

FFI—Fly Casting Skills Challenge

The *Fly Casting Skills Challenge* is a fun way to improve casting skills. It includes three challenge levels progressing from Bronze to Gold that include fly casts used in many fishing situations. The Bronze level Challenge is designed at the novice (but not beginner!) level fly fisher, while the Silver and Gold levels are aimed to advance the casting skills of intermediate and advanced level fly fishers. Recognition award documents and pins are available for each level achieved. You can learn more here, or contact Dave Cleaves via email at (cleaves.david@comcast.net) or 301-525-2332 for more information.

Task	Description	Why?	Tips and Clips (Video)
BRONZE SKILL LEVEL			
Bronze 1 Pick-Up & Lay-Down (PULD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 40' mark. Perform in a near vertical plane with leader straightening to within 2' of the 40' target center. <p>No hauling or false casting allowed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This cast is fundamental to all fly casting. Breaks down cast to locate and correct faults. 	<p>Pick up: Slow, smooth, and slackless.</p> <p>Backcast: <i>Up and back</i> — accelerate to a crisp stop.</p> <p>Forward: <i>Out</i> — accelerate to a stop.</p> <p>Lay-down: Follow the line down with the rod tip.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFI: Bruce Richards — Basic Fly Casting FFI: Jeff Wagner — How to Pick Up and Lay Down FFI Video: Jeff Wagner — Casting Substance and Style Orvis: Pete Kutzer — The Basic Cast FFI Overview — PULD cast
Bronze 2 Vertical to Horizontal Casting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 40' mark. Pick up in a near vertical plane (1 o'clock). Make 2-4 false casts moving down to a near horizontal plane (3 o'clock). Deliver the fly with leader straightening at 40' within 4' of either side of the tape. Fly travels and lands under an imaginary obstacle 4' above the surface. <p>No hauling allowed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under overhanging obstacles. Avoiding wind. Small streams with tight conditions and overhead obstacles. 	<p>Cast somewhat faster in the horizontal plane.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFI Overview — False Casting FFI Video: Jeff Wagner — Changing Planes and Curve Casts Joan Wulff — Dynamics of Fly Casting Orvis: Peter Kutzer — Improving (sidearm) Casting Accuracy



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Bronze 3 Roll Cast — Dominant Side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 40' mark. Perform a 40' roll cast on the dominant shoulder (right shoulder for a right-handed person) with the leader straightening to within 2' of the 40' target center. A roll cast tool (artificial anchor) may be used if performed on grass at participant's discretion. Establish the D-loop (the back loop) by slowly dragging the line into position. Fly and leader do not leave the water surface or grass. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removing slack in the line. Limited backcast space. Starting a cast quickly (e.g., salt water, moving fish). 	Form the D-loop slowly and deliberately. Form the anchor without too little or too much line on the water in front. Start forward stroke slowly – cast out not down – repeat the forward stroke from the PULD cast. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFI Overview — Roll Cast FFI: Jeff Wagner — Video Orvis: Pete Kutzer — How to Make an Accurate Roll Cast Bumcast: Carl McNeil — Roll Cast
Bronze 4 Roll Cast — Non-Dominant Side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 40' mark. Perform 40' roll cast on the non-dominant shoulder (left shoulder for a right-handed person with rod held in right hand). Straighten leader to within 2 feet of the target center. A roll cast tool (artificial anchor) may be used if performed on grass. The D-loop (the back loop) should be formed by slowly dragging the line into position on the non-dominant side. Fly and leader do not leave the water surface or grass. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removing slack in the line Limited backcast space Starting a cast quickly (e.g., salt water, moving fish) from the non-dominant side. Wind blowing in from the dominant side. 	Make sure the line is anchored on the water on the non-dominant side. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFI: Jeff Wagner — Video FFI Overview Orvis: Pete Kutzer — How to Make an Accurate Roll Cast
Bronze 5 Shooting Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 40' mark. Strip 5-10' of fly line off the reel. Perform a pick-up and lay-down cast with shooting the loose line to 45' (or more). The fly landing within 4' of either side of the tape. <p>No false casting or hauling allowed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longer casts Repeating a cast to a prescribed distance. This technique is fundamental to extending line when casting. 	Release the line from the line hand at the same time you stop the rod (launch the loop), even a micro-second later. Think “stop-release”. Let the loop pull the line from your line hand. Manage the line with an “O-ring” formed by pinching thumb to forefinger of the line hand. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orvis: Pete Kutzer — Shooting Line Dusty Wissmath — False Casting and Shooting Line

