This month is the start of a two-part series looking at something that almost no rod can go without, line guides.

As the title line mentions this month is the start of a two-part series looking at something that almost no rod can go without, line guides. Why ‘almost’ no rod? Well there are different types of rods available which don’t use guides.

In the mid 1990s, Daiwa brought out a range of Interline rods which used no guides. The rod had a hollow blank and it was crafted so that fishing line went through the inside of the rod and came out at the tip. Part of the thinking behind this type of rod was the idea that when an angler was hooked up the pressure of the line would be applied evenly across the whole rod, rather than against the individual pressure points where guides are connected to the rod.

Another type of rod which doesn’t use guides is the tenkara style of rod used mainly for fishing streams and rivers. It’s not a particularly mainstream style of fishing in Australia but I have seen it
used in different places around Australia, particularly over east. This style of fishing is all about simplicity. In fact, it's so simple that not even reels are used. Rather, the line is attached directly to the tip of a 10-13 foot long rod, and the bait or fly is flicked or dropped into the desired area.

One location in Perth I can remember seeing these rods being used to some effect was fishing the scaly mackerel run at the E-Shed a few years ago. At the bottom of the main line the angler had tied a sabiki-style baitcatcher rig so all they needed to do was drop the rig into the berley stream and when they were hooked up they just lifted the fish up out of the water and onto the wharf. Pretty simple fishing, but very effective.

As far as rods that do use guides go though, different types of guides are used for different styles of fishing. Roller guides have a large open frame with a bearing and roller inside and these are found on heavy game rods. Fly rods traditionally have an open wire type guide called a 'snake-guide'. Then there is the more standard style of guide that you will find on overhead and spin rods used from general purpose boating through to heavy jigging. It's these types of guides that this series of articles is going to focus on given this is the style of guide the majority of the fishing population deals with each time they wet a line.

OVERHEAD AND SPIN ROD GUIDES

As a general rule you will find rods suitable for fishing with overhead fishing reels have more guides on them than rods suitable for fishing with spinning/threadline reels.

When an overhead rod is loaded up with a fish, the design of the rod sees the line is being pulled down 'onto' the rod (the photo might help to illustrate this). So, if the gap between the guides is too large the line will rub on the rod when it starts to bend. During a short fight this may not be so much of a problem but if the fish is reluctant to come to the surface and you're battling it for a while, there's the potential that heat will build up where the line is rubbing on the rod and this may eventually become hot enough to burn or damage the line.

On the other hand, when there's a fish on the end of a spin rod the line is pulled down and 'away' from the rod and so less guides are required. For this reason you'll often find that overhead rods tend to be a bit more expensive than spin rods, especially if they have been made with quality guides.

One other difference between these two styles of rod is that spin rods tend to have a large guide close to the reel with the size then tapering off as it gets to the top of the rod. Overhead rods tend to have less size variance between the top and bottom guides. This makes it easy to spot the style of rod without referring to the tag or rod specifications. The reason for this difference is because the larger guide at the base of the rod allows for the circular movement of the line from a spinning reel when it's being cast or retrieved.

In the next issue we'll look at the differences between guide inserts and frames as well as some tips for better care and maintenance of your rod guides.

ANATOMY OF A GUIDE

Without getting too much into the technicalities of it all there are four main parts to a guide:

The eye - is the main circle that fishing line passes through. The inside of the eye can be made of different materials like silicone carbide or cermet (a mix of ceramic and metallic materials) but you'll have to get the next issue of FWA to find out what they are and what differences they bring to fishing.

The shoulder - is where the frame of the guide connects to the eye. Frames come in different shapes which bring different advantages and practicalities to fishing. This again will be discussed in more detail next issue.

The leg - is the section of the frame leading down to where the frame connects to the rod.

The foot - is the flat section at the base of the frame which is used to secure the guide frame onto the rod. If you haven't seen a guide before it has been connected to a rod - grab a rod from the shed and have a look where the frame connects to the rod and you will notice a small elevation where the connection takes place. This is the foot that has been secured to rod.

www.fishingwa.com