

Fly Pattern Sheet - Woolly Bugger/ESL

compliments of 2GuysFlyFishing.net

Hook: 3XL to 4XL Streamer

Thread: Denier depending on hook size

Weight: Lead wraps

(Lead wraps are normally used on stream patterns, but often left off of leech patterns for lakes. Cones are used to create a front heavy fly.)

Rib: Wire or Oval Tinsel (traditional)

Tail: Marabou

Body: Chenille

Hackle: Saddle



Notes: Woolly Buggers are one of those patterns that are very adaptable.

Everything from small #10s used for leech patterns in lakes, to extra large flies for salmon fishing. The Egg-Sucking Leech version is on page 2 of this pattern sheet.

The body can also be created from dubbing material, and it's not unusual to see some flash incorporated into the tail and/or body.



For our #6 3XL hook we're using .025 lead wraps on the shank from an eye width behind the eye to above the hook point. Attach the thread and bind the lead down with several wraps back and forth.



Since we're going to show the traditional hackling method on this version, tie in a length of gold wire on the back side of the hook shank.



Cut the very tip from a marabou plume and measure it to the length of the hook. Tie it in at the back (up to the lead) with tight wraps.



Prep and attach a piece of chenille at the rear tie in point. Bring your thread to just in front of the lead wraps.



Wrap the chenille forward with touching wraps. Tie off and clip the excess.



We're showing the traditional way to hackle a Woolly Bugger. Select a well tapered saddle hackle and find the spot of the base where the fluff ends.



Clip the base off and tie in the saddle hackle with the top side facing you and the feather on your side of the shank.



Palmer (open spirals) the hackle to the rear counter-clockwise (under, around the back, then over the top). Then, while holding the hackle tight, wrap the wire rib forward through the hackle.



Tie off the wire and clip the excess. (The wire reinforces the hackle stem against breakage from sharp teeth.) Clip off the hackle tip at the back. Build a small head, half-hitch and whip finish.

ESL is short for Egg-Sucking Leech, probably the most famous version of the Woolly Bugger.

Tie smaller sizes (4-6-8) for trout, and in larger sizes (2 through 2/0s) for salmon.

Purple and black are the most popular color schemes for the ESL, but any color is possible.



We're tying this fly on a #2 4XL hook to allow for a full body and the egg head at the front. We've also increased the lead wire to .030 for extra weight.

Notes: Reinforcing the palmered hackle with a rib is the traditional construction technique for Woolly Buggers, and if your fly is going to see a lot of fish it may be worth the extra effort to do.

However, I lose a lot of this style fly, either to fish or snags. So on my personal flies I use the hackling method shown on this ESL that is much easier and faster. And for me, works just as well 98% of the time.



Wrap lead wire over the shank from above the hook point to a couple eye widths behind the eye. Attach your thread and bind down the lead, leaving your thread at the point above the barb.



Measure a full marabou plume to the length of the hook, and tie in at the rear with very tight wraps up to the lead.



Here's the quick hackling method. Strip the base fluff from the base of a saddle hackle and tie it in at the rear of the shank by its tip.



Tie in chenille at the rear, bring your thread forward, wrap the chenille forward, leaving room for the egg head; tie off and clip the excess.



Palmer the hackle forward, tie off and clip the excess.



Tie in and wrap egg colored chenille between the body and eye. Tie off, clip excess; half-hitch and whip finish.