



Picking the Perfect Fly Rod

By Steve May

This winter if you are looking to get into fly fishing or add to your collection of fly fishing gear it is good to buy gear that suits the fish and conditions you expect to encounter with it. If you ask yourself a few key questions before heading to the cash register you can get a rod that can make future trips to the river a real joy.

Key questions to ask are “what size of water you will be fishing”, “how big are the fish you will usually encounter (be realistic)?” and “what size range of flies you will be casting?”

Unfortunately, there is no one fly rod that can do everything, but some are very versatile.

But, there are several lengths and line weights of rods available from a variety of manufacturer’s at many different price points. There are graphite fly rods out there to tackle with everything from trout to tarpon or bluegills to blue marlin.

To make selecting fly tackle easier, manufacturer’s have come up with a standardized method of categorizing rods and lines using numbers from 0-15. Matching the line to the rod is very important. In fly fishing you are actually casting the line versus catapulting a lure. Getting a rod and line that are properly matched will make the outfit perform to its potential. Unmatched outfits can be difficult to use for even the most experienced fly anglers. Balancing a rod and line with the same number and you are pretty sure you will have an outfit that will perform well.

Lighter outfits numbered #0-#4 are perfect for fishing small streams with picky trout or making small fish like sunfish more sporting. But, light lines do not perform well in wind, when you need a long cast or a big fly.

Medium action fly outfits (#5-#7) are the 6’6” medium action spinning rods of the fly rod world. The rods will throw a wide variety of flies and can a variety of fish

including trout, bass, panfish and at the heavier end steelhead and light saltwater use. Most people should buy their first fly rod from this size range.

If you intent to tackle steelhead, salmon, largemouth bass or pike with a fly rod look to a rod in the #8-#10 range. These rods can be cast further and handle windy conditions, sinking lines, larger flies and larger fish. But, these heavier outfits more tiring the cast and can spook fish when delicacy is needed.



Tight quarters on a small stream are fun with a short light rod

As with any sport there are people who operate on the fringe. Ultra heavy rods designed for lines #11-#15 are tools designed to land giants on a fly rod. Musky, sailfish, tarpon, and tuna are all within reach with this heavy gear.

Rod length is another consideration. Rods that are 9 feet long are the most popular. This length seems to balance accuracy and distance. Shorter rods are easier to cat more accurately and steer around brush-choked streams. Longer rods give you more on-water line control and can help you cast further. Generally, smaller water, smaller fish and smaller flies mean you should go with a shorter and lighter weight outfit. When you are tackling bigger fish in larger waters with big flies a longer and heavier rod is needed.

So next time you are picking up a new fly rod remember to gear up with the proper tools for the job your days on the water will reflect on your wise choice.



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