

Rod Building 109C
Two-Handed or Spey Fly Rod
(Selecting guide types, guide sizes, and guide spacing)
By Larry Lee

This is the third article in the *Two-Handed or Spey Fly Rod* series about selecting guide types, guide sizes, and guide spacing for two-handed fly rods (also called Spey rods). I was intending this to be the last article of the series on two-handed rods, but realized there is much more information that needs to be covered.

Guide Selection for two-handed Rods

Two or three stripper double foot guides typically make up the first two or three guides above the handle. These guides have a ceramic-ring located in the center of a stamped metal guide (see photo). This type of guide is also sometimes used on single handed fly rods, but are primarily used with bait casting or spinning rods. There are a number of materials used to make the ceramic ring such as silicon carbide (SiC), Zirconium, and Aluminum oxide ("H" Ring). Each type of ceramic ring has a hardness associated with it, dependent upon the ceramic material. Of the materials listed above, SiC is the hardest material. They are diamond polished to the smoothest surface available in ceramic rings today. SiC offers the finest performance available in terms of wear, hardness, thermal dissipation and low coefficient of friction. Another alternative is the Zirconium ring which comes in colors such as blue TiO, tin gold, bronze, chameleon, and Titanium-carbide over Zirconium. Zirconium rings offer similar performance to SiC at a much lower cost. Rings made from this high-end ceramic offer superb hardness, thermal dissipation and low coefficient of friction. The metal frame set for the stripper guides are coated in Titanium carbide, chrome, black chrome, or polished stainless steel. The photo illustrates all Titanium carbide plated frame sets with gold, blue, Titanium carbide, Zirconium colored ring sets (shown from left to right).



Typical stripper guide sizes used for two-handed rods are size 12, 16, 20, and sometimes 25. Two-handed rods with line weights of 5, 6, 7, or 8 typically have stripper guide sizes of 12 and 16. Two-handed rods with line weights of 9 and 10 will tend to have stripper guide sizes of 16, 20 or 25.



Snake or single-foot wire guides (see photo) can 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. Snake or wire guides used on two-handed rods are typically sized as 3, 4, 5, and 6. Two-handed fly rods with line weights of 5, 6, 7, or 8 will typically use snake or single foot wire guides sizes of 3, 4, and 5, while two-handed fly rods with line weights of 8, 9, or 10, will typically use snake or single foot wire guide sizes of 4, 5, and 6.



A tip-top guide, as its name implies, is located at the tip of the rod. The guide typically consists of a large sized loop. The tube section of the guide, which fits over the blank, is constructed in various diameters, which range from 3.5 to 8.0. Tip-top guides (see photo) are made of the same materials and coatings as snake and single foot wire guides. Some tip-top guides may even have ceramic inserts (far left in photo). These tip-top guides insert sizes are very large (loop size at least 10).

In the next article series about two-handed fly rods, we will discuss the selection of guides, handles, reel seats, reels, and line sizes. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact me at lllee@L3rods.com or telephone at (916) 962-0616.