

White Dog's Vise - Deer Hair

1. I prefer fine thread to spin fine deer hair for flies like Irresistible Adams and Tarantulas.

I recommend finer whitetail body hair than that found on the strips such as Primo Deer Strips for trout flies and smaller sunfish patterns because the individual hairs are generally smaller in diameter. For lighter coloration with a brown tint, Texas Whitetail is a great choice. "Texas Whitetail" is sold through some shops. Regardless, coloration can vary from animal to animal and from different part of the body. The best thing to do is look through the selection available. Also talk to the hunters in the club.

2. I prefer Kevlar thread for thicker deer hair for bass bugs.

I recommend Northern deer hair for bass bugs because the individual hairs are thicker in diameter. Canadian Whitetail is often advertised. I also like Primo Deer Strips. It is also cheaper for the tyer to by strips rather than patches and you can tie a lot more flies off a strip than a patch.

3. Consistency only comes with practice. It is easy to tie one good fly but difficult to tie twelve which look the same.

To get a more consistent thickness with your deer hair, try alternating the ends of each clump of hair as you tie. (Butts down, butts up, etc.) Being right handed, the hair tended to lean back at an angle from front to back. This showed up especially on stripes. The theory is you will get a more even, thicker bug by alternating the ends because the deer hair naturally tapers. Another method is "stacking" a clump of hair to fill in thin spots if I don't get a good spin.

Pre-trimming the tips and length down to a quarter of an inch for trout flies and an inch or so for bass bugs after the initial spin, makes it easier to tie in, reduces trimming time, and provides a more consistent thickness.

To help even up stripes on bass bugs and to create a more consistent body, rotate the thread in a very direct, 90-degree angle around the shank. As a right hand tyer, I naturally tend to push back to the left when applying pressure.

Tie the weed guards and tails on several hooks before spinning the hair. Spin the hair on all of them, then trim all and finish off by tying the weed guard and adding eyes. This will provide the tyer with a good tying session and will provide much more consistent and professional looking patterns.

4. Stripes are as simple as spinning a different color on your hook.

5. Spots are as simple as stacking one color on top of the other.

6. Hair Packing.

Packing makes a stronger, more durable pattern. The more hair that is on the shank, the better the floatation will be and you may be surprised how much hair you can actually spin on a hook. Finally when trimmed, any stripes, spots and colors will be very distinct making a really cool looking pattern.

Hair packers are sold commercially, I use my fingers. You can also use the barrel of a ballpoint pen if it fits over the eye of the hook. You can make a packer by drilling a hole in a piece of hardwood dowel or chunk of old broomstick. The broomstick packer works great because it is almost a natural fit for most adult hands.

Regardless of your packer of choice, be careful to firmly hold the bend or shank of the hook at the vise. One slip can bury a hook point in your hand.

Use lighter pressure when packing the initial spin. Then increase the pressure for each consecutive spin. This is so you don't push the tail of the fly down the bend of the hook. Often about half way down the shank you actually feel the hair slip back towards the bend. This is a good thing.

7. Use Scissors with a serrated edge. I have used both the Orvis Deer Hair and the Dr. Slick scissors. When strictly working with the hair the Orvis scissors worked great. However, for overall tying and if you tie your flies from start to finish I strongly recommend the Dr. Slick scissors. They are a little pricey, but are the best scissors I have used for all around tying.

8. Use a toothbrush, mustache comb, etc. to brush out the undercoat of each clump before tying it in. Usually a couple of strokes will suffice. You do not want to pull the brush through the hair so hard that it breaks and kinks it. Doing so may cause problems when you try to spin it. I suggest using your thigh as a support when brushing out the undercoat.

9. Use a Hair Stacker to align the tips of the first clump of hair tied on and the first spin for a very clean look. It will also give some additional color definition because even died hair still shows the dark tips of the hair.

10. I prefer using a razor blade to make the initial, flat belly cut and for final trimming. For the rest of my trimming, I prefer my serrated scissors. They are especially helpful when trimming around legs.

11. When done with the first trimming, steam the bug over a teapot using hemostats to hold the fly to prevent burns. The hair will often flair dramatically and expose any way ward stragglers you may have.

12. Use the teapot to refurbished crunched hair bugs. I usually get 3 to 4 good flairs. However my observation is the hair get a little weaker with each steaming.