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Junction Tubes, A New Approach

Stuart Anderson

As most fly tiers know, tube flies have exploded in popularity in the past decade, and with that explosion new approaches and techniques to fish them have grown exponentially. Junction tubes (also known as hook sleeves) are an important part of the whole tube fly package. Without a reasonably secure connection between your tube and hook, your overall fly will not cast, flow, or fish the way you intended it.

When all tube flies were (many fantastic patterns still are) tied “In the round”, junction tube served one main purpose, it secured the tube to your hook for casting purposes only. Things have changed a great deal with many patterns now being tied in a more “standard” way, the same way in which you would tie on a hook. These tubes have a definite tail, wing, collar etc. The “In The Round” style produced a fly that looked the same from all angles, making the junction tube and the position of the tube in relation to the hook not as important.

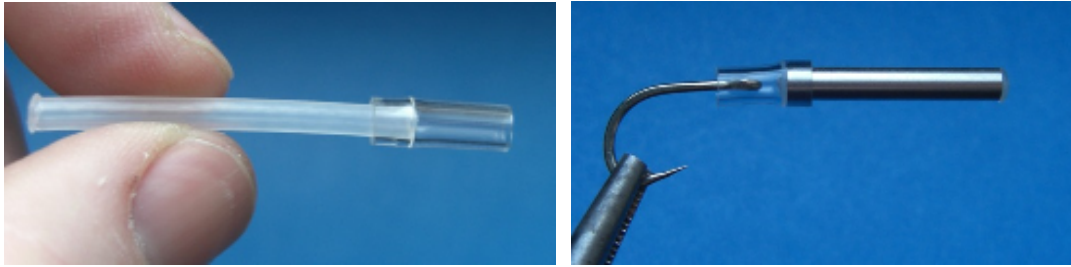


“In The Round Style”



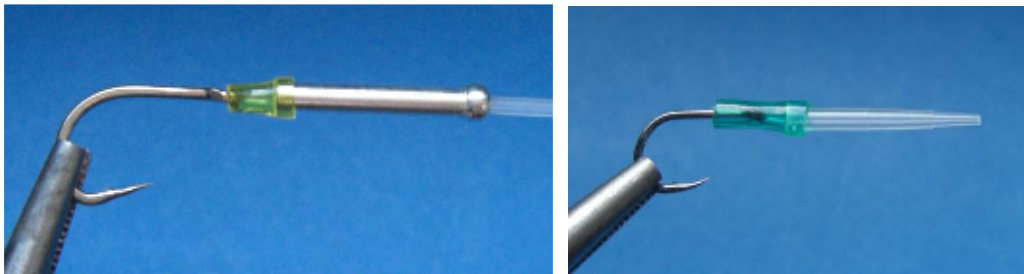
More like a hooked pattern

Junction tube is a soft, flexible plastic, usually made of PVC, silicone, or sometimes polyethylene.



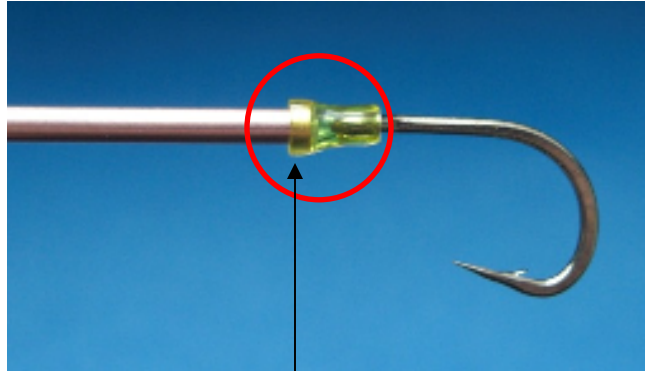
They have traditionally fit over the back end of either the plastic or metal tubing and then slipped over the eye of the hook. Ideally, you want the hook and junction tube to separate after you have hooked a fish. This extends the life of your fly by keeping it out of a fishes' teeth. I have fished for years with this set up and have had very little trouble.

