



## THE CANADIAN TUBE FLY COMPANY

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### Tube Flies, Where Do I Start?

*Stuart Anderson*

When I got into tube flies over a decade ago, things were much clearer. You had a tube, usually from a Q-Tip or a BIC pen, and you tied your fur and feather on it to make it look like something a steelhead or salmon might be interested in. The way you secured the tube in your vice was with a small diameter finishing nail or a large needle, put the point into the front of the tube and then secure that point into your standard (a.k.a. normal) vise. It wasn't brain surgery, and quite frankly, it still isn't. Like all thing fishing, and especially fly fishing, there are some tried and true methods, some fantastic new developments, and some ideas that are masked as original thoughts.

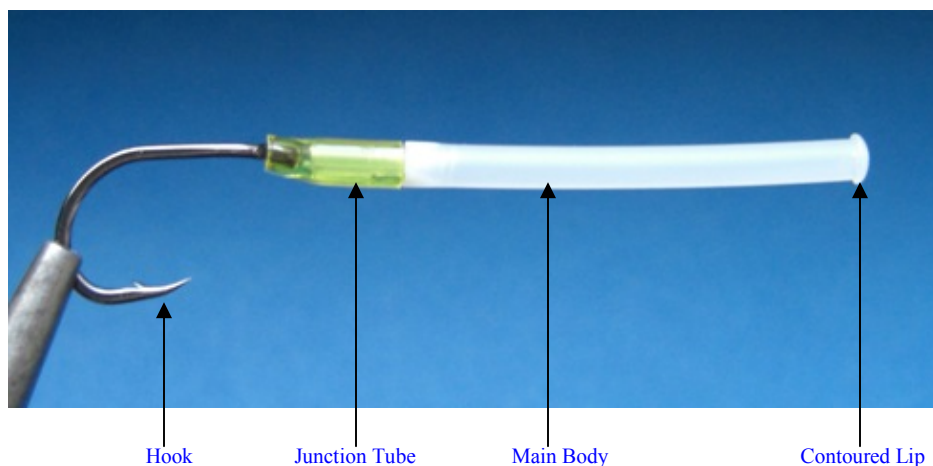
Tube fly types can basically be split into three main categories. ***Plastic tubes, Metal tubes, and Hybrid tubes (metal and plastic together)*** now make up the designs that tube fly tiers are using globally. Within these three categories are sub categories (I know what you are thinking) that can make tube fly tying more of a mystery for beginners. When you are starting out you must consider three criteria before choosing the tube most appropriate for the pattern.

1. The weight of the fly. This issue is not nearly important as it was many years ago. The advancement of line and leader technology has made some fantastic approaches to making even a light fly sink quickly. Still, if you want to have ultimate control over your entire presentation and don't want to use split shots or other techniques during fishing, consider the weight. Think about what materials you will be using on the tube. Is it going to be a fluffy marabou fly like a Popsicle? Is it going to be a very slightly dressed low water tube? Questions such as these need to be thought about before you can choose a tube that will work best for your needs.

2. Consider the profile or “silhouette” your want your fly to have. Do you want your fly to have a certain length? Do you want it to represent a certain creature such as a baitfish, a prawn, or a leech? A General Practitioner (for instance) will look much more like a large prawn pattern tied on a 1.5 or 2 inch metal tube rather than a 9mm bottle tube.
3. Consider the balance of the fly. Hook Hang Down (HHD) is something that can cost you fish. HHD is when the weight of the hook that is attached to your tube pulls the back end of your pattern down before the front. Ideally you want to have a pattern that sinks uniformly. This keeps the hook parallel with the body and wing of the fly. Fish making a targeted hit on the pattern end up with a higher likelihood of a nice corner placement of the hook in the mouth. There are several tube styles (most of them Hybrids) that specifically address HHD, though adjusting the hook and adding cone heads to the front can also help balance a fly.

