

Personal preferences and rod building.

During the wraps course, I'll introduce several techniques that should improve your learning curve. Where I can, I'll show different methods to accomplish the same task. I would hope that you try them all and find the ones that fit your style, or what looks good to you. There are no wrong methods, with exception to personal safety of course so feel free to utilize these methods or bring up others in the discussion times.

Thread Color

Selecting thread colors is important both in color matching for good looks but also for a clean solid looking wrap.

Selecting colors that are lighter than the blank will require more care to ensure the thread is packed tightly during wrapping. Failure to do so will result in a splotchy-looking wrap that actually is allowing the blank color to show through the wrap, even if color preserver is used. A color that is darker than or equal to the blank color will be the most forgiving. This is the reason you see thread color that is about the same color as the blank on production rods. Small mistakes are hidden easier.

Thread size

For most freshwater rods and even some light saltwater rods, A size thread will be the size of choice. This size will result in a smooth wrap with good holding strength for keeping guides in place. D size thread is used on many salt water rods. It's about twice the size of A thread and has a breaking strength roughly twice that of A thread. However, due to it's size, you will only be able to get about half as many turns on a wrap compared to A size thread. D size thread is a little easier to work on larger salt water guides but won't result in quite as smooth a wrap as A size. Either provide adequate holding strength for wrapping any rod.

Starting Wraps

Starting wraps always seems difficult for new rod builders. Like any other craft skill, once the tips are learned it goes easy.

Key terms and tips:

Tag end: The thread end that sticks out after the main wrap crosses over it.

Thread tension: Best setting is learned over time but if your thread is breaking, tension is way too tight. If your wraps loosen while you wrap, it's too loose. Tension should be fairly tight, but you can still pack thread to close gaps if you need to, or reposition a guide after its wrapped.

This session assumes we are wrapping from left to right, and I'm right handed.

I'll discuss 2 methods for starting thread wraps. There are others but these work well for me.

The X knot.

This starting method works best in the butt half of a blank or on larger rods. It's more difficult in skinny tips where the next method works better.

Start the X knot as shown in the photo. Wrap over the tag end of the thread to make an X. Apply pressure with your left index finger as the blank rotates. The object is to continue to wrap over the tag end so it's captured under the main wrap. Once you get 2-3 turns over the tag end, you should be able to release your finger and continue. Once you get 5-7 turns over the tag end, you can cut the end close to the wrap and continue.



3 turn knot.

This has advantages at the tip end and also stays exactly where you start it. It also works well with any thread tension method, including bobbins used in free-hand wrapping.

With your right hand, wrap the tag end 3 turns around the blank in the direction of the wrap, in this case, 3 turns to the right of the main wrap.

Kick the main thread over the 3 turns with your left thumb and begin wrapping to the right. You should need little or no finger pressure to hold the wrap in place to start. Once you get another 2-3 wraps over the tag end, clip short and continue.

A minor downfall of this method is that there is a small bump where the main wrap crosses the 3 turns. If you burnish the wrap when finished, it's barely noticeable. If you don't like the way this looks, then use the tag end pull method to get rid of it in the next steps.



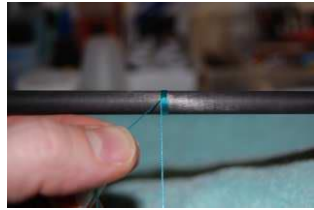
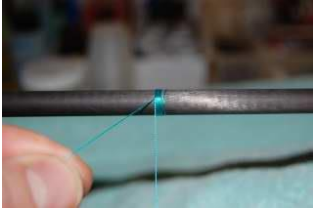
Pulling the tag end to clean up the starting edge

Note I wrap right to left on this example.

If your first couple of turns look ugly with gaps and crosses, etc, don't sweat it.

Put 4-5 turns over the tag end. While the blank is rotating, hold on to the tag end to pull the first couple of wraps off until the starting end is square, and there are no gaps. Use this to pull out the cross over point on the 3-turn wrap if you don't like the way it looks.

I use this to ensure I only have 3-4 wraps at the end of a guide foot on every guide. If you start too far away from the end of the guide foot, use this method to move the wrap over until you get to the end of the foot, then cut the tag end and keep wrapping. This also helps keep the leading edge of the wrap square so you don't have to fuss with packing and closing gaps.



A tip on thread angle.

When your wrap is started, always continue with a bit of a back angle on the wrapping thread. This helps ensure a tight wrap with fewer gaps. Again, wrapping right to left in this example.