While testing new patterns the last few seasons, I have moved away from the usual way on connecting the tube and the hook. It began when I start using Flex Tube as a junction tube instead of just using it for actual tube patterns. Now available in over 20 colours, both opaque and transparent, Flex Tube adds an extra dimension to your fly. Not only does it work as a fabulous junction tube (because of its flexibility and temperature resistant properties) it also gives that extra splash of either vibrant or subtle colour to your pattern. I have been using Flex Tube for several years for junction tube in the traditional way. This only works though when the diameter of your tied tube will accommodate the size of the junction tube.

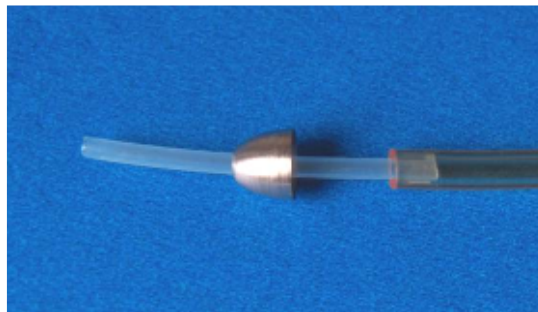


Flex Tube used in a standard way as Junction Tubing

The junction tube works superbly for what we intended, it holds the hook on with just enough give for a hooked fish to separate the hook eye from itself. My main concern was the unsightly bulge (what I thought) that was created where the Flex Tube slipped over the back of the main tube.



Unsightly Bulge

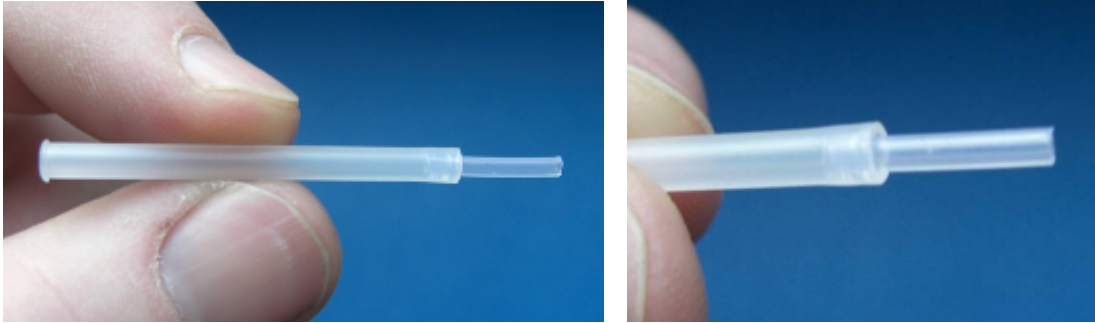


Using Plastic Liner Tube to add a cone at the front of a tube

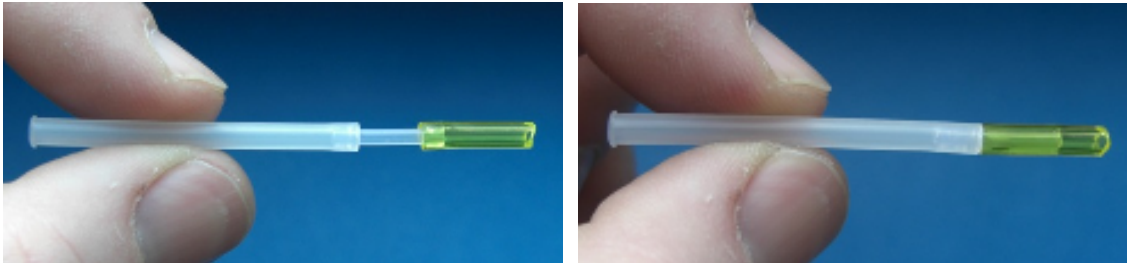
For years I (along with many other tube tiers) have been using small lining tube inserted into the front of a fly to attach cone heads. I thought, why not reverse the idea and put the lining tube out the back of the pattern in order to connect Flex Tube to work as the junction tube? My reasoning was two fold.

1. You could remove the unsightly bulge that exists when adding Flex Tube to a pattern.
2. Flex Tube could now be added to a min tube style that would normally have too big of a diameter to allow Flex Tube to be used anyway.