## *Anatomy of a Tube Fly*

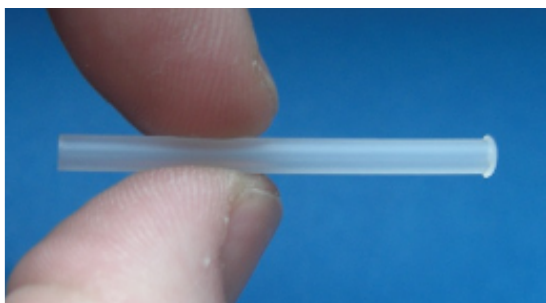
Most tube flies consist of three or four basic parts. The main tube is where all of the actual tying is done, you can think of it as the shaft of a hook. The junction tube is the small piece of flexible tubing that connects your main tube to the hook. Without the junction tube (sometimes called a hook sleeve) your tube would slide up and down your leader as you cast the fly. Your hook simply slides into the soft junction tube, it should be in place firmly but not completely stuck. Ideally, you want the hook to dislodge from the junction tube when a fish is caught, this extends the life of your tube. The contoured lip on the main tube is created by twisting the tube end near (not in) an open flame. The contoured lip is important in keeping all of your materials on your hook. Without the lip, the head of the tube can sometimes slip off of the edge and completely unravel your fly. Many tiers also like putting a lip on the back end of the main fly; they feel it gives the junction tube a better hold.



# Plastic Tubes

## *Standard Plastic Tubes*

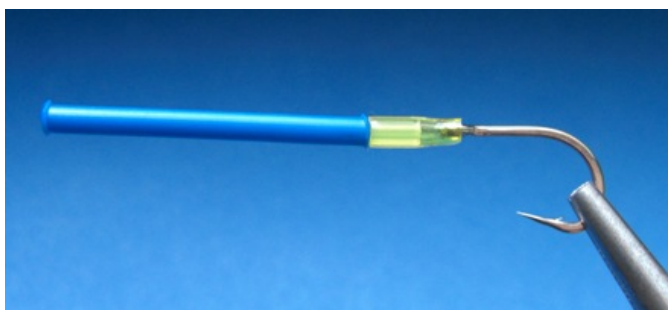
Standard plastic tubes are an excellent place to begin tube tying. Rigid plastic tube is very hard, though it does have a little bit of flex while still holding its linear shape. Semi rigid tubing has more give when bent, though it will maintain its shape also. Probably the most convenient attribute to using plastic tubes is that you have complete control over tube length. I have created flies as short as 1/3 of an inch to saltwater patterns longer than three inches in length. Years ago there was some apprehension to using plastic tubes because of their light weight, though recent advancements in line control have alleviated this issue for many tiers. In fact, some rivers (mostly on the East coast of North America) consider metal tubes lures, making plastic your only option. Plastic tubes are also a good choice because you can easily melt a “lip” on the front of the pattern. This lip helps hold the tied material and junction tube (if you put a lip on the back of the main tube) in place more securely. Plastic tubes can easily be cut with scissors or better yet a razor for a cleaner cut. An inexpensive plastic tube cutter combines scissors and a razor together for a neat little tool.



