

## Tying Trout Flies - Where Do I Start?.... Jerry Aldridge

The hardest part of starting to tie trout flies is picking the flies to tie. There are literally thousands upon thousands of different flies, many touted with words such as "the only fly you will ever need" or "the silver bullet has finally arrived" or some such nonsense. There is no perfect fly but there are some that have been proven to catch trout consistently under a wide variety of conditions. So I too, will come up with a short list. These work for me and others and will serve you well as a good starting point. The flies are not listed in order of preference.



1. **Crackleback.** Size 12. Does not look like any insect in particular. Easy to tie. Fish as a dry fly without drag, skittered with small strips or dragged under the water and retrieved as a wet fly or streamer.

2. **Parachute Adams.** Sizes 12-18. Dry fly that suggests many mayfly duns and spinners. Was my "go to" dry until I discovered the crackleback. Now it's a toss-up.



3. **Elk Hair Caddis.** Sizes 12-18. Dry fly that resembles many of the common caddis, especially when tied in a variety of body colors. Tan or olive work well.

4. **Griffith's Gnat.** Sizes 16-18 (and smaller, too). Dry fly that resembles a cluster of midges (tiny fly-like insects).



5. **Bead Head Pheasant Tail Nymph.** Sizes 12-18. Resembles many mayfly nymphs, especially olives. As with most nymphs, fished with drag-free drift along stream bottom. A very good general "attractor", this is my "go to" nymph.

6. **Bead Head Hare's Ear Nymph.** Sizes 12-18. Resembles some mayfly nymph, probably some caddis larva and pupa and even looks a bit like a scud or sowbug. This may be the most popular general attractor nymph. I tie it in gray or olive.



7. **Whitlock's Fox Squirrel Nymph.** Sizes 12-18. Another very good general attractor. May even suggest a small crawdad with its cinnamon body.

8. **Bead Head Woolly Bugger.** Size 8 or 12. Generally fished as a streamer but may be fished dead drift as a nymph. Looks like any number of underwater critters (leeches, crawdads, stoneflies, hellgrammites, minnows). I tie most often in black or olive but other colors are effective, too.



9. **Ant.** Sizes 12-18. I tie foam or parachute dry flies and thread bodied wet flies in black, brown or red. You would be surprised how many ants end up in the stream as trout food. Trout love them.

10. **Beetle.** Sizes 12-18. I tie as foam dry flies, black or brown. Trout like them just as much as ants.



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## *Trout Flies - How Do I Start?... Jerry Aldridge (continued)*



11. **Grasshopper.** Size 8 or 12. Tied in many styles. Foam bodied and parachute are shown. Fished as dry fly but often banged near the bank with gusto the way a real hopper might land. Often attacked with serious harmful intent.

**Material list.** The materials required to tie our flies is listed below. No tools are listed (perhaps a separate topic?). Substitute materials are sometimes used to keep costs down. For example, black thread is used instead of olive in the olive wooly bugger and partridge feather fibers are used for the tail of the Hare's Ear nymph instead of guard hairs from the face or ears of a hare. You can certainly

use the original materials if you want to spend a little more.

The total material cost is about \$170. Costs were taken from the catalogue of a single supplier. Other suppliers might be cheaper on individual items. The two most expensive items on the list are hooks and hackle. Nine boxes of 50 hooks, roughly \$5 per box are included, four boxes of dry fly hooks (Mustad 94840, sizes 12-18) and five boxes of nymph/streamer hooks (Mustad 9671, sizes 8 and 12-16). Each hook costs about a nickel. The hackle is a Whiting, bronze grade combination cape (actually, half a grizzly cape and half a brown one) priced at \$49. The two half capes will tie about 500 flies so hackle for each fly costs about a dime. Metz has a similar quality combo priced at \$45.

1. Hooks, Mustad 9671 nymph, sizes 8 and 12-18, 5 boxes of 50 at \$5.25 per box, \$26.25.
2. Hooks, Mustad 94840 dry fly, sizes 12-18, 4 boxes of 50 at \$4.95 per box, \$19.80.
3. Hackle, Whiting rooster combo-cape, grizzly/brown, bronze grade, \$49.
4. Thread, Danville Flymaster 6/0, black, dark brown, beige, \$1.25 per 200 yard spool, \$3.75.
5. Dubbing, SLF Whitlock, redfox squirrel thorax and abdomen, \$2.50 per pack, \$5
6. Dubbing, Hare's Ear Plus, natural, dark natural, olive, red brown, \$1.50 per pack, \$6.
7. Dubbing, Antron, golden tan, medium olive, \$0.85 per pack, \$1.70.
8. Dubbing, Superfine, Adams gray, black, \$1.25 per pack, \$2.50.
9. Beads, Spirit River Brite, gold, 3/32, 1/8, 5/32, 3/16, \$2.25 per 25 pack, \$9.
10. Squirrel tail, red fox natural, \$1.95.
11. Wire, Wapsi Ultra, copper and gold, sizes brassie and small, 4 spools at \$1.25, \$5.
12. Lead wire, .015, spool, \$2.25.
13. Ringneck pheasant tail, whole, \$3.75.
14. Peacock herl, small package, \$1.50.
15. Hungarian partridge feathers, loose, package, \$1.50.
16. Chenille, ultra medium, dark olive, black, \$1 per pack, \$2.
17. Marabou, Hareline bloods, black, dark olive, \$1.50 per 1/8 oz. pack, \$3.
18. Neck hackle, black, sculpin olive, \$1.85 per 1/4 oz. pack, \$3.70.
19. Turkey biot quills, Hareline, pale morning dun color, \$1.95.
20. Krystal flash, black, pearl, \$3.50 per pack, \$7.
21. Yarn, polypropylene, white, tan, \$0.85 per pack, \$1.70.
22. Elk hair, select light, \$1.95.
23. Foam, Hareline 2mm, black, brown, tan, \$1.75 per pack, \$5.25.
24. Rubber legs, round medium, yellow, black, brown, \$1.65 per pack, \$4.95.

**Total Material Cost = \$170.45**

A fly box or two filled with these flies, a few of each size and color listed will catch trout on any stream I have ever fished. You cannot match every hatch with these but it's a helluva start!