DESIGNING A CLASS

There are several aspects involved in the design of a fly tying class. A person or committee involved in the planning might want to start their task by implementing the five W's procedure often used by newspaper reporters to get the story straight and covered completely. The five W's are: **WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE? and WHY?**

**WHO?**
First, who are you? Are you the instructor for the class? A representative of a sponsoring organization? A member of an organization wanting to start up a class? Each of these different "who's" are inter-related in the designing process. If you are the instructor, you may be looking for a sponsoring organization (fly shop, FFF club, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA, educational facility, 4H, etc.) to support your efforts. An organization wanting to sponsor an activity in the community might be looking for ideas and someone to contact to offer their support. You may be a member of an organization involved with fly fishing and want to get a tying program started as part of your club's offerings. Whether it is an individual or a group 'who', there is a common starting requirement - **FIND THE INSTRUCTOR.**

If you are not the instructor, you might want to consider the following sources to locate one:

- Local fly fishing shop
- FFF Council VP of Fly Tying for your region
- Local FFF Club or affiliated or non-affiliated fly fishing club in your area
- Community Colleges, State Colleges, Universities, Private Colleges - check their catalogs or check with Physical Education Dept.
- Your fly fishing friends
- If there is a fly fishing / tying expo in your area, find out who the Fly Tier Chair is and how to contact them

When choosing an instructor you should consider the person's:

- Communication skills
- Ability to relate to different learning styles
- Ability to work with the target audience
- Desire and willingness to teach the target audience
- Cost - will they supply all or part of the supplies - what do they expect to be paid for the instructor fee
- What do they expect you to supply for the class - equipment, materials, printed materials....
- Level of expertise

If you are the instructor, you should ask yourself;

- Can you adapt your teaching style to the different learning styles? - This may mean you limit the target audience to a style accommodated by your teaching style.
- Do you have the communication skills and patience to work with the target audience? - youth, adult, physically impaired, mixtures of all sorts of personalities.
- Do you have the commitment? - Do you really want to do this???

An over-all suggestion governing the choosing of an instructor should be: **You are looking for a guide at the side rather than a sage on the stage.**

Second, who are the students? Identify the target audience for the class. The range of offerings presented in the class will vary greatly depending on the ability level of the students. For a beginner class, you can assume the student has had very little experience in fly tying. They signed up for the class indicating a certain level of motivation to learn. Some classes are designed for a specific target audience (Project Healing Waters, youth programs, senior adults, physically handicapped) and these students may bring a special set of mutually possessed personality traits or 'special needs' consideration. Be aware of the need to adapt the course offering to these traits or 'special needs'.
As course designer, you need to;

- Decide on who your target audience will be
- Identify any student 'special needs' common to that target audience
- Locate other resource people to help in addressing a 'special need' if you are unable to do it yourself
- Build into your course a quick way to identify any 'special needs' of individuals taking the class

WHAT?

You need to decide **what** to teach. We call this the content of the course. Most of the content of a beginning class will fall into one of the following categories; equipment, materials, techniques or basic entomology. Remember, this is a beginning class. The student wants to learn how to tie flies. The quicker you can get them tying, the sooner they will feel they have accomplished their goal. An introduction to the basic tools fly tying and what they are used for will be a starting point. New words and terms will also be part of this introductory course. With beginners, you need to be aware of how unfamiliar these words are, and define the new words using familiar language. The different materials are often introduced as you use them in tying a fly. The basic techniques used in constructing the fly are usually demonstrated by the instructor as called for in the fly recipe. Several approaches are used by different instructors. One approach is to teach sequentially as you tie a pattern from start to finish. Another approach is to introduce a technique and then practice the technique several times without actually tying a fly. Attaching the thread and wrapping a thread base is a basic procedure for most flies. Doing it once and then repeating the process gives them practice in wrapping thread and learning thread control. Unless the student has their own tools at home, very little practice of techniques by your students can be expected. Students often do not want to buy the equipment until they decide if they really want to continue with fly tying. Most of them do not know what to buy before having a class. Part of an instructor’s role is to give them guidance in the acquisition of useful and good quality tools.

A major decision will have to be made in deciding which fly patterns to use in the course. Choices are made based on local fishing practices, local waters, and personal preferences. Most beginning tying classes start with trout patterns. The basic set of beginning trout flies varies from instructor to instructor. Again, remember the student’s goal is to tie a fishable fly. The instructor’s goal is to get the student there knowing certain techniques must be used to get that fly done. The time required for skill building is not under your direct control. The type of fishing available in your area will also dictate an emphasis on certain patterns. The standard starting place should be what we call an easy tie.

