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I've been messing with making my own furled leaders since last season. I don't use a jig and power drill; I make them from regular mono and furl them by hand. I really like them. They cast as well or better than the hand tied mono leaders I tie, but I like them more because they float better and are more visible for nymphing than plain mono. I usually apply floatant (muscilin) to the butt end and they float well all day. Like the regular mono leaders, they can be tied to perform the way you want them – to turn over a fly well, to execute slack casts, or somewhere in between.

It's real simple and they cost practically nothing. I make them from regular 4 or 6 lb test mono, no need to use expensive tippet material either or buy a leader building kit with different diameter mono. You can just peel some line off your son's (or your) Snoopy rod and your ready to build. You can use clear mono, stealthy colored mono, or use bright colored line for visibility to make a hot butt leader. The line is twisted together to form a tapered mono leader.

A good formula to try for a 6' leader, measured starting from the butt, is 24" (8 strands) – 20" (6 strands) – 16" (4 strands) – 12" (2 strands). To make this 6' (72") furled leader, peel off 12' (144") of mono. Match both ends and double it up. Go to the end where the loop is formed, grasp one piece of line in each hand between your fingers, and twist both ends IN THE SAME DIRECTION. The line will twist together (furl) into a single fiber. Work your way down to the end and tie in an overhand knot to hold it together. You now have a single 72" strand, which will serve as the base of your leader. I usually add a few inches to each segment and cut them back to the exact measurement when finishing it.

Put your first segment aside and work on the next longest segment. Peel off 120"+ of mono, double it up and twist together in a same direction as the previous segment. You will end up with a 60" segment. Follow the same procedure for segment 3 - 88"+ of mono to yield a 44" segment. And segment 4 - 48" of mono to yield a 24" segment. All four segments should be twisted in the same direction.

Now to form the tapered leader you just twist together the four segments. Take the first two segments, the two longest ones, tie the ends together with an overhand knot, and twist both together. Twist both lines with your fingers in the same direction, but in the opposite direction from which you twisted before. In other words with your fingers on each hand you should always twist the line in the same direction, but if you twisted all the segments to the left, now twist the segments with your fingers on each hand to the right. Changing directions will tighten, not loosen the furl. Do the same thing for the two shorter segments. Knot them on the end and twist them together the same direction as the previous segment.

Now you are left with two segments. Knot and twist the final two segments the opposite way of the last segment
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You now have a tapered furled leader. To finish, you need to put a loop on each end and put a nail or needle knot where each segment meets together. I always start by forming a loop on the butt end and nail knot or whip-finish it together. A loop that is whipped or nail knotted slides through the tiptop easier than tying a knot with the leader. I measure from the end of the butt loop. For this leader nail knots will be, measuring from the butt end at 24” - 44” - 60”. – 72” (loop). You can also use a tippet ring on the thin end of the leader instead of a loop. I lay the leader out next to a tape measure, use masking tape on the butt end to keep it in place, and tie the knots. After tying the knot, I cut off the tag ends of the nail knots and the excess line remaining, since each segment was measured a few inches longer from the beginning. I coat the nail knots and loop knots with Knot Sense or Sally Hansens. This also helps the leader slip through your tiptop without hanging up.

A few things I’ve found are:

You can experiment with all different tapers, type and color of mono, and lengths of leaders. 4 lb test with 8 strands seems work well with a 3 or 4wt line. 6 lb test, 8 strands, works well for a 5 or 6 weight. You can use more strands or heavier line for a 7 or 8 weight lines. A 6’ furled leader is my average length, but you can tie one longer for a fine fishing, and shorter if you are doing a lot of nymphing. Also the length of any leader is dependent on the rod length and the size of the stream you are fishing. Since the leaders are so easy and cheap to make, you can make several and use the one that best fits the conditions and equipment you are using.

Laying the leader over the back of a chair and separating the tag ends when furling is a good way to keep the tag ends from twisting together when making each segment.

I’ve made some hot butt leaders for nymphing using bright colored mono. Also, I have used bright colored mono or bright colored thread to tie my nail knots for better line visibility when nymphing. Also, I like to “dirty” the knots with a little Strike Putty (orange works best) for visibility when nymphing. The furled leaders hold the Strike Putty better than regular mono and can removed easily when fishing dry flies. No need to mess with or buy any indicators if you have bright colored knots or a little Strike putty.

Also, as I mentioned earlier, the butt floats like a cork, even more so when floatant is applied since the furled leader holds floatant better and lasts longer. This feature is great for nymphing or for mending when fishing dry flies.

I often tie a short segments of 3X – 4X – 5X for example, on the end of my furled leader to step down to my tippet. I can use the same leader to create a long leader for clear water and fussy trout, or make it shorter for high stick nymphing, simply by changing the length and size of the mono on the tippet end.

It sounds like a lot of work when you read my instructions, but after you build one or two, it’s really not any more work and doesn’t take any more time than building a regular knotted mono leader. Give it a try – good luck.