

FLY CASTING PRACTICING WITH PURPOSE

Dave Cleaves

- Finding the problem
 - Use the “casting ladder” to diagnose problems (loop >rod path>hand/arm motion)
 - Use a casting instructor for an assessment (See IFFF list)
- Principles of practice
 - Problem-focused
 - Progression
 - Periodicity
 - Persistence
 - Patience
- Making time to practice
 - Don’t wait for the next fishing trip.
 - Keep a rod rigged and ready. Lower psychological barriers and excuses.
 - Frequent short sessions are better than infrequent marathons.
 - Find a place – backyard, athletic field, beside reflective surfaces (car windows), even indoors.
 - Practice indoors
 - Pantomime in mirror
 - Indoor practice rods
 - Rod butt with props
 - Laser pointer
 - Use videos and visualization techniques
- Have a plan – select the most important things to work on.
 - Set measures and goals – distance, accuracy, amount of presentation slack, whatever. Use numbers.
 - Establish and record baselines. Measure and record them. Don’t fool yourself.
 - Visualize yourself making the perfect cast. Imagine the problem you are working on going away. Spend a minute before each practice session visualizing what the right way looks and feels like.
 - Alternate hard and easy days.
 - Alternate/rotate the problem focus. For example work on long casts (Day1), accuracy (Day 2), and presentation (Day 3) then cycle back.
 - Use sets and repetitions (reps). For example 3 sets of 5-10 reps on a backcast improvement. Do one set (5-10 reps). Assess/Adjust. Do set two. Assess/adjust, etc.
 - Break down complex skills into single movements and then together progressively. For example, a longer cast require (1) tight loops, (2) longer strokes, (3) more lift (tilt up) in the casting plane, and (4) more line speed (through hauling the line).
 - Simple sets for each of the 4 component skills (3sets of 5-10 reps)

- Compound, progressive sets:
 - Loops (1X5)
 - Loops plus longer stroke (1X5)
 - Loops plus stroke plus lift (1X5)
 - Loops, long stroke, lift, and hauling (1X5) for 20 reps total then do a second.....
- Making practice more effective
 - Limit the number of issues to work on.
 - Video your casting. Smart phones were invented by the casting gods.
 - Be sensitive to feedback – visual, tactile (line tension), auditory (line and rod sounds)
 - Take notes – good casts and bad. What went right? Wrong?
 - Catch the feel. You know when a cast goes well, even without seeing it. Dwell on that and try to capture it in your notes. Remember when and how it happened. Then make it happen again and put in the reps. Grind in the good.
 - Cast to targets in all practices. Let the goal-seeking mechanisms inside you connect new casting habits to positive outcomes.
 - Don't forget to practice line hand movements. It is responsible for more complex moves than the rod hand and gets less training attention.
 - Create obstacles and simulations. Vary the parameters and move quickly from one to another in the same session to work skills across “contextual interferences”
 - Distances
 - Directions
 - Presentation demands
 - Casting planes
 - Target types (Try casting to hopping birds and squirrels in the backyard)
- Strengthen muscles for casting, endurance, and injury prevention
 - Grip – hard foam squeezers
 - Wrist – wrist curls
 - Forearm – reverse (hands down) curls
 - Shoulder – raising a weight to the ear
- Remember
 - Casting is a lifetime journey. There is always progress to be made, and new things to learn.
 - Challenge yourself.
 - Everything is an adjustment, application, or extension of the basic casting stroke. When confused or discouraged, go back to the basics and work forward.
 - Strive for statistical improvement. Measure progress on the basis of consistency and versatility not extreme one time performances.
 - Expect jagged progress. Learn from the ups as well as the downs.
 - Observe other casters. What makes their casts do what they do – good or bad? How does that relate to your own casting?

- Be ready for the next fishing trip. Don't fall back into "survival mode" and start slinging. Take a look at your practice notes and be ready for the challenges and casting gremlins to reappear.
- Strive for smoothness in all movements.

Dave Cleaves is an FFF certified master fly-casting instructor and registered Maryland freshwater guide. He can be reached at 12600 Falconbridge Drive, North Potomac, MD 20878, (301) 208-9170, cleaves.david@comcast.net