The ‘Woolly Bugger’ is a good starting point for trout patterns. The pattern involves a hook of moderate size, wrapping a thread base, tail attachment, ribbing attachment and wrapping, body attachment and wrapping, hackle attachment and wrapping, and head formation. You can also introduce hook terminology and fly proportions with this pattern. A basic set of beginner flies might be composed of the Woolly Bugger, Hare's Ear, Pheasant Tail, Prince Nymph, Griffith's Gnat, and the Adams dry fly. Several commercial tying kits are on the market using this basic set. There are several book and cd references you might want to consult in the media section of the website to help in fly selection as well as technique selections for your course.

The *Nelson Table*, developed by Dick Nelson (Buszek Award - 1987), is a class developing tool used to help in choosing patterns and analyzing a set of fly patterns in terms of the skills each pattern requires/teaches, how well the patterns reinforce/build on previously learned skills, and how well the set covers a full range of fly tying techniques. Check out the *Nelson Table* of the web site to see how to utilize this class developing tool.

Many successful instructors will have extra patterns ready to introduce to their students as they monitor and adjust their students' needs.
A suggested list of techniques to include in a beginning course might be as follows:

- Adjusting the vise and mounting the hook in vise
- Securing thread to shank and laying a thread base
- Half hitch and/or whip finish
- Proper use of wax
- Proper use of head cement
- Use of bobbin - threading, tension adjusting
- Thread control - how to flatten, how to increase twist, how to split
- Material preparation before attachment to shank
- Material attachment to shank
- Tying off materials
- Wrapping on materials - edge-to-edge, overlapping, open spiral
- Forward wrapping and reverse wrapping
- Use of hook to determine fly proportions, material selection, and material placement
- Soft loop technique - when and why to use it
- Finishing a head
- De-barbing hooks
- Eye clean-up
- Mounting wings
- Dubbing and dubbing loops
- Hackle gauges
- Tapering bodies
- Ribbing bodies

A suggested list of Basic Tying Materials to cover in a beginning course might be as follows:

- Hooks - types, makes, sizes
- Tail material - hackle fibers, hair, synthetic fibers, biots
- Feathers - hackles for wet, dry, streamer flies - hen vs. rooster - neck, saddle - dyed hackles- quality grading - descriptive vocabulary
- Body plumage - breast, wing, primaries, secondaries, biots, rump, filoplume, marabou, tail, specialty feathers
- Furs - hollow fiber, solid fiber, hard fiber, guard hairs, underfur, special characteristics of particular furs and their uses in fly construction
- Body materials - natural, synthetic, special properties, interaction/reaction to water, dubbing, yarn, chenille, other string wraps, foam
- Wing materials - quill, whole feather hair wings, synthetic fibers, sheet materials, hackle tips
- Ribbing - wire, oval tinsel, flat tinsel, Mylar, thread, floss, synthetic strips, quills
- Thread - types, sizes, colors, special characteristics, flat, multi-strand, Kevlar,
- Head cements
- Waxes

In planning the 'what' for your course, we recommend you:

- Select the patterns to tie
- Determine the skills needed to tie the selected patterns
- Determine the order in which the flies will be tied (simple to more complex)
- Design and print handouts for students that will include; 1. Terminology you will be using, 2. Hook proportions you will refer to including visual formats
- Design and print class workbook to include; 1. List and description of basic tools of tying you want them to know and expect them to use, 2. Pictures of flies they will tie along with pattern recipe, 3. An order of tying sheet for each pattern including a list of techniques required/learned/reinforced by tying the pattern, 4. Contact information for you (the instructor), 5. Space for their own notes, 6. A feedback sheet (optional)
- Have a sample set of the flies available for their viewing or give them a sample of each fly to be used as a pattern.
WHEN?

You will have many options for when to offer a class. One of the main considerations will involve who your target audience will be. Adult classes are pretty much limited to evening or weekend times due to their work schedules. Youth groups will have competing after school activities. If a sponsoring agency is involved, you may be limited to their time schedules. Some classes are offered through an educational institution and they will probably set the schedule to fit their needs. Fly shops are probably the main sponsors or hosts for fly tying classes. Unless the shop is extremely large, they will want their classes to be offered after closing during the week or some may want a weekend offering. In all cases, you need to consider how much time on task will be appropriate for your students. If an evening class is decided upon, a 2 - 3 hr. time limit should be observed. Weekend classes can go longer, but you need to plan several breaks or variable teaching activities to keep the interest level high and productive. In looking over several Fly Shop offerings, the courses tend to consist of 4 sessions of 2 hours each during one weekday evening.