Semi-Rigid Tube



Rigid Tube



Coloured Semi-Rigid Tube

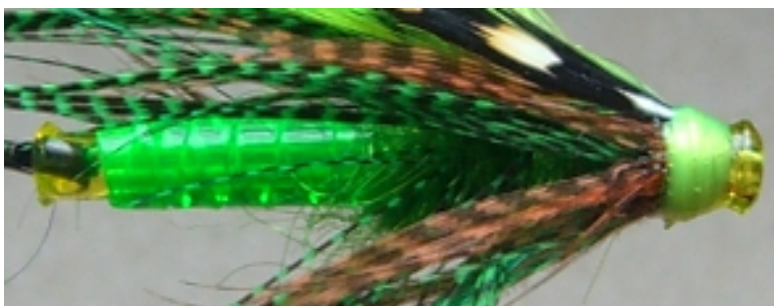


Plastic Tube Cutter

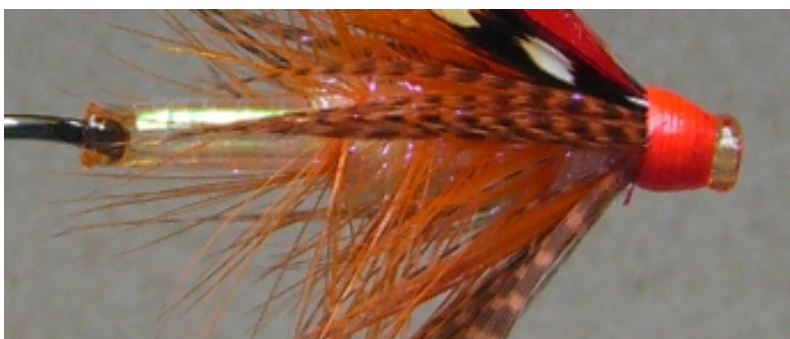
## *Flex Tubes*

Flex Tube, developed a few years ago in response to the need to have a temperature resistant plastic tubing, has many uses. Of course it can be used as the main tube body, with an easily moldable lip. When used as the main tube body its flexibility nullifies the need for junction tube, hooks can be tied on and then inserted directly into the back of the tube. Flex Tube is also a fantastic junction tube that can be used on small diameter metal tubing, as well as several other Hybrid tubes. It is a fantastic way to add colour to the back of a pattern.

Perhaps the best reason for using Flex Tube is the amazing colour you can add to your fly. Now in over 20 different colours (both transparent and opaque), Flex Tube will almost glow in the water. Cover the body with Laser Wrap, pearlescent tinsel, or a thin cover of dubbing, and the colour of the tube (especially in transparent colours) radiates through.



Transparent Yellow Flex Tube covered with chartreuse Laser Wrap.



Transparent Orange Flex Tube covered with pearlescent tinsel.



With Flex Tube there is no need for junction tube, the hook fits directly into the pattern



A lip can easily be melted on both ends of the tube, it will not burn and discolour.



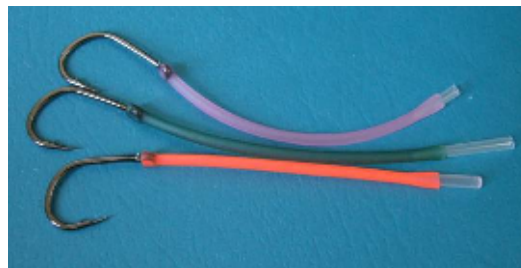
"Purple Blossom"



"Kryptonite"

## *Wiggle Tubes*

There have been some fantastic developments in large leech patterns recently. Articulated patterns have created bunny leech flies that are now longer than five inches. In response to these fantastic patterns, Wiggle Tube was created. Wiggle Tube has the same consistency as an elastic band, very floppy stuff. Just as with Flex Tube, Wiggle Tube is flexible enough to allow you to insert a hook directly into the back of the fly, there is no need for junction tube. Though the tube will compress under your thread wraps, a small insertion of plastic liner Tube into the front of the Wiggle Tube, will give you up to half of an inch to tie on your favourite leech materials. Icelandic Sheep, T's Fur, Prairie Dog, or just about any long flowing fiber will give you a fantastic looking leech fly. The way this supple tube flows in the water is amazing.



You must insert a piece of plastic liner tube in order to tie onto Wiggle Tube

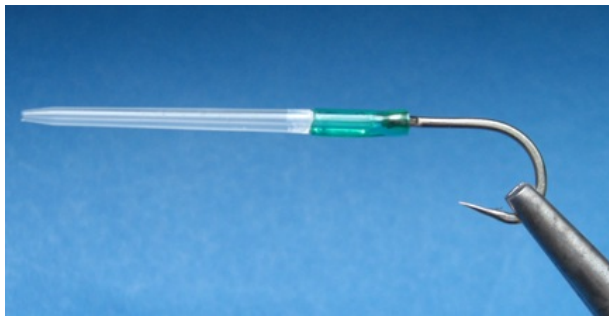




Some large Wiggle Leech Patterns.

