

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO

FLUORO

LEWIS READ explains how to incorporate fluorocarbon into your approach so that you can slip the net under more carp on your next session.

Fluorocarbon is a line that's made up from an alternative chemical base from the popular nylon polymer materials that make up regular monofilament. This gives fluorocarbon different characteristics from other materials and we can use these to our advantage.

The two well-publicised facets are that fluorocarbon has a refractive index that's close to that of water. Put it into clear water, therefore, and it will be virtually invisible. The second is that it's denser than mono so sinks extremely well. Use a slack line and give the fluorocarbon time to settle and it will lay flush to the bottom. This is fluorocarbon's biggest advantage, in that it will sink out of harm's way where the carp won't come into contact with it.

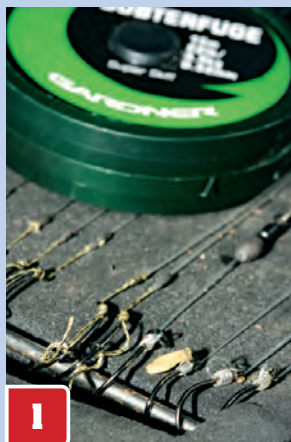
ANGLER FILE



LEWIS READ

AGE: 38
NICKNAME: Harry Potter
UK PB: 47lb 12oz
SPONSORS: Gardner Tackle and Carp Company

TACTICS WHAT IS FLUOROCARBON GOOD FOR?



1

Hook-link material. In shallow, clear water fluorocarbon is ideal for tying hook links.



2

Leaders. Strong fluorocarbon makes ideal casting leaders or a leadcore replacement.



3

Main line. This is great for short to medium-range work and snag fishing.

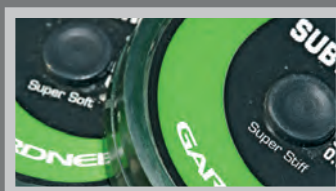
Fluorocarbon was originally developed for commercial long lining, but was quickly adopted by big-game sportfishermen for its clarity. Coarse anglers then picked up on it and started using it, primarily as hook-link material. Since then, improved, finer and softer fluorocarbons have been developed specifically for coarse angling. The range of breaking strains, stiffness and spool sizes mean that fluorocarbon can be, and is, used as leader material and main line too.

Its discreet, visual nature comes into its own in shallow, clear waters, where visibility is good and

the carp might be checking for danger by sight. The advantages of an invisible rig in this situation are pretty obvious. When used as a hook-link material fluorocarbon does give you similar advantages to monofilament, in a rig-mechanics sense. The rigidity that it has over and above braid, and most coated braids too, is often an advantage in itself. Even more so given that few anglers use mono, or straight fluorocarbon, for hooklengths in comparison to braid and coated braids, so it's something a little different. ☒

Employing fluorocarbon while fishing a shallow plateau at range resulted in this 13lb mirror.

CARBON



THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO FLUOROCARBON LEWIS READ



Get in! Lewis lifts the net around a double-figure mirror fooled on a fluorocarbon hook link. It's a material that has a multitude of applications for you.



Back you go.



A material that sinks and is virtually invisible in water, as fluorocarbon is, will help you to catch more carp like this when used correctly.

It's very popular as a shockleader material, especially the 20lb and 25lb versions. It's strong so copes with powerful casts with big leads; it sinks well and is invisible. When fishing at range, even with a semi-tight line, the fluorocarbon will sink to, or near, the lake bed. You can help this further by dotting a few small blobs of rig putty up to six feet behind the lead.

Remember, however, it may not lie along the lake bed if there are gravel bars between you and your rig, so bear the lake's topography in mind if this is your plan.

The stiffer materials are no good for fishing over soft lake beds or weed. If your lead sinks into the bottom it can leave the rig poking out at an angle – which isn't a presentation that will

get you many bites. However, this stiffness is a bonus if fishing at range because it's far less prone to tangles than supplier hook-link materials. A fluorocarbon hook link coupled with a helicopter rig can be cast at range and, providing the lake bed's firm and relatively clear, you can be confident of a decent presentation.

To get the best from fluorocarbon it needs a little care and attention. It's a transparent material; the benefits of which you lose the minute the line gets dirty. The main line in particular has a habit of picking up tiny particles of dirt from where it's laying across silt and debris on the lake bed. To keep your line clean hold it above the reel between your thumb and forefinger each time you wind in to wipe the dirt away. As you do this, look at the water dripping from your finger, it'll be filthy due to the sediment that's clung to your line. Fishing over clay is particularly bad for this because it coats the line, so cleaning it is even more important. Being a dense material, fluorocarbon will sink into very soft, silty lake beds. I'm talking about bottoms that are almost covered in a liquid-ooze type of silt, but main lines, leaders and hook links will all sink out of sight, so it's not the best choice in this scenario.

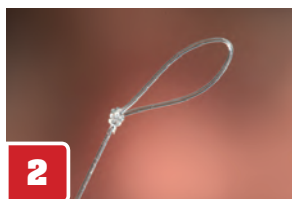
On the subject of main line, fluorocarbon is renowned for causing problems on the cast because it wraps around the butt ring on the rod. This is because it's stiffer than standard copolymer lines. However, because it's a dense material it throws itself off the spool in wide coils as you cast. These have to funnel down into the butt ring, but they are so large that they actually get thrown past it and then

STEP-BY-STEP LEWIS' INVISIBLE RIG



1

Take a length of soft fluorocarbon; 10lb or 12lb breaking strain is ideal.