The time of year must also be taken into consideration. You will have to look at your community and determine if there are certain seasonal events that would take away your audience. In the Northwest, winter steelhead activities attract a lot of fly tiers away from the classes. Summer tends to be family vacation time. Hunting seasons tend to conflict with class schedules. We suggest you work with or through a local fly shop and make use of their newsletters, websites, and storefronts to get a class list started. When enough people have shown interest, they can be contacted to finalize a time and place. Without a budget, advertising must be limited to word of mouth, fly shop newsletters and posters, sporting goods store wallboards, various public information websites and newsletters, and sponsoring organization newsletters. In all cases, a centralized communication system must be set up so all inquiries get to one person for setting up a schedule. Unless you have help with the instruction part of the course, you should limit the classes to 4 or 6 students.

In planning the 'when' for your course, we suggest you:

- Work with a local fly shop to see if they already have a program set up you can fit into
- Work with local organizations to use their communication devices to get the word out about your class
- Analyze your community make-up to determine the best day and time for a tying class
- Use your results from the 'what' section to decide how much time will be needed to complete the course
- Consult the Sample Class Settings / Format section of our website to get a look at some successful tying class presentations and formats

WHERE?

Finding an ideal tying classroom is not easy. In many situations, the sponsoring club, institution, or fly shop has a facility that was not designed for your teaching needs. You will have to adapt to the facility's physical properties. If given the opportunity, you can make some requests.

Space and lighting are probably the two most important items you need to have for a classroom. A room can have adequate light during the day when outside lighting is supplementing the inside light. Check out the classroom during the time you will be teaching the class especially if you are teaching an evening class. There are several tying lamps available, but they can sometimes hinder as much as they help. If you are demonstrating, be sure the tier lamp is not blocking the view of the students. Tying lamps can also block the instructor's view of the student and their work.

You want a physical space that allows you to easily move around the room to get you into a position to assist your student. There should be enough space to allow all students to have an unobstructed view of you in your teaching mode. If you have visual aids, be sure students can see them from their tying station. There are times when a tentative/hesitant student may need you to go behind them and place your hands over theirs and guide them physically through the step they are trying to accomplish. Use your judgment on whom you help in this way.

Table space is important. At least a 3 foot width and almost a 2 foot depth seem adequate. If you are using printed materials, they will need a place to put them where they can see and refer to them when needed. If they are taking notes, they need a surface on which to write. As you hand out materials, the packages and contents begin to spread all around the tier and don't forget the tools. We usually know where all our stuff is when we are tying through repetition and practice. All of this 'stuff' management is new to the student. Part of your job as an instructor might be to suggest some material, waste, and tool management procedures to reduce their frustration. Some of us thrive in a mess while others need a very ordered environment.
Pay attention to table height and be prepared to have to make some adjustments depending on student needs. The right table height for a pedestal base model vise might depend on the maker of the vise. Vises seem to come in all sizes heights and the more they adjust, the more time will be spent in setting up the tying station. Check out the table thickness compared to the vise clamp opening. Many of the tables today are made from plastic instead of wood and are thicker to build up strength in the outer rim. Not all vise manufacturers have adjusted their clamp openings to accommodate the thicker tables. Pillows and adjustable seats can help resolve table height adjustments. You want the student to be comfortable. Most of the beginning students have not had to hold their hands in the position required by fly tying. If you know one of your students is using a wheelchair be sure to have a table high enough to accommodate the arms of the chair. Card tables wobble and may work for pedestal base but not for a vise clamp.

Creature comfort may be an issue you need to address. Air conditioning, heat, ventilation, and accessible restroom facilities are nice. A shop or private facility may not be set up for special need students.

In locating/evaluating the 'where' aspect of your course, we suggest you:

- Visit the classroom well ahead of first class and at the same time as the scheduled class
- Evaluate the lighting, tying station arrangement, table height, table thickness, space for instructor, space for students, seating, electrical cord availability, bathroom availability, adjustable creature comforts
- Take your vise and several other models (pedestal and clamp) and test out the tying stations

**WHY?**

You need to ask yourself, "Why am I doing this?" There are many different reasons behind your making this decision to teach and/or design a fly tying class. Only you know the real situation. An organization might be seeking you out to fulfill a role for them or there is a more personal reason coming from within you. There is no one correct answer to this question of 'why.' There are lots of incorrect reasons. The students will be the final judge of the correctness of your taking on this responsibility. Our organization has a commitment to helping instructors of fly tying have a successful experience. A successful experience not only for you but for your students. We have recognized a need for high quality fly tying instruction. Our hope is to pass on to our students the heritage, skills, techniques, art of fly tying as well as the utility of fly tying. The ultimate fly has not been created. This is a living and evolving activity having a past, present, and a future. We hope we can help you to ensure that future.

In addressing the 'why?' aspect of your tying course, we hope you:

- Have a reason for being an instructor that promotes our vision of providing a high quality fly tying course
- Have the commitment to the art of fly tying and success in teaching your students to enjoy the art of tying flies