## *Tapered Tubes*

Juri Shumakov was the first to use Tapered Tubes, he particularly liked how he could create a fly with a body that starts out wider at the back and comes to a narrow head. Creating tube flies with a small head can sometimes prove challenging with a standard plastic tube. Tapered Tubes are also very easy to use in conjunction with cones.



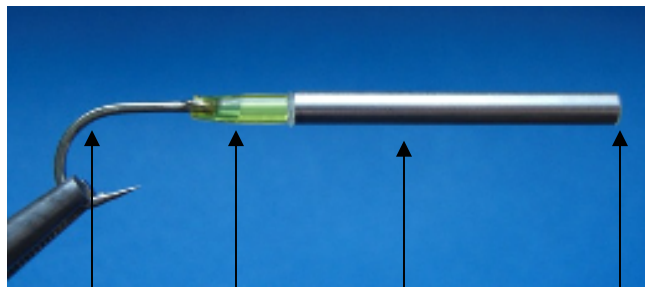
33 mm Tapered Tube



"Black & Gold" by Stuart Anderson

## *Metal Tubes*

### *Standard Metal Tubes*



Hook

Junction Tube

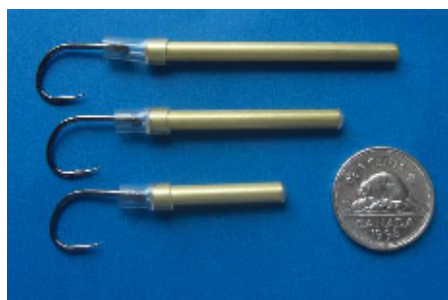
Main Body

Contoured Lip

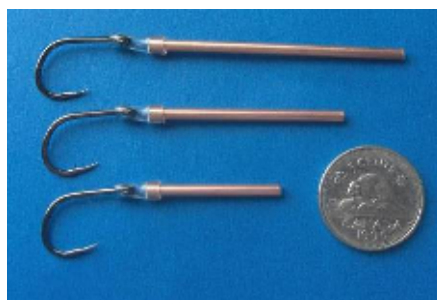
Standard Metal Tubes can be thought of as a Standard Plastic Tube with a sheathing of aluminum, Brass, Tungsten, Copper, or Stainless Steele. All metal tubes should be lined with plastic, one only has to find out the hard way like I did. A limp line after an incredible hit and a chafed tippet was all the motivation I needed to line my tubes. The lining works well too because the plastic tube is moldable next to an open flame. All you need to do is insert the plastic tube into the metal one, cut the plastic so that there is a 1/16 of an inch overlap on both sides of the metal tube, and then melt lip on both sides. If you melted the lip up tight to both ends of the metal tube, you should have a tight fit that will not spin on your mandrel.

Probably the major reason for using metal tubes is to more accurately control the weight of your fly and presentation overall. For extremely fast and high flows, probably a Copper, Tungsten, or Brass tube would be the way to go, a slower current may have you using Aluminum. One must also consider the weight of each tube based on their length and diameter, for instance, a two inch Aluminum tube may be heavier than a one inch Brass tube. Tube diameter can also be an effective way to control the weight and profile of your fly. Most metal tubing comes in a 1/8 or 3/32 outside diameter.

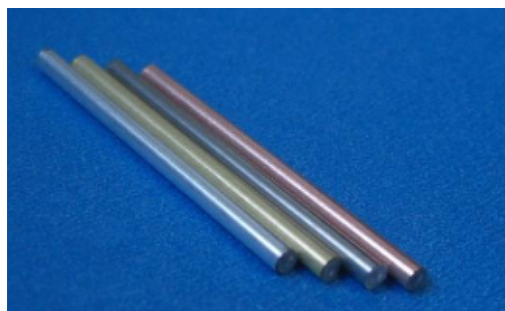
Stainless Steele is the best way to go when fishing the Saltwater, though the other metals do not corrode nearly as much as regular hooks, they can tarnish from repeated saltwater action and lack of freshwater rinsing when finished. Whenever fishing with tubes or hooks, you must remember to rinse your flies and leave the box open completely to dry out.



