



**A Sisterhood of Anglers.**

## **Fly Fishing Leaders:**

The fly fishing leader and tippet are what connect your fly line to your fly and are critical components of your setup.

### **Leader vs. Tippet:**

The leader is the section that attaches to your fly line. On most North Shore Rivers and streams, a tapered, 7-9-ft. leader is the standard used by most anglers.

A tippet is the section of monofilament or fluorocarbon material that connects your leader to your fly. Sometimes this is used to lengthen your leader or replace original length after breaking off or changing out flies. This will be the lightest material of your setup, usually being 4-8lb. test depending on the fly sizes you're planning to fish.

### **Tapered Leaders:**

Your leader needs to be thick and strong enough at one end to securely attach to your thick fly line and to also turn over your fly while thin enough at the other end to allow for gentle presentation and not be seen by the fish. This is why fly fishing requires tapered leaders, meaning they're thicker at the butt section (section that connects to the fly line), tapering to a thinner diameter at the other end. Additionally, the taper allows energy from your cast to transfer efficiently through the leader and tippet in order to straighten out rather than landing in a pile on the water.

### **Materials:**

#### *Monofilament vs. Fluorocarbon:*

Though some anglers develop a preference over time, both of these materials work well. The big draw to fluorocarbon is that it's virtually invisible to fish. Fluoro sinks faster than mono, is more abrasion resistant and has less stretch which means more sensitivity. On the flip-side, fluorocarbon is more susceptible to knot breakage and is more expensive than monofilament. The important thing here is that both are adequate so if you can't afford to splurge on fluoro, you'll still do just fine with mono.

### **Length:**

Leader lengths vary depending on techniques and conditions and can range from 7-15 feet. It's our recommendation for those new to fly angling, to start out with a 9-ft. leader. Many anglers prefer to start with a 20lb. test butt section and taper down to 6lb. Does the idea of tying a bunch of different size line sections together to get from 20lb. to 6lb. in 9 feet, make you cringe? Believe me, you're not alone! Thankfully

manufacturers now offer pre-built, knotless, tapered leaders. Hand building leaders is rewarding and doable but could be an article in itself so we'll cover that as a separate topic down the line to avoid confusion.

**Leader & Tippet 'X' Rating System:**

When you start looking at fly fishing leaders and tippet, you'll notice 'X' ratings. This rating denotes the line's breaking strength at its smallest diameter. Ratings range from 03X (being the thickest)-8X (being the thinnest). In terms of fishing the North Shore region, the ratings you'll be most likely to use are:

<u>Tippet Size</u>	<u>Diameter</u>	
3X	.008"	8.5lb.
4X	.007"	6lb.
5X	.006"	4.75lb.
6X	.005"	3.5lb.
7X	.004"	2.5lb.

Which size depends on what size fly you plan on fishing. One of the most common rules is to take the size fly you want to fish and divide that by 3 to get the proper tippet size. The reason you want to match up fly size with leader weight is to ensure your leader will be able to turn over your fly efficiently when you're casting it. Not doing so can result in frustrating tangles or spooked fish.

