

A step at a time: TOUCH DUBBING



Here comes a demonstration of a dubbing technique which can make both life easier and flies neater. I won't give you a fly, you can't be handed everything for free. This is just a technique that you can use when you design your own flies.

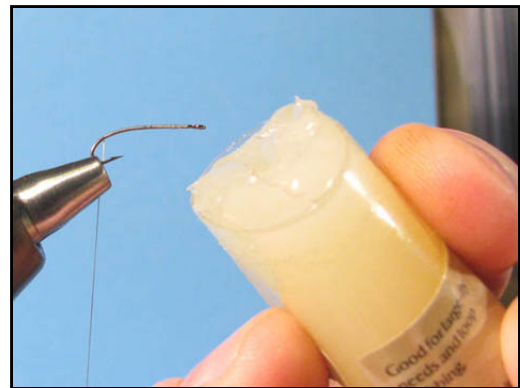
Slim rough bodies using conventional dubbing technique often ends up in taking too much dubbing... or too little dubbing... or applying it unevenly... or ripping it apart with the bodkin. Many obstacles, which only get higher as the hooks get smaller. But there are other ways than just "rubbing finger tips".

Step 1



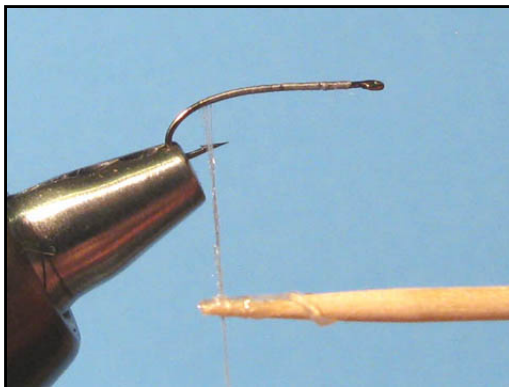
To this we will use the wax that normally "just stands there"... LOON High Tack Swax.

Step 2



'High tack' is not an exaggeration. It's not the same as the wax you normally see (and probably also have). Soft enough to be squeezed out from the can... and it's really(!) sticky.

Step 3



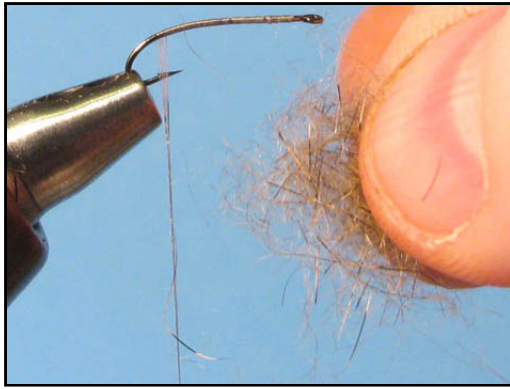
The method I prefer. Using the tip of a tooth pick gives you better control. Its tackyness makes it really easy to overdo it. But applying it little by little with the tip and distribute it with a "clean" part of the tooth pick, puts you back in control over both amount and distribution.

Step 4



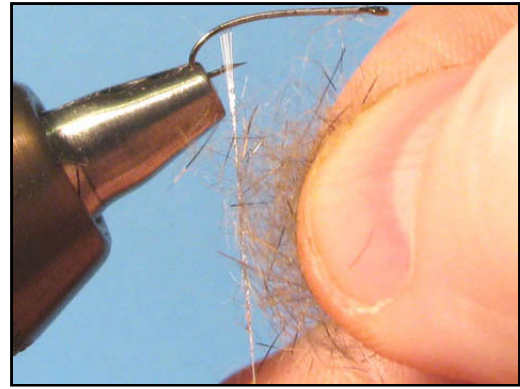
Wax spread out and ready for dubbing. A very thin but extremely tacky layer.

Step 5



Take a pinch of dubbing. This is squirrel, a fairly rough dubbing. Rather similar to hare's ear, but a little longer. Because of its length I have taken a portion of it and worked it with the scissors, so now most of the hairs have a length of about 0.5 cm (1/5").

Step 6



Hold the thread between your left hand's fingers (around a wax free part) and while twisting it back and forth, you touch the thread with the dubbing and kind of "dab" the hairs on. The wax layer on the thread will catch the hairs and pull them out from the others.

Step 7



Yep, it doesn't need more than this. It's not necessary to cover the thread completely in this step, so don't take too much just because you "still can see the thread through the dubbing".

Step 8



Here I have spun the thread clockwise, in the same way as I would have if the thread had been split with the material between the filaments. The wax is so tacky that the material in contact with the thread will twist around it instead of falling off, forming a dubbing "core" that covers the thread. It will be thin, so use a thread color that doesn't contrast to the dubbing color.

Step 9



Wrapped onto the hook. Slim, but giving the impression of already having been worked up with the bodkin.

Another one...



A muskrat underfur example prepared.

Wrapped...



And here is the dubbed "body" after wrapping that one around the hook. Note that I took quite a lot of hair this time (compared to the squirrel part), but it doesn't make the body core much thicker. When the thread is twisted, only a certain amount of material can stick to the thread before the wax is covered and stops catching new hairs.

Synthetic...



This is SLF Masterclass. A fairly thin and short dubbing, which are two qualities that make touch dubbing easier. But I still had trouble with dabbing it onto the thread. Synthetic fibres seem to be each other's best friends. Stiff and always keep tangling up. Some synthetic dubbings may work better than others, but natural material is still my preference when it comes to touch dubbing.

A tiny example...



Finally an example on a really small hook... size #32. Sometimes touch dubbing is THE method and this can be one of those times. To dub an even body on a hook like this without taking too much, building bulks etc. doesn't always have to be a piece of cake. But this way makes it easier.

Something to think about...

It's often said that "it's easier to add dubbing than to remove it". This is something which is very(!) true when doing it this way. This wax really plays in a league of its own and having to add some for the body to be completed, is definitely to prefer instead of needing to clear away the hairs from a left over centimeter of dubbed thread when the body is finished.