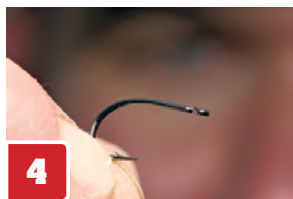
2

Tie an overhand knot (see page 194) in one end of the hook link.



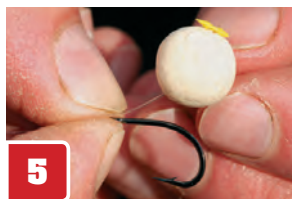
3

Thread your chosen hook bait onto the link and secure it in place with a boilie stop.



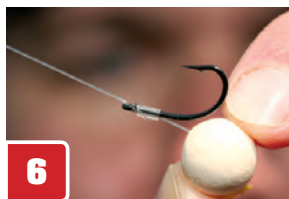
4

You will need a size 8 hook with a straight eye. Lewis uses a Gardner Incizor.



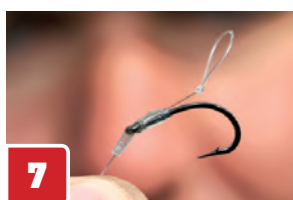
5

Thread the hook onto the link and set the length of the hair, as shown here.



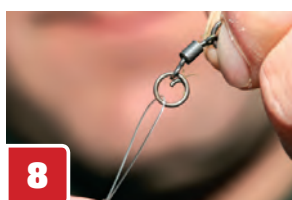
6

Attach the hook using a simple knotless knot (see page 194).



7

Shrink a piece of tubing over the knot. Lewis removes the bait prior to doing this.



8

Tie a loop in the end of the link. Attach it to a quick-change link.



9

Lewis prefers to use this simple rig in conjunction with a helicopter setup.

With fluorocarbon use a hook with a straight eye...



... because inturned eyes create a pressure point on the hook link.



Fluorocarbon main line is great for some scenarios, so Lewis carries his on spare spools and uses it only when necessary.



By reeling your line through your thumb and forefinger you clean it and remove line twist at the same time.

Take extra care when tying rigs with fluorocarbon because it's not suited to use with certain knots.



have to come back on themselves. This is what causes the problem and why fluorocarbon is far worse than mono for fishing at range. Enhancements in fluorocarbon manufacture have improved its suppleness, but there is still a way to go yet before it rivals mono for casting ability.

I'm fishing at around 90 yards so I'm using Gardner's new, brown, Hydro Tuff line with a fluorocarbon leader. So, the fact that it's dense and sinks well is an advantage but this limits it with regard to casting.

If you have a severe kink in a hook link or leader it's best to change it.

If you're fishing at short to medium range then a fluorocarbon main line excels, largely because of the aforementioned properties. However, it has less stretch than mono and is a harder material, so is less prone to being cut on sharp bars, mussel beds and snags. For demanding situations such as snag fishing, therefore, it's excellent.

If possible, carry spare spools, one loaded with mono and one with fluorocarbon. Use the fluorocarbon where you can and where distance will allow, while the mono will cover you if you need to fish at range.

When you're spooling up with a fluorocarbon main line don't fill the spool as much as you would with monofilament, leave an extra millimetre of the spool lip showing. This helps to stop the line from springing off the spool and causing tangles. What's more, it's prone to line twist so it's worth using a Gardner Spin Doctor lead to

help remove the twist from the line after spooling up. Winding the line in through your thumb and forefinger is another method of 'pushing' twist out of the line and another reason for getting into the habit of doing this.

Using fluorocarbon will add another string to your angling bow, but there are a few common errors with its use to watch out for. Don't use a fluorocarbon hook link with a hook that has an inturned eye when tying a knotless knot. The acute angle created between the fluorocarbon and the hook eye

creates a pressure point, which leads to the hook link breaking when put under pressure. I've seen a very big fish lost because of this. I know anglers that use hook patterns with slightly inturned eyes with fluorocarbon and don't have any problems, but I always err on the side of caution and use a straight or out-turned eye – my favourite being a Gardner Incizor.

Knots are another problem area, especially with the stiffer fluorocarbons, because knots are harder to tie and bed down properly. With a pure fluorocarbon the most consistent knot strength is with a blood or tucked blood knot. Bizarrely, I would advise everyone to avoid these knots with a copolymer line, braid or coated braid because they are inferior when used with these products, but produce the best results with fluorocarbon. Until I saw the results from tests that I helped carry out at Gardner Tackle a few years ago I'd never have believed it.

The thing with knots is that a lot depends on the products you're using and the competence of the knot tyer. The fact is, the best knot for you is the one you use most often, simply because you will be practised and proficient in tying that particular knot. However, learn to tie and use a blood or tucked blood knot with fluorocarbon.

I'll often attach a fluorocarbon rig to my lead setup via a loop, but you must be careful to bed the loop knot down carefully and test it before casting out. First and foremost, with the addition of a quick-change clip, this makes changing rig a doddle, but the loop helps to build a little flexibility into an otherwise stiff rig. Another way to build a little flexibility into a fluorocarbon rig is to use a combi rig with a braided hook section and fluorocarbon boom.

I've never been one for steaming my fluorocarbon to remove slight kinks or get it nice and straight. By holding the length of fluorocarbon tight and rubbing it between thumb and forefinger you create a little warmth with the friction of your fingers and that's enough to straighten it. If you steam your rigs then there's always the possibility of catching it in the heat of the stove or on the edge of the kettle and damaging it. However, if you have a severe kink in a hook link or leader it's best to change it.

Fluorocarbon is a brilliant material. It's not going to be the solution to all of your angling problems, but in certain situations it will lead to you putting more carp on the bank. As anglers we work on percentages. If you can alter your tactics or use a different material to add an extra per cent or two in your favour then it has to be worth a try! **TC**