Large Diameter Brass



Small Diameter Copper



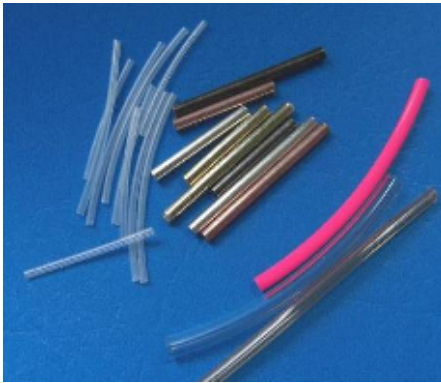
Small Diameter Tubes



Large Diameter Stainless Steele

## *Micro Metal Tubes*

Micro Metal Tubes are very similar to Standard Metal Tubes, though they have been electroplated with five metallic finishes (copper, brass, silver, gun smoke, and alloy). They are 3/32 in outside diameter and come in one and one and one half inch lengths. I particularly like these flies when adding a cone head to a pattern; they can make a metal tube very well balanced to avoid HHD. They are also fantastic tubes to use with any transparent or translucent body material such as Laser Wrap, Pearlescent tinsel, or thin dubbing. The metallic finishes can be seen through these body materials and add an extra sparkle to the body of your fly.



Micro Tube with liners and J.T.

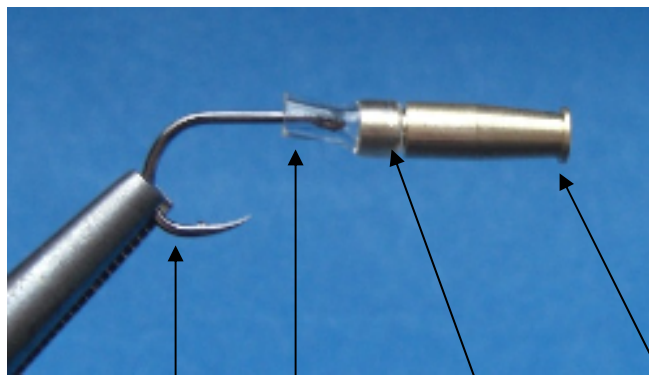


"Trio Blue Spey" with Cone Head

## *Bottle Tubes*

Bottle Tubes are a great way to get the benefits of using a Metal tube on a more compact, shorter tube. Getting their name from their characteristic Coke bottle shape, these tubes are fantastic for Marabou patterns found across the Western US and Canada. The brass bottles in particular have a good amount of weight to them and allow your fluffiest pattern to get down fast.

Bottle tubes come in 15mm and 22mm lengths and are available in Brass or Aluminum. A very nice recessed area at the back makes adding your junction tube a snap. They also have a lip on the front to keep your head from falling off of the edge and unravelling your fly



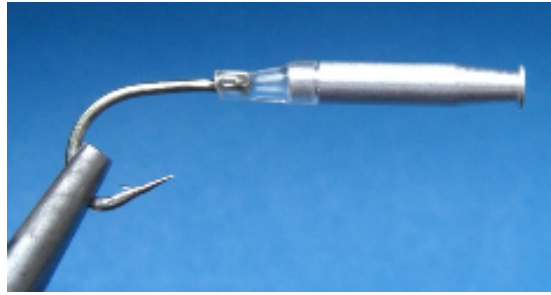
Hook

Junction Tube

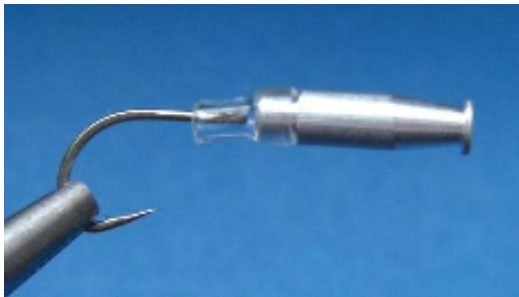
Recess for J.T.

