

## Dubbing Methods

There are a number of ways to use dubbing in fly construction. I'll do my best to describe a few of them here. There are also several tools that help with the process. As with any tying method, practice will eventually turn into speed and consistency.

One rule of thumb regarding dubbing (I think it's the ONLY rule) is:

**Use half as much dubbing as you think you will need.**

Regardless of method chosen or tool used, pull dubbing from bag or dispenser, then cut that amount in half. You'll come out just about right. You can always add more if you wind up short on the hook, but a fly body that comes out too big and bulky means unwinding and starting over.

### **Good Ole' Spit**

Yup, a little human saliva on the thread and most fur dubbing materials will stick. Simply put a little spit on the thread, pull dubbing in small amounts from the dispenser or bag and lay it on the thread, spinning with your fingers and thumb, working your way down to the bobbin, then wrap over the hook. Repeat process as needed until you reach the tie off point. You can also create tapered bodies by adding more dubbing as you go.

Cautionary Reminder: Licking fingers and handling dubbing products can easily lead to a mouthful of fur. Be mindful of where you are in the process! Lick clean fingers, touch thread, wipe fingers, grab dubbing, apply to thread, wipe fingers again before licking.

### **Dubbing Wax**

It's pretty much the same method as above, but using dubbing wax instead of spit. Just be sure to keep the wax on the thread, not your fingers and thumb.

Another cautionary reminder: Resist the temptation to scratch that itch along side your nose, behind your ear, etc. during any point in this process. Sticky wax and fur will end up wherever your fingers travel until they are wiped clean.

## Dubbing Loops

This is where some tools and gizmos come into play. Hooks, special bobbins, weighted loop spreaders, etc. They all follow the same basic idea though. You “trap” the dubbing fibers between two pieces of thread, wire, or tinsel and twist to form a very tight rope or brush (similar to chenille). You end up with a very uniform and durable dubbed body. Making tapered bodies is a little more of a challenge because you are guessing the first few times on how much dubbing to introduce at various points in the loop. But you’ll get the hang of it. With practice, you’ll also learn how big (or small) of a loop you’ll need, but you can always make multiple loops.



To start, pull bobbin to expose the required amount of thread, apply dubbing to thread (can use spit or wax to help it stick). Grasp thread at the eye of bobbin using Shepard’s Hook, dubbing spreader or even hackle pliers.

Hold tight and take bobbin and thread back towards hook and make a few thread wraps, then wrap thread forward to tie off point (still holding your loop taught) and let the bobbin hang.



Next, begin twisting your shepard’s hook, loop spreader or hackle pliers until you form a nice, tight “rope” of dubbing and thread. Then, holding tension on your rope, begin wrapping around hook shank to the tie off point. Tie down with thread and clip excess.

Visualize your “rope” as a piece of chenille that you’ve tied in, only the whole thing can come undone if you release tension before you tie it down.

Dubbing loops are my preferred method, primarily because of the durability, especially on flies with no hackle or ribbing wraps. I also use a similar method for making ropes when using peacock or ostrich herl bodied flies.

One final note: Some fly shops (including Riverwood) sell pre-made ropes and brushes. The ropes are primarily for dry fly patterns and the brushes (wire core) are for wet flies and nymph patterns. These are very versatile and can have a number of body materials built into the rope – dubbing, marabou, deer, elk, and other large animal hairs, flash, rubber legs, etc. They are not just for the dubbing “impaired” tiers, but have a place and a purpose.

Tight Lines!

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