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Task	Description	Why?	Tips and Clips (Video)
Bronze 6 Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend the fly to 45' mark. Strip line in so that 4' of fly line plus the leader is outside the rod tip. Cast off the dominant shoulder to the 20, 30, and 40' targets in sequence. 3 tries each target. Land the fly within 2' of the target center. If a miss, pick up where the fly landed and try again at the same target for up to 2 more attempts (3 total). Once the first target is achieved or 3 attempts exhausted, pick up and false cast while lengthening line to the next targets. 2/3 targets must be achieved, with one at 40'. <p>False casting, shooting line, and hauling are allowed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Precision to present fly successfully. Need to change line lengths and maintain accuracy. Opportunity to recast to missed fish as same of changing distances. Reaching fish holding in difficult places 	<p>Stance: Line up with the target — square or dominant foot forward</p> <p>Stroke: Keep stroke close to the body and aligned with the target. Take the backcast straight back from the target.</p> <p>Sighting: Gaze into the smallest part of the target — “aim small-miss small”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFI Overview — Change of Direction Casting Orvis: Pete Kutzer — Making an Accurate Cast Tim Rajeff — Casting Accuracy Tips — Part 1 Tim Rajeff — Casting Accuracy Tips — Part 2
Bronze 7 Distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 40' mark. Achieve 50' (or beyond) with the fly landing beyond the line tip within 4' of either side of the tape. 3 attempts. Second & third attempts, if needed, can be started from any point. <p>Hauling and unlimited false casts are allowed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widening the range of presentation Reaching fish holding in shallow and/clear water conditions Limited mobility and position 	<p>Maintain tight loop.</p> <p>Lift trajectory.</p> <p>Lengthen stroke and haul.</p> <p>Increase line speed — hauling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFI Overview — Distance Casting (coming) FFI Video: Jeff Wagner — Distance Casting Orvis: Pete Kutzer — Adding Distance to Your Cast Orvis: Pete Kutzer — Long Casts Without Hauling Anglers All: Doug Andrew — How to Double Haul in 5 Minutes. Midcurrent: Joan Wulff — The Double Haul

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Task	Description	Why?	Tips and Clips (Video)
SILVER SKILL LEVEL			
Silver 1 Vertical to Horizontal False Casts — Non-Dominant Side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 40' mark. Pick up in a near vertical plane (1 o'clock) Make 2-4 false casts moving down to a near horizontal plane (3 o'clock) on the non-dominant side. Deliver the fly with leader straightening at 40' within 4' on either side of the tape. Fly travels and lands under an imaginary obstacle 4' above the surface. <p>No hauling allowed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wind or obstruction require the loop to be on the non-dominant side. Under overhanging obstacles Small streams with tight conditions - overhead obstacles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joan Wulff — Dynamics of Fly Casting Orvis: Peter Kutzer — Improving (sidearm) Casting Accuracy
Silver 2 Reach Mend to Right	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 40' mark. Perform a reach mend to the right without slipping line. Land the fly within 4' on either side of the tape. Final rod position 45-90 degrees to the direction of the cast. The leader and line may be curved, but line position should account for a faster current nearer the caster. <p>No dragging of line/leader after landing.</p>	When casting across different current speeds, the water in front of the caster being faster than the current out near the fish. Up current to the right of a right-handed caster.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bumcast: Carl McNeil — Reach Mend Phil Gay: Presentation Casts for Trout
Silver 3 Reach Mend to Left	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 40' mark. Perform a reach mend to the left without slipping line. Land the fly within 4' of either side of the tape. Final rod position 45-90 degrees to the direction of the cast. The leader and line may be curved, but line position should account for a faster current nearer the caster. <p>No dragging of line/leader after landing.</p>	When casting across different current speeds, the water in front of the caster being faster than the current out near the fish. Up current to the left of a right-handed caster.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bumcast: Carl McNeil — Reach Mend Phil Gay: Presentation Casts for Trout

