

ROD BUILDING 107A

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Rod Building 107 b — Guides—General

This will be the first of three articles covering guide types, guide sizes, and guide spacing on a blank. A little later we will provide details on tying the guides onto your rod. The number of details to consider when choosing and placing guides on your blank is part of the fun! Building ones own fly rod can help bring out the creative at heart. It can be somewhat complex. There are many types of guides, which come in lots of different materials, shapes, and sizes. Proper guide selection is very important for proper rod performance. Casting distance, fish fighting, and appearance on your custom rod are all greatly affected by guides used. In general, there are three different guide types on each rod. They are: stripper guides, snake or single-foot wire guides, and the tip-top wire-loop guide. This article gives a brief overview of type of guide, what they're made of, and their general location on the rod.



There are typically one to two stripper guides (see photo above) and generally 1 – 2 double foot guides located just above the handle. These guides have a ceramic ring located in the center of a stamped metal guide. This type of guide is used primarily with bait casting or spinning rods. There are a number of ceramic materials used such as aluminum oxide, silicon nitride, and silicon carbide (SiC). Each type of ceramic ring has a hardness associated with it, dependent upon the ceramic material. Of the listed materials above, SiC is the hardest material. Diamonds are used to polish the surface of a SiC guide to get the required smooth surface. A very hard ceramic insert provides a smooth surface for

the fly line to slide on, one which will not be worn by line contact. A major advantage of a smooth, hard surface with less drag is that you can control a cast longer distance. Also the metal frame set for the stripper guides are coated in titanium carbide, chrome, and black chrome as illustrated in the photo from left to right. Typical stripper guide sizes are 8, 10, 12, 16, 20, 25, and 30. Size 8 stripper guides are used on 2,3, or 4 weight rods, while a size 30 stripper guide might be used on a 15 weight rod.



Snake or single-foot wire guides (see photo above) make up the majority of the guides on a fly rod. They are located between the stripper guide or guides and the tip-top guide. Snake and single-foot wire guides come with different coatings such as titanium carbide, chrome, and black chrome (as illustrated in the photo from left to right). The titanium carbide coating is the hardest, and therefore causes the least amount of line sliding resistance. However, chrome and black chrome coatings are also quite hard and durable. These guides come in the following sizes: 1/0, 1, 2/0, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. A size 1/0 is used on rods up to a 4 weight, while a size 6 guide is used on rods up to a 15 weight.

Tip-top guides are made of the same materials and coatings as snake and single foot wire guides. A tip-top guide, as its name implies, is located at the tip of the rod. The guide consists of a loop, which is either a regularly sized loop or a large loop. The tube section of the guide, which fits over the blank, is constructed in various diameters, which range from 3.5 to 7.5. These numbers represent 1/64th of an inch. For example, a 4.5 tube diameter is $4.5/64" = 0.070"$.

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Regular loop tip-tops are used for 0 weight to 6 weight rods. Large loop tip-tops are used on 5 weight to 15 weight rods.

In addition to the guides, a hook-keeper is also attached to the blank to provide a place to attach your fly when transporting the rod or in between sessions. Hook-keepers come in small sizes and large sizes, and are typically made of the same material as snake and wire loop guides.

There is a significant amount of information available if you are interested in learning more about guide material and types. A good website to get started on is:

<http://www.batsonenterprises.com/guides.php>

Batson Enterprises manufactures Forecast rod components and is dedicated to providing high

quality components and rod blanks at a reasonable cost. They give a brief discussion on guide types and the some brief information about manufacturing of guides. Check out the VD (stripping guides), UD (stripping guides), SN (snake guides), SF (single foot wire guides), and the F (ceramic single foot fly guides) types.

The next rod building article will provide in-depth information about selecting guide sizes for your new rod. □

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