

The Fish Wrap

This classic wrap is still a favorite of rod builders and fishermen alike. by Tom Kirkman

The venerable fish wrap is a favorite of both custom rod builders and fishermen alike. Although it is a closed wrap and entails a bit of planning, with the right sizing and choice of thread colors you can arrive at a fish that closely resembles your favorite quarry!

While it appears to be a very intricate and difficult wrap, it is really quite simple once you break the wrap into 3 separate wraps that combine to create the head/body, tail and fins of the fish.

The Wrap

The fish wrap is based on two wraps, a small diamond which forms the eye and a split diamond which forms the tail. The body is comprised of a chevron wrapped as an extension on one side of the diamond that forms the eye.

The Layout

You will have to determine whether you wish to wrap your fish across or along the rod. If the fish is to be wrapped across the rod, take note that the center of the diamond which forms the eye is not in the center of your fish. Thus, you will likely wish to mark your centers either to the left or right of both the 0 and 180 axis's. How far to either side you go will depend upon how wide you wish your fish to be.

If you would rather have your fish swimming along the rod rather than across it, just plot your centers along the 0 and 180 axis's, or if you want the fish to swim along the sides of the rod use the 90 and 270 axis's.

You will be working on two sets of centers - one for the eye and the body, and one for the tail. Some builders just start the tail as they go along but you can also plan your spacing ahead of time to achieve the length fish you desire.

The Eye

The eye is constructed with a dark center and then framed with a lighter outside. Make it as large as you want but scale it to appear well in your overall wrap. You wrap it as you would any diamond, equal on all sides.

The Body

The body is formed by wrapping a split chevron off one side of the diamond (eye). In our photo the chevron is made to the left of the diamond. By alternating dark and light threads you arrive at a split chevron which mimics the light-belly and dark-back of many fish species. In the photo you may notice the dark thread (red) which has been incorporated as a gill plate. A nice touch!

The Tail

A split diamond is used to create the tail. Because it will add some length to the body it must be wrapped (centered) a bit away from where you stop the chevron body wrap. To get a forked tail, you will use a "plus-one" spacing on the split diamond. For a squared off tail, just wrap a regular split diamond.

Fins

You can add fins to your fish by wrapping in chevron fashion next to the eye on the opposite side (left) from where you created the body. If you wish to have your fins exhibit a tapered/forked appearance, you must wrap them at the same time you wrap the tail, allowing the plus-one background wraps to form the taper in both the tail and the fins at the same time.

Closing

On larger blanks with little taper in the butt area you may well be able to get by with just careful packing and fitting of the closing threads. On blanks with a bit more taper you will want to incorporate some type of taper offset spacing.

Use consistent centers and pack threads carefully. Depending upon the sizing you choose, you can make almost any shape fish from fat to slender. Careful selection of thread colors also allows you to mimic the colors of your favorite fish. Any way you wrap it, long or across, fat or thin, bright or muted, the fish wrap is a winner! 🎣

Fish Wrap Instructions

by Tom Kirkman



These instructions will form a fish "swimming" across the axis and facing left. You can vary the instructions for a fish facing right or for a school swimming along the axis. For clarity, the fish shown in the illustration is based on spacing which creates a "square" fish. By adjusting your centers and distance between eye and tail centers, you can create fish which are long and slender or short and fat.

In the photo at left, a single red thread is used as a gill edge. Several gold metallic threads have been incorporated into the fish's back to add sparkle. Be creative - experiment with different colors and spacings and you can create nearly any fish that swims!

- Form eye and head with a simple diamond. Wrap dark - light - dark.

- Body is formed by adding chevron to the right of diamond. Wrap up threads light and down threads dark.

- Begin tail by wrapping another diamond to the right of the body (remember that the tail will also add a bit of length to the body so plan accordingly). For a square tail wrap dark threads to the left and light threads to the right. For a forked tail wrap wrap "plus one" to the right with your light thread.

The instruction to wrap "plus one" entails wrapping more threads on one side of the chevron or diamond than the other. For example, you might wrap a diamond by wrapping 1-left and 1-right. "Plus One" would require that you wrap 1-left and 2-right, then 1-left and 3-right and so forth. You can vary the number of additional wraps you make to any one side to alter the appearance to your liking.

- Fins are created by wrapping a quick chevron next to the original diamond (eye). Wrap to the left, up and down with dark threads. If you wish to make the fins tapered in the same manner as a forked tail, you must wrap them at the same time that the tail is wrapped. Wrap fins, tail and background plus one. Repeat until the appearance is just as you wish.