Contoured Lip

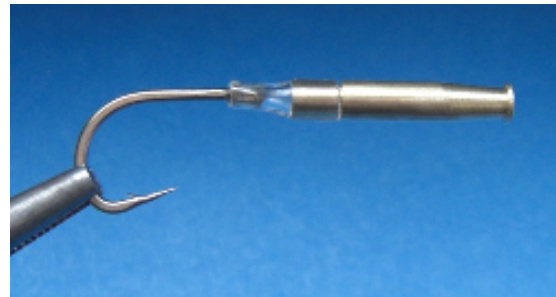




Aluminum Bottle Tube Long



Aluminum Bottle Tube Short



Brass Bottle Tube Long



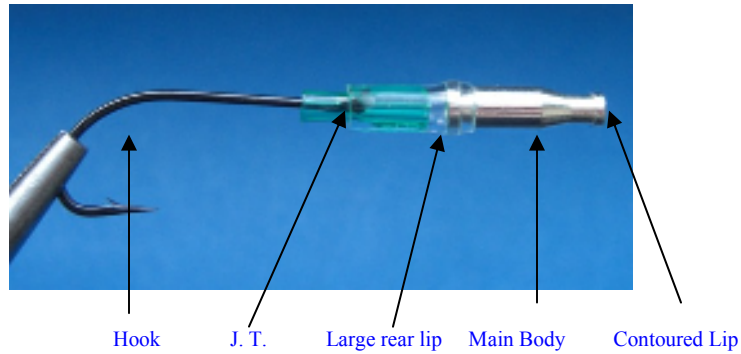
"Orange Marabou Streamer"



"Laser Bugs"

### *Ridged Bottle Tubes*

Ridged bottle tubes are very similar to standard bottles except for their lengths, Available in four different lengths and five electroplated finishes they are fantastically heavy for their size. Many tiers prefer ridged bottles over standard bottles because they do have an extra ridge at the back of the fly, this definitely grabs onto the junction tube very well.



## Hybrid Tubes

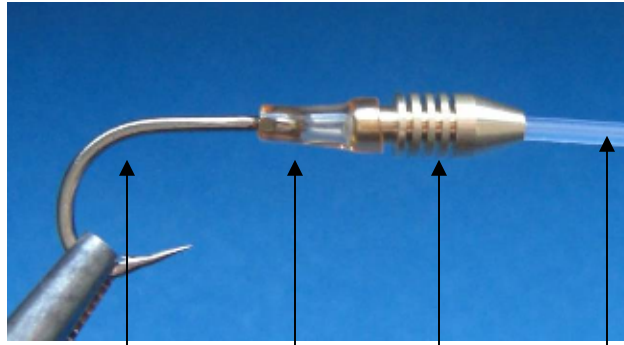
### *Shumakov Tubes*

Jury Shumakov designed his line of tubes in a quest to address Hook Hang Down. He was the first to develop a system of Hybrid tubes that saw the combination of metal body with all of the tying being done on the plastic liner section of the tube. He also was the first to remove weight away from the back of the tube (where the hook attaches) in an attempt to balance the fly. The system he created is basically the blue print for all Hybrid tubes that have come since.

His Long Range tubes are available in brass and aluminum and come in diameters of 4 mm and 5 mm, they are the most versatile of his designs. With there characteristic grooves or slots, the not only serve the function of removing weight from the rear, they also serve as the actual body of the pattern. The slots can easily be painted with varnish to ad a kick of colour to the fly.

His Skittle tubes also have the slots and address balance even further. They have a teardrop shape that puts even more of the weight at the front of the pattern. His Weight Forward tubes add even more weight to the front and are fantastic tubes for faster water.