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Task	Description	Why?	Tips and Clips (Video)
Silver 4 Slack Line Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 40' mark. Make a slack line presentation (caster choice). Land the fly beyond the line tip and within 4' of either side of the tape. The amount of slack should take up 3 or more feet of fly line/leader – fly lands about 37 ft. or less from the caster. 	Positioning slack across multiple current seams or directly downstream to avoid drag on the fly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bumcast and FFI: Carl McNeil — Slack Line Casts Bumcast: Carl McNeil — Pile Cast Bumcast: Carl McNeil — Wiggle Cast Phil Gay: Presentation Casts for Trout
Silver 5 Belgian Style or Oval Cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 40' mark. Perform a Belgian cast with the fly landing approximately 40' within 4' on either side of the tape. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sinking lines, multi-fly and nymph rigs, or heavy flies to avoid “kicking” at the end of a traditional backcast stop and/or to substitute a sidearm pick-up and backcast. Windy conditions that demand control (line tension) throughout the back and forward strokes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orvis: Pete Kutzer — How to Make a Belgian (Oval) Cast Tim Rajeff — Heavy Fly Casting Nelson Ishiyama (Henry’s Fork Lodge) — Belgian Cast
Silver 6 Accuracy — Non-Dominant Side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend the fly to 45'. Strip line in so that 4' of fly line plus the leader is outside the rod tip. Cast off the <u>non-dominant</u> shoulder to the 20, 30, and 40-foot targets in sequence. 3 tries each target. Land the fly within 2' of the target center. If a miss, pick up where the fly landed and try again at the same target for up to 2 more attempts (3 total). Once the first target is achieved or 3 attempts exhausted, pick up and false cast while lengthening line to the next targets. 2/3 targets must be achieved, with one at 40 ft. <p>False casting, shooting line, and hauling are allowed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obstructions or wind on the dominant side. Restricted casting positions in a boat or wading 	<p>Stance: Line up with the target — square or dominant foot forward</p> <p>Stroke: Keep stroke close to the body and aligned with the target. Take the backcast straight back from the target.</p> <p>Sighting: Gaze into the smallest part of the target – “aim small-miss small”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFI Overview — Change of Direction Casting Orvis: Pete Kutzer — Making an Accurate Cast Tim Rajeff — Casting Accuracy Tip Part 1 Tim Rajeff — Casting Accuracy Tips Part 2

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Task	Description	Why?	Tips and Clips (Video)
Silver 7 Distance and Shooting Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 45' mark. Achieve 60' or beyond with the fly landing beyond the line tip within 4' of either side of the tape. 3 attempts.		Maintain tight loop Lift trajectory Lengthen stroke and haul Increase line speed — i.e., hauling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFI Overview — Distance Casting (coming) FFI Video: Jeff Wagner — Distance Casting Orvis: Pete Kutzer — Adding Distance to Your Cast Orvis: Pete Kutzer – Long Casts Without Hauling Anglers All: Doug Andrew – How to Double Haul in 5 Minutes. Midcurrent: Joan Wulff – The Double Haul
GOLD SKILL LEVEL			
Gold 1 Loop Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 45' mark. Perform four (or more) false casts off the <u>non-dominant</u> shoulder. Deliver the fly to 4' of target. Hauling is allowed.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFI Overview – False Casting
Gold 2 Curve Casts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 40' mark. Perform a <i>curve cast</i> to the side of the caster's choice. The line/leader should curve around an obstacle at 25' Fly should land at least 45° from the line layout between the caster and the obstacle. Technique and direction of curve is caster's choice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Casting around obstacles. Avoiding casting (over-lining) a fish Presenting from the bank or into overhanging brush. Combining with slack line casts and mending to drift the fly to holding fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bumcast: Carl McNeil – Curve Casts Phil Gay: Presentation Casts for Trout FFI Video: Jeff Wagner – Changing Planes and Curve Casts Orvis: Pete Kutzer – Curve Casts



