

Fishtape rope trick

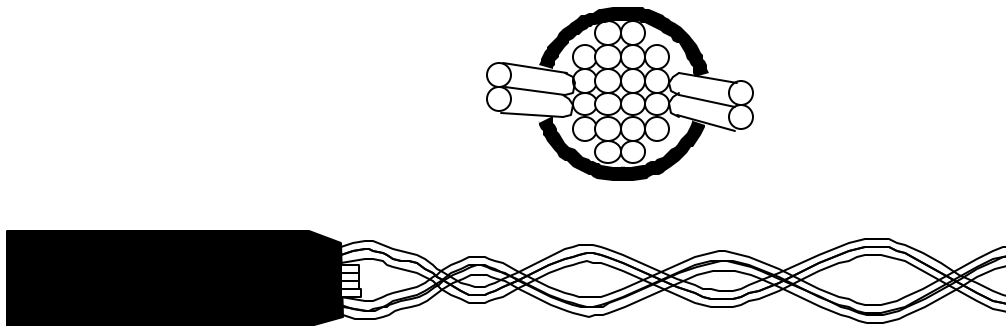
Does your fishtape have kinks and bends in it where someone used their lineman's pliers to pull wire? I learned this trick from a great electrician . . . a man who's generosity and genuine desire to contribute to the electrical industry still prevails, even after his untimely passing. I'm speaking of Mr. Lou Newman.

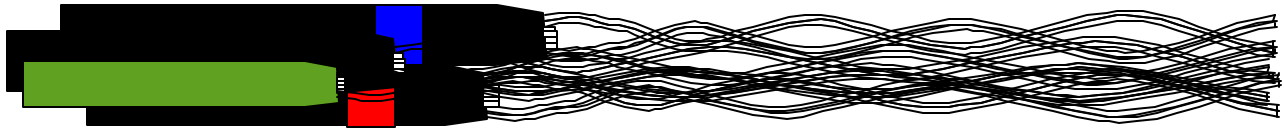
One of the maintenance activities you can do for your fishtape is tedious, but hugely important . . . NEVER roll it up wet! It takes two people to do it efficiently, but it will make a world of difference in how long your fishtape lasts, if you wipe it off, dry it, and occasionally oil it, as you roll it back into the holder.

Now for the rope trick . . . when the wire pull gets tough enough for you to consider getting out your lineman's pliers, take a rope, separate the strands by twisting it backwards, and wind it around the fishtape. The fishtape should now be in the center of the rope for about 2 to 3 feet. When you pull the free part of the rope, it will act like a kelly grip, clamping onto the fishtape and helping to pull. Then you can push the rope up the fishtape to where it enters the pipe, and do it again. This technique is so simple, and it saves a lot of wear and tear on your hands, not to mention the fishtape!

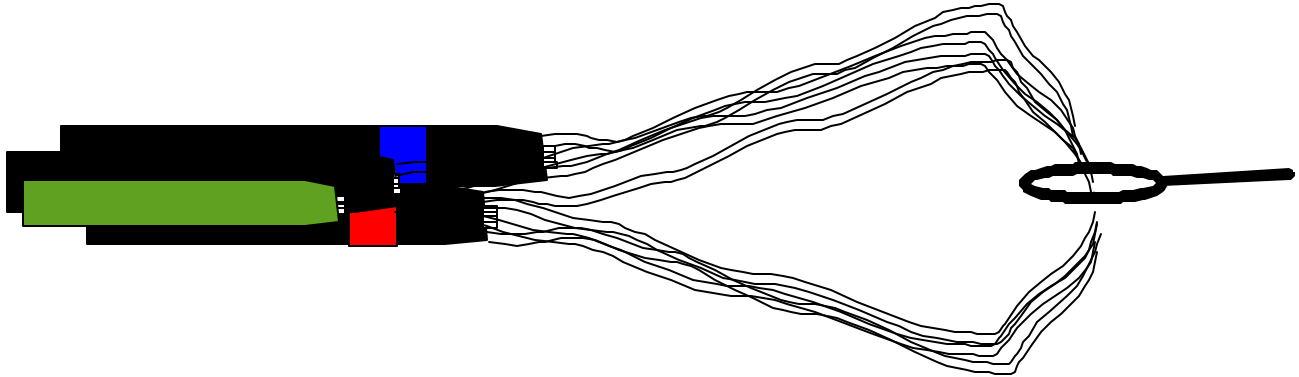
Always use gloves when you're on the fishtape end of a pull, and if you're tying wires to a fishtape, remember that the size and shape of the 'head', makes the difference between an easy pull and disaster! When pulling #6 and larger stranded conductors, the head should NEVER be larger than the diameter of the group of conductors being pulled.

Strip 12" to 20" of insulation from the conductors, (each one a different length), so that when the ends are placed together, the place where the insulation begins is staggered instead of all in the same place. Be sure to strip the wire as if sharpening a pencil, so that the insulation tapers toward the wire. Then take 2 or 3 strands from opposite sides of the conductor and unravel them to the insulation, cut the 'core', of strands, and twist the ones you unraveled back together. Place all the "down-sized" ends together, push them through the eye of the fishtape or rope, and fold the wires back on themselves, making sure the wire ends do not overlap the beginning of the insulation.





On particularly long or tough pulls, separate the strands into two groups and push half of the strands through the eye from each direction. Squeeze the loop as flat as possible with pliers, and tape the assembly into a nice smooth, tapering head. Don't use any more tape than necessary, as it will increase the diameter of the head.



I've found that taking a few extra minutes making up the head, can save hours of frustration and difficulties, and the "tugger", or fishtape puller won't have to work nearly as hard! Work smarter . . . not harder. Also, the new gel-like pulling lubricants are much nicer to use than that old yellow stuff!

- On long, tough pulls, it is imperative that the person feeding wire;
- (1 keeps the wire straight, and free of kinks and twists,
 - (2 pushes with the same enthusiasm and effort as the one pulling,
 - (3 times his efforts so that push and pull are simultaneous,
 - (4 keeps the wire lubed as it goes into the raceway.

If the wire is larger than 1/0, it is likely that an additional person will be required to help manage the wire at the feed point. Most electricians think that pulling is harder than feeding, but I'm here to tell you that if the 'feeder' is doing his job correctly, it requires a great deal more thought and effort than pulling! Being conscientious at the feed end of a wire pull can make the difference between success and failure.

Do the job right the first time, and pay attention to insulation integrity . . . no matter how quickly you pull wire, speed and productivity won't matter if the integrity of the insulation is damaged in the process! Not only will you have to start over, but you will have wasted your time and materials.