In response to low water conditions, Juri created his summer arrow tubes that could easily be cast and would not create a “Plunk” when cast into summer conditions on many rivers.

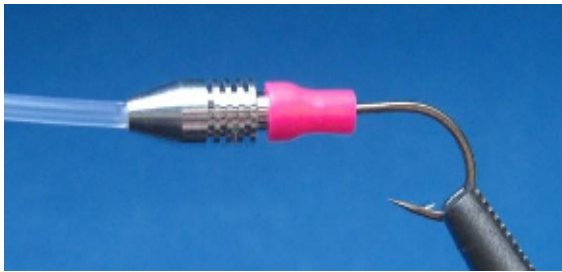


Hook

Junction Tube

Main Body

Inner Liner



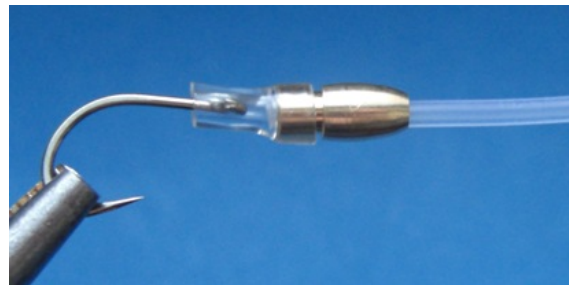
Long Range Aluminum Tube



Weight Forward Tube



Skittle Tube



Summer Arrow Tube



"Sunrise"

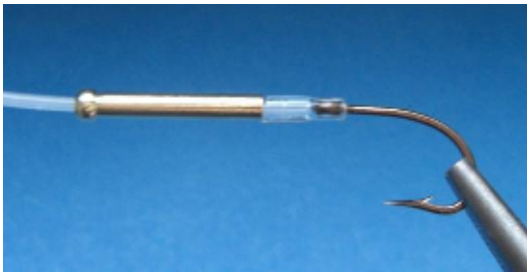


"Red Tippet Spider"

## *Nubby Tubes*

Nubby tubes can be used in two different ways. They were originally developed so a tier could have a ready made bead on the end of his fly. Tying is done on the metal tube and the “Nub” is left exposed. I often even colour the Nub before I tie on with powder paint, this gives me the choice of what colour I may want to use to enhance my pattern. With the nub in the front HHD is less of an issue with the longer tubes and the fly is almost perfectly balanced on the shorter tubes.

Nubby tubes can also be tied on the same way as a Shumakov tube. The plastic liner is inserted into the metal tube, the back end is melted into a small lip, and then all of the tying is done on the liner tube, just in front of the Nub. The nub actually serves as a foundation to boost up your hackle and wing, this gives your fly a bigger profile while in the current. Some tiers layer hackle, wing, then hackle, then more wing, in an attempt to build a foundation that will not flatten in the water. The nub almost lets you cheat this process by holding the tied material up. Nubby Tubes (like Micro Metal Tubes, and Barbell Tubes, come in five electroplated finishes)



Long Nubby Tube



Short Nubby Tube



The Nubb is a foundation to hold the shape of the wing



Tubes tied with all materials on the plastic liner. The Nubb helps hold up the wing and hackle in the current

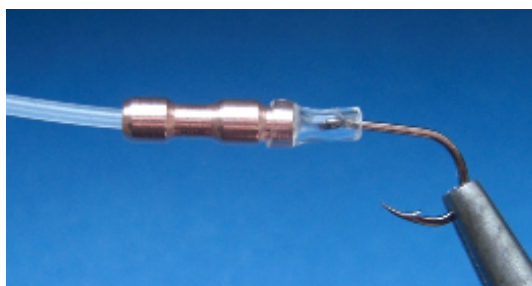




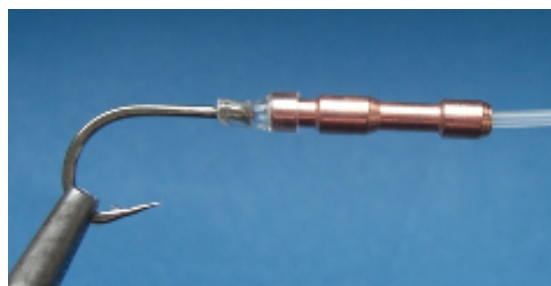
Tubes tied with the Nubbs Exposed. Everything is tied on the metal tube

