

fly line care

Common amongst fly anglers is their neglect and lack of adequate maintenance of their fly lines. An internet search on the topic of fly line care is summarised below.

LINE CARE POINTERS

Clean and dress your lines at least once or twice during the peak season - and before you put them away for a long period

Never store your lines too tightly on the spool. On your last retrieve when fishing, strip the line out completely and wind back onto the spool as loosely as you can. – that way the line does not develop a memory. Cheaper lines tend to store memory more than expensive ones. When you strip line out after a storage period, it's a good idea to do it an arm's length at a time – and stretching it to straighten it. Always try and store unused fly lines loosely. If you wanted to, you can instead use something like a hand line holder, or even the plastic spool that the line was bought in - this will prevent memory and coiling. One can also merely loosely strip and drop the line into a suitable storage container. Be aware that some plastics react with each other – so be careful when choosing a container.

Keep your lines in a cool place – never in on your dashboard or anywhere where it will get hot – this will do some serious damage

Avoid stepping on the line, dragging it across rough surfaces like rocks, or trailing it along the banks when moving spot to spot. Be careful when fishing off a boat because it's very easy to step on the line

Refrain from practicing casting in an open field, fly lines are made for water, nothing else. Lines being dragged on the ground will get abraded! Rather go to your local dam and practice casting in the water.

Check you rod guides to see that there is no damage that could cause abrasion to the line. Make sure that you check your reel to see if there is no area where the line can be abraded – especially when you are stripping line off. We often strip line sideways which means that the line is being pulled across the rim of the spool – or the line guide. Check the rim of your reel spool - this is where scrapes and rough edges appear when you drop your rod or when you scrape it on rocks.

Avoid getting any solvents, aerosols, insect repellent, suntan lotion, diesel, petrol etc. on your line – this significantly affects the plastic. Sometimes two plastics react with each other – so be careful when you store the line – better to keep the reel in a cloth bag rather than some synthetic material. Best to wash your hands after applying sun cream or repellents.

CLEAN YOUR LINES

It is wise to take good care of the lines by always cleaning and dressing them about twice a fishing season. Do this simply by pulling the line through a cloth wet with a light detergent

and water mix – and then dressing them with a line dressing. An internet search came up with the following useful information.

Remember, cleaning fly lines keeps them casting smoothly. Caring for fly lines requires maintaining a clean, slick surface. Slickness is one of the most important features of a fly line. To cast smoothly, friction of line against guides should be minimal. Fly line manufacturers strive to reduce friction by incorporating slickeners into the material surrounding the line core and by applying slick finishes to the line. Airflo and Scientific Anglers have also introduced lines with texture, on the theory that less line in contact with the guides means less friction. No matter which line the fisherman chooses, dirt will eventually build up on it, creating more friction and weighing down the line. Periodic cleaning and dressing will keep the line casting smoothly and extend its life.

Generally it would seem that most cleaning methods involve soaking and washing the line (once or twice) in luke warm water with a little bit of gentle detergent – and drawing it through a soft wet cloth to remove residues and dirt on the line. Then dry the line by gently pulling it through a soft dry cloth and leaving it to air until completely dry. Always be careful not to pull the line through the cloth using excessive pressure (when washing, drying or dressing) as the friction will cause heat that can damage your line. You can also use specialised cleaning pads made by some line manufacturers to clean the line.

USING DRESSINGS

After washing, apply a line dressing (there are many types available) – but make sure that it is suitable for your line and does not contain any ingredients that will cause harm. There are many types available in the shops – it is not recommended to use stuff that is not specifically designed for fly lines because some stuff will rapidly deteriorate your line. Remember your line is plastic and is susceptible to various chemicals that may be lurking in some things like silicon wax polish etc.

As with detergent, dressings should be used sparingly. Too much dressing of any type will cause more dirt to adhere to the line. The dilemma of fly lines is that lubricants provide slickness but also result in greater dirt adhesion, while hard, impervious surfaces don't pick up dirt as easily but have a greater tendency to crack. If the line's finish feels slick and clean after washing, dressing may not be needed.

Bear in mind that if you dress a sinking line (or intermediate) with floating line dressing or a dressing that contains silicon, it will struggle to sink. (Snowbee says the following: "We have all suffered from those Intermediate or Sinking Fly Lines that 'hang' in the surface film. This is generally due to silicones used in fly line production, leaching through to the surface. Our degreaser is the only known silicone solvent, which effectively removes all traces of silicone or grease from the fly line, allowing it to cut quickly through the surface film and fish as it was designed to do").

It would appear that one can also use Fullers Earth to make a sinkant for your line. A mix of Fullers Earth, a few drops of glycerine and dishwashing liquid mixed into putty – slide this over your line and it sinks. The glycerine stops the putty from drying out – and it's the

dishwashing liquid is what does the work of making it sink – the Fullers Earth gathers up any grease on your line - it's the grease that is keeping your line afloat. This Fullers earth is used mainly to make your leader sink – should work just as well on your line. Another solution is to take some river mud and slide your line through it. (This may just dirty the line but if you have nothing else when at the water's edge, go ahead!). An innovative solution is to rub fish slime on your line – but that means you have to have caught a fish first! No need to kill the fish to do this, by handling the fish you will get enough slime on your hands.

For YouTube videos from Rio on how to wash your lines see

Part one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taTfJMpiXeQ>

Part two: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BdaC9UiwUQg>

MANUFACTURERS CLEANING AND CARE TIPS

This is a list of tips for fly line cleaning and maintenance by the line manufacturers themselves - for their products specifically. Some are pretty basic and common sense and some have additional products to help with cleaning as well as increase performance.