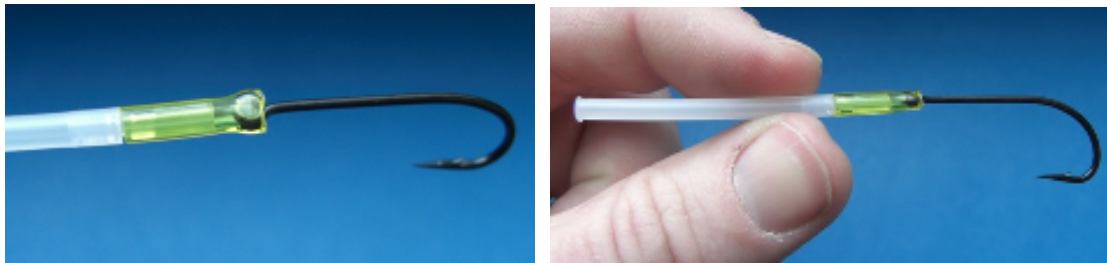
At the very minimum, I was looking for a way to add junction tube to almost any pattern that would allow an almost seamless transition from main tube back to the hook.



Step One: twist a small section of inside liner tube into the back of your pattern
(bare tube here just for the picture)

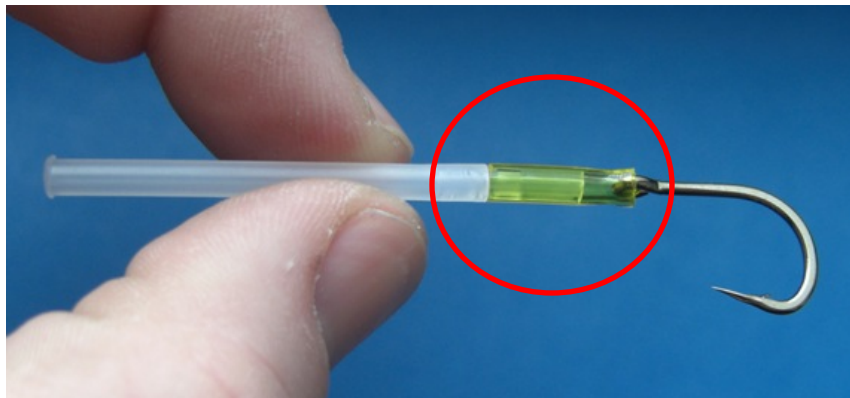


Step Two: place a small section of Flex Tube on the end of the inside liner tube.
Squeeze the Flex Tube so that it butts up against the back of your pattern.



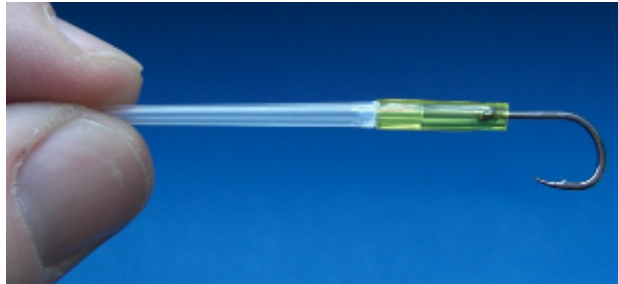
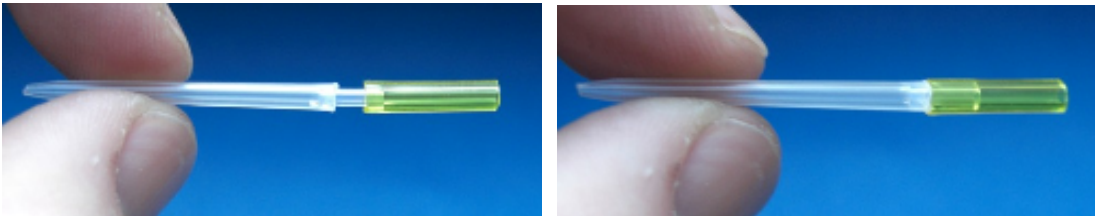
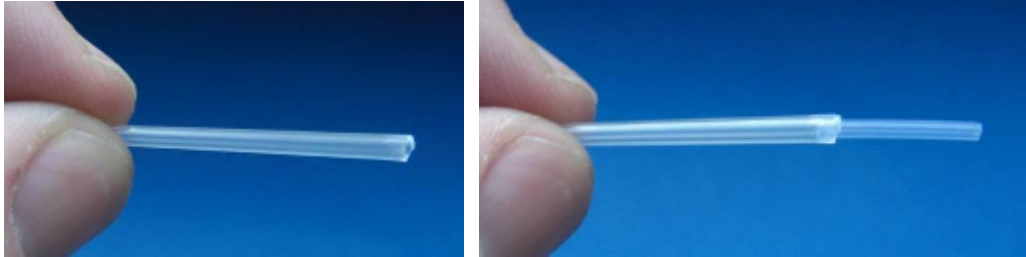
Step Three: Slide your tippet through the tube, tie on your hook and insert the eye of the hook into the flex tube. Be sure not to insert it too far, you want it to separate when a fish begins thrashing.