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Gold 3 Roll-Cast Pick-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 40' mark. Perform a <i>roll cast pick-up</i> with extension of line to 55' (three additional false casts). Land fly within 4' of either side of the tape. <p>Hauling is allowed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove slack after the drift. Quickly get into position for a first backcast Quietly pick line off the water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orvis: Pete Kutzer – Roll Cast Pickup
Gold 4 Change of Direction Casts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 40' mark. Perform two different change of direction – caster's choice. Land fly line and leader relatively straight. Directional change should be at least 45°. <p>Hauling and false casting are allowed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redirect the fly back upstream to repeat a drift. Respond to changing boat or wading position or to moving or rising fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFI Overview – Change of Direction Casting
Gold 5 Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend the fly to 55' mark. Strip line in so that 4' of fly line plus the leader is beyond the rod tip. Casts to 20, 30, 40, and 50' targets in sequence. 3 tries at each target. If a miss, pick up where the fly landed and try again at the same target for up to 3 attempts total. If a target is achieved or three attempts exhausted, pick up and false cast while lengthening line to the next targets. 3/4 targets must be achieved, with one each at 40 and 50'. <p>False casting, hauling, and shooting line are allowed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redirect the fly back upstream to repeat a drift. Respond to changing boat or wading position or to moving or rising fish 	<p>Stance: Line up with the target – square or dominant foot forward</p> <p>Stroke: Keep stroke close to the body and aligned with the target. Take the backcast straight back from the target.</p> <p>Sighting: Gaze into the smallest part of the target – “aim small-miss small”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFI Overview – Change of Direction Casting Orvis: Pete Kutzer – Making an Accurate Cast Tim Rajeff – Casting Accuracy Tips Part 1 Tim Rajeff – Casting Accuracy Tips Part 2
Gold 6 Casting While Seated or Kneeling	<p>While sitting in a chair or kneeling with one knee on the ground, pick up 30' of line and shoot to 40'.</p> <p>Land the fly within 4' of either side of the line,</p> <p>False casting, shooting line, and hauling are allowed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fishing from a boat, float tube, or kneeling behind cover. Adjusting the stroke to avoid hitting the water or ground during the cast. 	



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Gold 7 Backcast Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with 40' of line out. Present the backcast to a minimum of 55'. Land the fly landing within 4' of either side of the line. <p>False casting, shooting line, and hauling are allowed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wind and obstructions may require presentation on the backcast. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Orvis: Pete Kutzer – Backcast Presentation
Gold 8 Distance and Shooting Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start with the fly at 45' mark. Achieve 70' or beyond. Land the fly beyond the line tip within 4' of either side of the line. <p>3 attempts.</p>		<p>Maintain tight loop</p> <p>Lift trajectory</p> <p>Lengthen stroke and haul</p> <p>Increase line speed — i.e., hauling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFI Overview — Distance Casting (coming) FFI Video: Jeff Wagner — Distance Casting Orvis: Pete Kutzer — Adding Distance to Your Cast Orvis: Pete Kutzer — Long Casts Without Hauling Anglers All: Doug Andrew — How to Double Haul in 5 Minutes. Midcurrent: Joan Wulff — The Double Haul