AIRFLOW

To clean your Airflo line, mix a small amount of household detergent with warm (not boiling) water in a bowl or sink. Strip the line from your reel into the water and allow the line to soak for 2-3 minutes - this will loosen any dirt and clean any algae build-up from the surface. Then dry off the line by winding the line back onto the reel through a clean dry cloth. Do not put too much pressure on the line, as the heat generated in the cloth can distort a fly line, also, if you put the line onto the reel under too much tension then this will cause reel set or memory.

CORTLAND

At Cortland, we build our fly lines to provide you with many hours of trouble free use, but it is your responsibility to extend the life of the fly line, and maintain proper performance through routine care. Avoid excessive heat exposure to the lines by keeping your reels out of direct sunlight. Avoid car dashboards or rear window ledges when transporting. Clean and dry fly line and backing before storing. Also, use Cortland XL Cleaner before and after each outing to ensure maximum performance and longer lasting lines.

ORVIS

Clean your lines frequently. The process typically takes less than five minutes. Orvis recommends Orvis Zip Juice Wonderline Cleaner, made specifically for the super slick coating on Wonderline Advantage lines. If Zip Juice is not available, use mild soap and water. Clean more frequently if you fish 'dirty' water - stillwater or moving water with lots of organic material.

SCIENTIFIC ANGLERS

Cleaning with soap and water on a cloth removes most of the dirt, but our new cleaning pads work even better. Properly cleaned your lines will float better, cast better and last longer, certainly a good trade-off for a couple minutes of line maintenance. Dressing with our new line dressing will further improve flotation, casting and durability also. Clean and

dress your lines every 2-3 outings, or anytime you think dirt is hindering their performance. The cleaning pads are easy to carry in your vest or tackle bag and can be used anytime, wet or dry.

RIO

Most RIO fly lines are self-lubricating. However, cleaning is an important aspect of fly line longevity, and we recommend cleaning every day. In freshwater, microscopic particles of algae will collect dirt and debris. These adhere to the surface of a floating fly line, adding weight which eventually overcomes the line's natural buoyancy. This microscopic dirt will also help grind ridges into line guides and destroy fly line coatings. In saltwater fly fishing, salt will dry on the line. When you notice your line not shooting as well, or the tip of a floating line beginning to sink, it is overdue for a good cleaning. A few drops of a mild soap without detergent or even a small bar of soap and a rag is sufficient for cleaning a fly line. Once it's cleaned, apply a super thin coating of RIO Poo Goo™ or another brand of 100% silicon on a cloth and pull the line through the cloth. This coating needs to be a thin film to prevent pickup of dirt. The silicone grease will help float the line and aid in shooting.

ADVICE FROM LEON CHANDLER, FORMER VICE PRESIDENT, CORTLAND LINE COMPANY

The modern fly line is a remarkable product that has evolved over a period of several decades by utilizing a blend of space age materials, efficient taper designs and manufacturing know-how. The fly line you buy today can be expected to provide you with many hours of pleasant fishing - but a fly line is not indestructible. By following a few reasonable precautions, you can insure that your line will last longer.

The appearance of small radial cracks in the finish coating will offer the first visual clue that a fly line is reaching the end of its useful life. Cracks occur because the plasticizers within the finish formulation have migrated or moved. The role of plasticizers can be compared to the milk in bread dough - in simplest form, they are the liquids that hold solids together and provide the suppleness that is so important in fly line performance. Once cracks appear and water is admitted, further deterioration is fairly rapid. Plasticizer migration will occur naturally over a period of time. The chemical process can be accelerated if the surface of the line is exposed to solvent base chemical substances (such as are found in most brands of insect repellent, suntan lotion and petrol/diesel), to excessive heat, or prolonged exposure to the ultraviolet rays of direct sunlight.

It is a well-known fact that most insect repellents are murder on fly lines; they are equally destructive to rod finishes. If it is necessary to use liquid repellents, be especially careful about handling your line with repellent residue on the palms of your hands.

Keep your floating fly line clean! In normal use, even on clean water, microscopic particles of dirt and debris will adhere to the surface of a floating line, adding weight that may eventually overcome the natural buoyancy built into the line itself. Because it contains a thinner coating of the buoyant finishing material than does the larger diameter body, the tip section of a tapered line will begin sinking first - an indication that it should be cleaned.

What is the best method to follow in cleaning a floating line? Opinions vary. Some manufacturers include cleaner saturated felt pads in the line package, with the

recommendation that the working part of the line be wiped with the cleaner pad each time before starting to fish. In addition to removing surface residue, the pad will leave a film of lubricant on the surface to assist the line in moving efficiently through the rod guides. Another manufacturer recommends washing the line with a mild soap and water solution and wiping dry with a soft, clean cloth. Regardless of the method used, clean your floating line frequently and you will be rewarded by a line that will give you better performance and considerably longer life.

Never ever leave a line-filled fly reel on the dashboard or rear ledge of a car parked in the hot sun. The level of heat build-up from the sun coming through the windshield or rear window can literally cook the line and start internal plasticizer migration. Visible cracks may not occur immediately, but the damage will have been done.

Most anglers are acutely aware of the importance of frequently checking rod guides for wear induced sharp areas that will scuff or cut the surface of a fly line. Most however, overlook the fact that the line guard area of the reel actually gets more wear from stripping off line than do the guides. A sharp projection on the reel line guard can slice and ruin a line in short order.

Some fishermen use methods of retrieving and controlling line that do little to prolong the life. For example, the procedure commonly referred to as the "hand twist" retrieve can place an unusual amount of stress on that portion of the line that is handled. Gradually, the portion continually squeezed and stretched will break down.