

Organizing A Fly Tying Desk

By Michael Abramowitz

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*Preface: The following article will be published in an upcoming issue of the **Mid Atlantic Fly Fishing Guide**. You can find more information about the Mid Atlantic Fly Fishing Guide on their [Facebook](#) page.*

This article is to complement my previous article, "Fly tying for beginners" in the February 2014 issue of the Mid Atlantic Fly Fishing Guide. Over a period of time many fly tiers may accumulate an extensive collection of fly tying materials. We have seen many photos of fly tying work areas. Some are the envy of many fly tiers. These are well organized with no visible debris, uncluttered and in an area where we would like to tie our flies. In contrast to the uncluttered we have seen fly tying benches that look like a tornado disrupted the area. You see piles of hackles, multiple rolls of colored threads, boxes of hooks, dubbing in small plastic bags, containers with flies and your tying tools. Just think of the time wasted trying to find that deer hair stacker or essential whip finisher. This would prompt you also to learn how to whip finish a fly without a whip finisher.

Once you begin tying your own flies, managing the fly tying workspace efficiently will result in many benefits. You will be able to utilize your time better. All your tools and required materials should be in the same area. Unfortunately some folks do not have a dedicated work area. This requires unpacking all the tying materials, repacking, and then storing. After tying up your flies, you may have to repack everything. The next task is cleaning up the worktable, the floor then meticulously making sure that no stray hooks are on the floor or imbedded in the carpet. A strong magnet is very helpful for finding all size hooks from the floor. A note of caution is that even the strongest magnet may not pick up a hook caught in the fabric of a carpet.

If you are able to have a permanent work area to set up your tying equipment the following thoughts should be considered.

First, the floor should not have a carpet for obvious reasons. If there is a carpet, even a powerful vacuum cleaner may not pick up tying scraps stuck in the carpet. It is much easier to clean up hooks from a non-carpeted floor. The large plastic

floor mats for use under a desk, in my opinion are never large enough to use in a fly tying area. If the floor is concrete, this could be uncomfortable during the cold winters when many fishing folks tie flies. Perhaps placing your feet on wooden flooring may feel warmer. Cleaning up after tying flies with a dedicated vacuum cleaner kept in the area or a small shop vac will be helpful. A few wall shelves or bookcase close by will be convenient to place your storage boxes.

If a work area is over carpet a vacuum cleaner may not pick up debris. A wired pet hairbrush will remove feathers, hackle, and hairs after trimming a fly.

Good lighting above the desk will allow you to see tying vice, materials and finished flies with less eye fatigue after long tying sessions. Light bulbs that simulate outdoor sunshine are available at many hardware stores. My preference is an "Ott Light". Many seamstresses and clothing manufacturers use these lamps and bulbs. This emits a light spectrum, which reveals the true color of a material.

Lamps with a circular fluorescent bulb may surround large magnifying glass. When tying small midges like size 20 and smaller you will be amazed how your fly tying technique becomes with time. You may begin using 10-denier thread, which will be easier to visualize on the small hooks. The fly will appear neater, and more natural like the insect you are imitating.

A waste bin nearby or garbage bag clipped to the desk is desirable when tying at your desk.

Storage of all your tying materials is easy to set up with some planning.

Start by composing a list of all the items and materials you have for tying your fishing flies. As a guide list the following: Hooks, threads, traditional silks, Chenille, yarns, tinsel, wire, hackles, dubbing, dubbing wax, flash materials, furs deer, elk, moose, squirrel, rabbit, duck, mallard, CDC, pheasant, goose, partridge, rare legal furs, synthetic rubber legs, biots, beads (brass/tungsten/chain), foams, glues and epoxies. And finally your tools, scissors, bodkins, hackle pliers, regular pliers to de-barb hooks.

If you have a computer choose a large legible font and print the list. Once you have your storage boxes, adhere the labels to the appropriate box.

Many stores sell plastic shoe storage boxes and in varied size plastic boxes. Clear Plastic boxes will also allow you to see what is in a particular box. The nut and

bolts bins hardware storage drawer cabinets are available in many sizes. Smaller size cabinets can be purchased for approximately the same price of an on stream fly storage box.

Keep a fly storage box to place your completed flies. When you have some free time or the urge to tie up a few flies that you saw in the latest magazine or what A. K. Best described in article in this magazine, your organized fly tying area is all set up. All the equipment and materials are easily accessible so you can begin to tie up the flies immediately.



Storage case with clear plastic bins.

Keep a box for you own stock of regular flies. Label your storage container with the names of your usual go to flies. The pheasant tails, Adams, soft hackles, midges, terrestrials, stoneflies, caddis, nymphs, streamers, and salmon flies. Label a container for flies used during special trips such as tropical tarpon, steelhead and finally the bluegill fly for the local neighborhood pond.

Relax during your tying time by having a radio or music player close by.

When your local Trout Unlimited chapter has the monthly outing you will be prepared by having your fly box well stocked. There is no longer the need stay be up late the night prior to the outing tying flies.

Mike Abramowitz is an avid fly fisherman from Potomac, Md. He ties flies, occasionally builds rods, and enjoys fishing from a kayak.