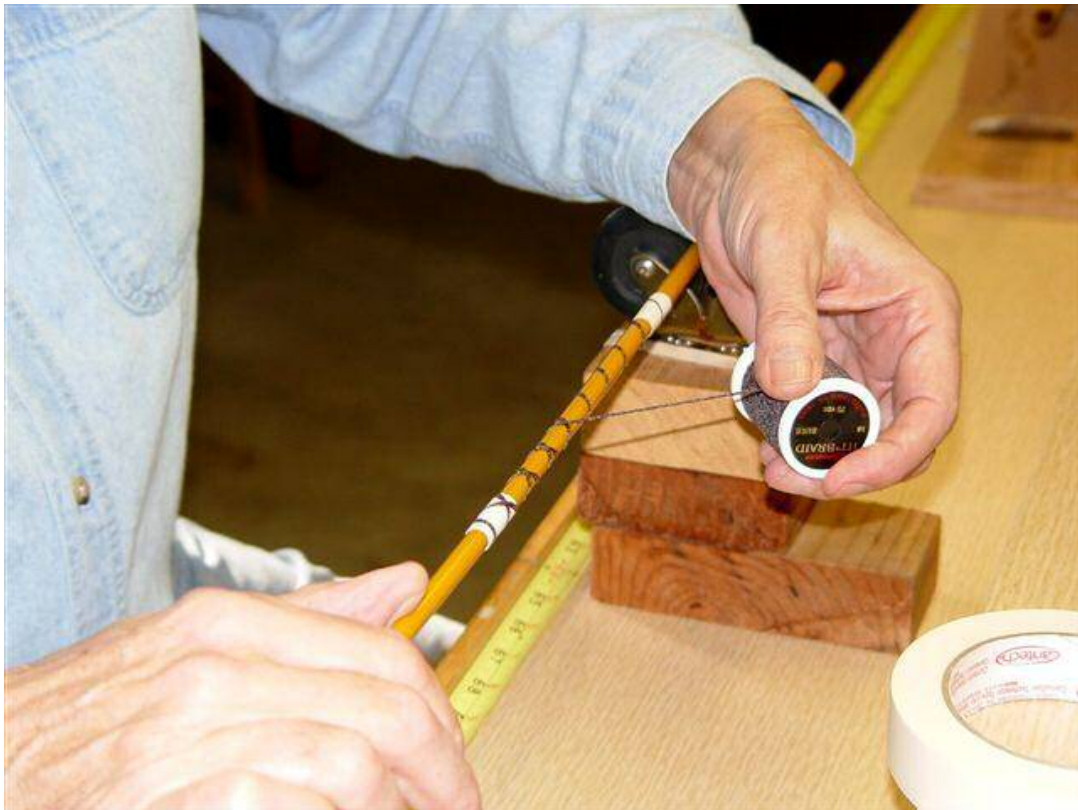
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### Cross Wrap 4

Another method of doing cross wraps without a rod lathe is to use rod supports to hold the rod. Rod supports can be as simple as notches on both sides of a cardboard box or a couple caster wheels mounted back to back on wooden blocks. More elaborate types of rod supports can be made from wood, metal or plastic. Or they can be purchased ready-made from many sources.

This method of cross wrapping entails holding the spool of thread in one hand while the other hand turns the rod being held level in the supports. The thread is spiraled up the rod (toward the tip) by one hand and then switching hands when spiraling the thread back down the rod (toward the butt).

The hand holding the spool of thread supplies the tension on the thread. Experience will teach you how much tension is correct. Too much or too little thread tension will lead to problems in packing threads later in the wrapping. Clean hands are also important so you do not transfer dirt or oil from your hands to the thread. The following is a photo of this technique of cross wrapping



Take home lesson: use rod supports when working space is small.