### *Barbell Tubes*

Barbell tubes get their name from the look of a recessed middle section and two bulges at either end. This tube was developed in response to many Hybrid tubes not being as heavy as some tiers would like. With extra weight at the front of the tube and a recessed back end to accept junction tube, these tubes do come out fairly balanced when the tying is done on the plastic liner. As with Nubby Tubes, you can also tie on the metal tube and leave the front bulge as a ready made cone or bead. Barbell Tubes come in five electroplated finishes and in two different lengths.



Short Barbell Tube



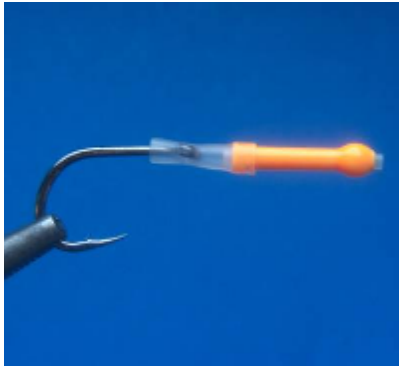
Long Barbell Tube



Tube tied with the head painted and exposed. Everything is tied on the metal.

## *Eumer Tubes*

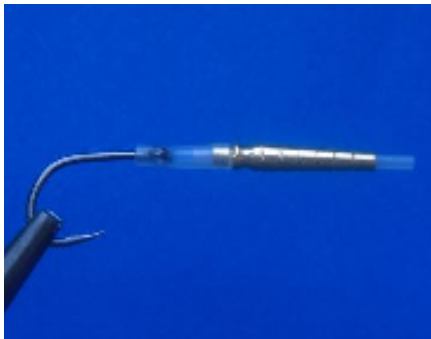
Eumer, a company from Finland, has a line of Hybrid tubes that are also extensions of Juri Shumakovs idea of incorporating metal and plastic tubes and tying the materials on the plastic liner tube, in front of the main metal body. Eumer has four designs that address Hook Hang Down to varying degrees. Both ball heads and cone head tubes have weight added to the front of the fly. They can either be tied on as a Hybrid tube, with the tying being done in front of the metal tube onto the plastic liner. They can also be used as a standard metal tube where all the tying is done on the metal and the front ball or cone is left exposed. The teardrop tube is Eumers most balanced fly. It begins small at the back and gradually gets bigger adding more weight to the front of the fly, balancing the fly nicely. The crayfish tube has an interesting design, though HHD is a huge issue with the style.



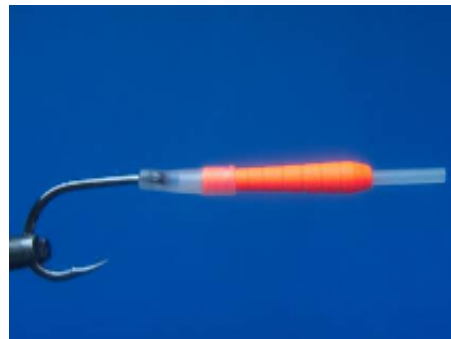
Ball Head Tube



Cone Head Tube



Crayfish Tube



Teardrop Tube

Tube fly tying does not have to be complicated. Like with all things new, practice and patience is most important. When I began tying tubes, it opened up a whole new world in fly tying. Not only did I quickly become obsessed with adapting my favourite hooked flies to tubes, I was soon developing new patterns that incorporated techniques in tying that is only possible on a tube. Very soon I was thinking ``Tubular``.....you will too!



*Stuart Anderson,*  
*January 2009*