You now have a seamless transition from your pattern to your hook. You also have the opportunity to switch up the colour on the back of your fly.

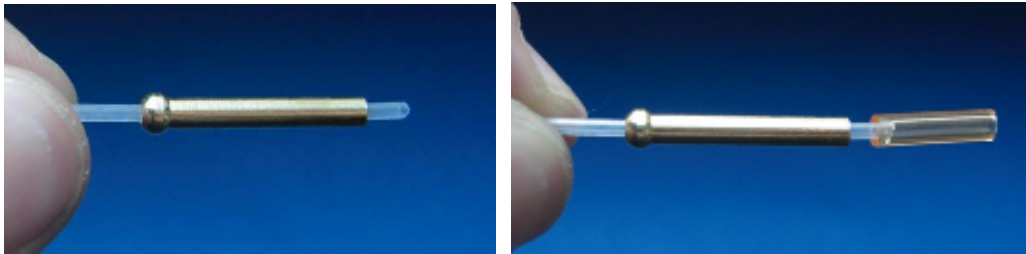


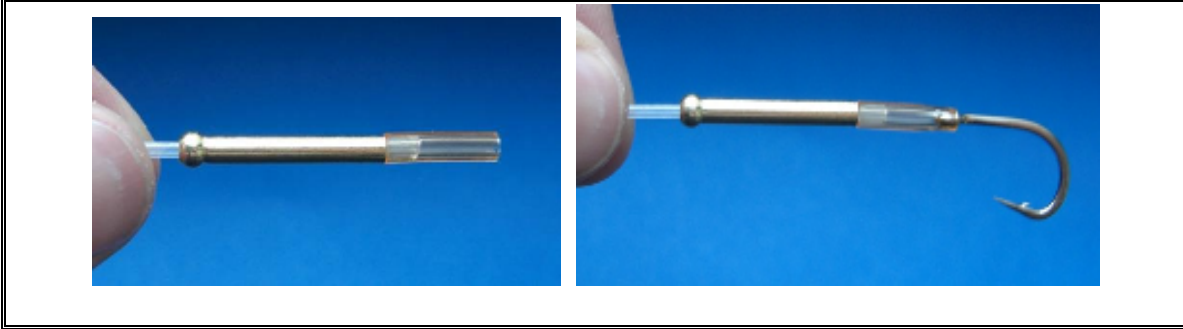
This technique can also be used on Tapered, Metal, Nubby, Barbell, Ridged Bottles, Shumakov, and Plastic Tubes

Tapered Tube

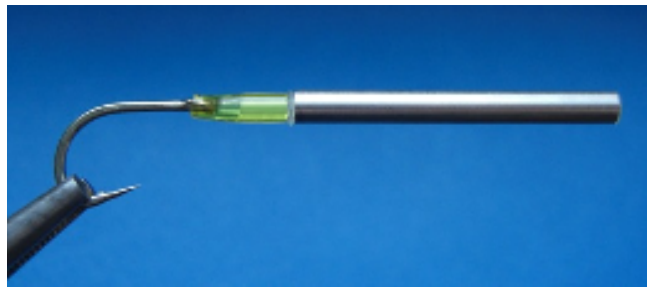


Nubby Tube





Metal Tube



Plastic Tube



It may be a bit particular but I think adding colour to the back of a pattern as well as creating a seamless transition makes a much better looking tube fly. Let's hope the fish agree!

*Stuart Anderson,
January 2009*