

ONE BEGINNER

From One Beginner to Another

By Gregory Shaffer

I've been fly fishing for less than two years, but I've got a few tips that I can share with fellow beginners:

- Join a fly fishing club in your area. Contact your local fly shop to find one. These clubs offer beginners knowledge of fly fishing beyond their wildest dreams.
- Develop a relationship with the staffs of your local fly shops. Introduce yourself, ask questions, and carefully listen to the answers. Some of the best advice you'll get comes from five-minute conversations with store personnel.
- Take a variety of classes – from the basics to specialty clinics in casting, tying or fishing techniques – because they will help you improve more quickly.
- Hire a guide. This can be a considerable expense, but think of it as an investment. Be sure to let the guide know what you want from the day and what level of coaching and instruction you are comfortable with. Remember: You are paying him or her, so if you want to rest, take a break, or learn a new knot, let the guide know. Feel free to ask any questions, no matter how silly or simplistic they may seem. Fish with others. I love fishing alone, but a few hours with a fly fishing veteran can do wonders to help you straighten out any bad habits you've acquired. Watch others fish. Each time I go out, I try to make sure I spend a few minutes watching others on the water, noting both what I should and should not do to become a better angler.
- Accept that progress takes time. Be patient with yourself. Praise yourself for good casts and hook sets, and learn from each bundle of knotted line you create. If you don't learn from each screw -up, you've made two mistakes, not one.
- Always remember to have fun. I know that I occasionally have to remind myself that I am out there for the fun of it. Relax and become rejuvenated. As one of my new fly fishing buddies always reminds me, "Fishing is its own reward; catching fish is just a bonus".

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