

# TIPS AND TECHNIQUES TEACHING FLY CASTING

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## TEACHING FLY CASTING

- What? You want me to help you learn how to cast?
  - We are all both teachers and students.
  - Teaching helps the teacher learn to cast better.
  - We are teaching whenever we fish—someone may be watching what we do.
  - We have a duty to introduce people to the sport. Casting is a part of it.
  - We may be called on at any time—on the water, in the neighborhood, even on the job to help.
  - We teach lots of things every day. Casting is no different.
  - We don't have to be experts. We can help people start learning and point them to the resources they need to keep learning.
- Establishing “rodside manner”.
  - Find out about the student. Name? Why the interest? What are the expectations? What experiences have they had in fly fishing?
  - Know your own motivations. Why do you want to teach this person? Beware the urge to demonstrate, lecture, critique.
  - Put the student at ease. He/she is probably a bit nervous. Assure them that they can learn to do this. It is easier than they might think. They already have “the cast” inside them. What you're doing is helping them find it.
- Getting started
  - Stress safety. Wear a hat/glasses and insist they do and are aware of the rod.
  - Explain what fly casting is. Why is it different than other ways of getting a lure to a fish? It is simply unrolling a flexible line to deliver a fly to the fish.
  - Minimize talking, demonstration, jargon. Maximize hands-on learning and get the rod in the student's hand quickly.
- Introducing the system. Walking down then back up the three rungs of the “Casting Ladder”
  - Top – the line. What is a loop?
  - Middle – the rod. The loop follows the rod tip. It accentuates everything we do with our hands. It does what the rod hand tells it to do.
  - Bottom – the caster. Moving the rod through the sky to “paint” a line to the target.
- Introducing the 4-part cast. (See handout)
  - Pickup (Lift)
  - Backcast (Back and Up) --- “Swoop” and Pause
  - Forward Cast (Down and Out) --- “Swoop” and Pause
  - Presentation (Lower)

- Observing
  - Use the “Casting Ladder” concept. Work down to diagnose. Work back up to explain. Avoid “loop trance” and focus observations the rod and body motions.
  - Watch the caster’s arm, wrist, and hands. Stand back on the student’s casting side so you can see them. Give them physical and mental space.
  - View them from different angles. From the side and from the back.
  - Track the slack. On the water. In the belly to the rod tip. In the guides. Below the caster’s line hand. Watch what happens to it when the stoke is made.
- Offering Suggestions
  - Be gentle. Don’t bark. Put yourself in the learner’s place. Empathize before you emphasize.
  - Praise what is going right. Everybody does at least one thing right, even the first time. Find it, point it out, and compliment them for it.
  - Know your own casting tendencies, style, and faults. Don’t pass on bad habits.
  - Strive to distinguish between substance (e.g. a good loop) and style (how the caster got that good loop). Many styles can produce the same result.
  - Ask questions. “How does that feel?” Encourage them to recognize constant tension in the line and the absence of it.
  - Find analogies and visual links to common human movements: answering the phone, throwing a dart, splattering paint with a brush, throwing water from a cup, hitchhiking (on the backcast), flipping an apple from the end of a stick, etc.
  - Transmitting the feel of the stroke. Let the student feel your hand as you work through the stroke.
- Setting Limits
  - Pick one thing at a time and work with the student on it.
  - Don’t overdo the advice. Provide feedback, then slide back to let them learn. Give them some space.
  - Don’t talk too much. Only casting instructors can make a conversation out of casting...normal people just want to get on with it.
  - Know when to stop. For some people, just “getting it out there” is enough. Don’t impose high standards on people who are just starting, experimenting, or just curious
- Introduce skills in sequence. Demonstrate all movements slowly, vividly, and in the vertical casting plane (overhead) so people can see them.
  - Explain
  - Demonstrate: 4-part cast and loop.
  - Demonstrate: 4-part cast in pantomime with line clamped
  - Student practice: 4-part cast in pantomime with line clamped
  - Student practice: 4-part cast with fixed length of line
  - Demonstrate: introduce line hand and index finger control. Bringing in, giving back, and keeping line organized.
  - Student practice: 4-part cast with longer lengths of line
  - Student practice: 4-part cast with retrieving line

- Demonstrate: shooting line (two-hands coordination of stop/release)
- Student practice: shooting line
- And so forth.... Roll casting, hauling, etc.
- Working with kids (age 5-95)
  - OK to use both hands
  - Use fixed length of line – rubber band the line to the rod
  - Use targets – pie plates
  - Create games and prizes
  - Have fun! Casting is cool!
- Common casting problems
  - Pickup
    - Starting with the rod tip too high
    - Starting with too much slack line on the water
    - Letting line slip through the guides
  - Backcast and/or forward cast
    - Hinging the wrist
    - Dropping or driving the back or forward cast to the water
    - Excessive, rotational stroke – the windshield wiper
    - Not stopping the rod at the end of the stroke
    - Not accelerating – smoothly or at all - through the stroke
    - Not pausing long enough or pausing too long after the stroke
    - Strokes too short for the length of line being casted
    - Curved arm/rod movement > unintentional curves
  - Presentation
    - Releasing line too early on the shoot
    - Dropping or driving the forward cast to (not over) the water

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