

Simple Wings for Fishing Flies

Creating Semi-Realistic Wings Using Raffia

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Materials & Tools:

- Cream Colored Raffia (also known as Swiss-straw)
- Scissors
- Bodkin
- Brass Wing Burner
- Butane Lighter



Step 1 – Cut a section of raffia about 5 inches long and then carefully open it up and smooth it out with your fingers. The strip of raffia will be about 1- $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide.

Carefully split the strip of raffia down the center. An easy way to do this is to poke the point of a bodkin through the center of the material and then pull the strip away from the bodkin. The material tears easily along the length, giving two narrow strips. Now cut each of these in half. You should end up with four pieces (roughly $\frac{5}{8}$ " wide by 2- $\frac{1}{2}$ " long).



Step 2 – Grasp both ends of one of the narrow pieces of raffia between the thumb and forefinger of each hand. While firmly pulling on the material, rotate your hands in opposite directions. Repeat this step a couple of times until the twist is in at least 360°.

As you rotate your hands the center of the raffia will twist together in the middle. This will later be the point to tie in the wings on your fly.



Step 3 – Fold the strip in half at the point. I find it helps to insert my bodkin between the ends and then pull in opposite directions. This helps set the positioning of the wings and reduces bulk at the point of the twist.



Step 4 – Insert the point of the raffia into a brass wing burning tool and trim off the excess raffia with your scissors. Next take a butane lighter and run the flame around the edge of the tool. This will singe off the raffia and give you the desired profile you are looking for.



Here is a close-up look at the finished Mayfly wings.

Note – You can make all kinds of different insect wings with this method. Simply change the type of wing burner and how you position the raffia in the burner. You can use different color raffia or change/mark the wings with permanent markers.