

**Rod Building 108A**  
**Thread Types, Sizes, and Colors**  
**By Larry Lee**

This is the first of two articles discussing thread choice on a custom fly rod. Different threads can be used to tie on your guides, hook keeper, ferrule protection, and tip protection, respectively. Your choice of thread for each makes your rod truly one of a kind. Thread color, thread size, and length of wrap are very important for aesthetics and functionality. In this article, we'll look at some of the choices you have when selecting thread for your custom rod.

Before selecting a type, size, and color of thread, the rod builder should first consider what the overall "look" they are trying to achieve. When you look at all of the manufactured fly rod blank colors available, you will find the fly blanks tend to be very muted and non-flashy. Blanks are usually black, matte black, transparent black, dark brown, chestnut, dark green, olive green, light tan, dark tan, or dark blue. The purpose of muted coloring is to avoid giving off a flash that may spook the fish when casting the rod. You will notice that most commercial good to high quality rods are all built with this type of color scheme. Some commercial rods do, however, have a very subtle amount of enhancement color here and there to enhance the rod's appearance and perhaps entice the fisherman to purchase that particular rod. Thread colors are available in various shade, tones, and patterns to match the blanks.

There are many types, sizes, and colors of threads being manufactured at this time. Detailed descriptions of several thread types, including regular nylon thread, NCP (no color preserver) nylon thread, metallic thread, Electra metallic thread, Trimar thread, and silk thread are provided below to give you an idea of the variety of choices available to customize your rod.

**Nylon Thread:** The most commonly used thread listed above is the regular nylon thread, which comes in more than 30 colors. Nylon thread is available in sizes A, C, and D. Size A is the smallest diameter, while size D is the largest. Most fly rods are built with size A thread, which is very strong and provides a very pleasing visual appearance. The use of a color preserver on the nylon thread prior to applying epoxy will prevent the thread colors from becoming muted after the epoxy is applied.

**NCP Nylon Thread:** A specific type of nylon thread used in rod building is called NCP nylon thread. Like most nylon threads, it is available in more than 30 colors and also comes in sizes A, C, and D. When using this thread, colors will tend to be brighter and less muted after epoxy is applied without the use of a color preserver.

**Metallic and Electra Metallic Threads:** These threads tend to have very vivid colors. They are both made with a nylon thread core that is surrounded by a metal thread. Metallic thread is available in about 20 colors, while Electra Metallic is only available in 5 colors. They are both available in sizes A, C, and D. Electra Metallic thread provides a holographic effect and radiates a brilliant array of light. However, both of these threads can be used for a bright accent to any rod.

**Trimar Thread:** This thread is a blend on NCP nylon and a single, thin metallic fiber that is twisted into one thread to give a variegated effect. This thread is used for accent and comes in only one size (C/D). No color preserver is needed to preserve the brilliance of color.

**Silk Thread:** Silk is the world's strongest natural fiber and is stronger than steel in tensile strength. The Japanese have been producing the finest silk thread in the industry for many years. There are more than 45 colors produced for rod building. Silk thread comes in three sizes: 100, 50, and size A. Size 100 is the smallest diameter, while size A is the largest. When using silk thread, you must use silk color preserver to preserve the color, or you may have problems with the thread darkening after epoxy is applied. This is the most expensive thread, but the price is negligible in relation to the entire rod cost. Silk thread only costs about \$3.00 per rod.

As you can see from the small handful of threads described above, there is a lot of variety in thread type, size, and color to make that custom rod take on your own personal stamp. If you would like to get a more specific

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idea of what type of thread you would like to use for your rod, try browsing [www.anglersworkshop.com](http://www.anglersworkshop.com) on the internet. They have many types of thread available for sale at reasonable prices.

In the next article, we will discuss how the length of thread wrap modifies rod action and how the placement of thread can protect weak areas in the rod.

If you have any questions, ideas, or suggestions, please feel free to mail me at [larrylee@L3rods.com](mailto:larrylee@L3rods.com) or telephone me at 916-962-0616.