

# FLYCASTING BASICS

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## ***The fundamentals you need to know before you get started.***

In spin casting the weight of the lure pulls the line off the reel. In fly casting the weight of the line carries the fly to the fish. In fly casting you must learn to use the rod to cast the weight of the fly line. You can do that quickly by following five basic principles of good fly casting:

1. The line (and fly) goes in the direction you point the rod tip during the cast.
2. Good fly casting is not strength-related; it is timing-related. Thus you must practice the timing of the cast to become a good caster. How much practice? At least 15 minutes a day to become a good caster in a month.
3. Proper stroking and stopping of the rod are fundamental to good fly casting. The caster loads energy into the rod during the casting stroke. The rod releases the energy into the line in the cast. The caster loads a little energy (a short, low-energy stroke) into the top of the rod for short casts; he loads a lot of energy (a short, powerful stroke)

- into the middle and bottom of the rod for a long cast.
4. Casting arcs (the arc the rod makes in the air during the cast) are small for short casts and large for long casts.
5. Stopping the rod after the casting stroke is critical to forming the casting loop, and it allows the rod to unload, thus casting the line.

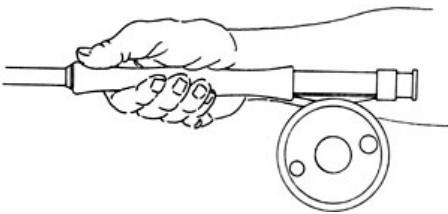
Fly fishers seldom need to cast more than 50 feet when fishing. Yet becoming proficient at long-distance casting can improve all your casting. You should learn to cast short (30 feet) first and then practice at greater and greater distances.

You can't learn casting from a book. You must do it. The more you practice the better you'll become. Practice on a lawn or pool. Casting while fishing is not practice. Practice allows you to focus on casting fundamentals without distractions.

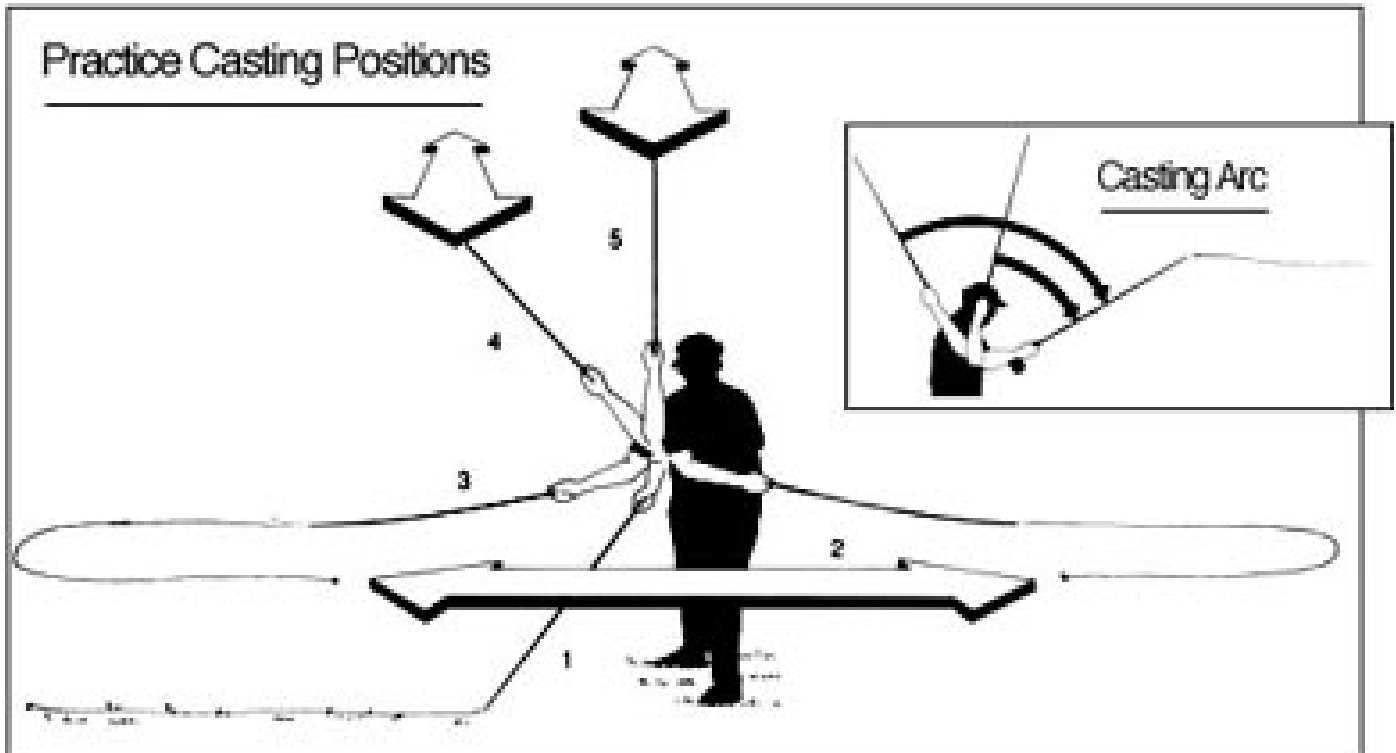
## Getting Started

The best way to learn casting is from an expert instructor--a friend, or relative. You can also find instructors at fly-fishing schools, fly shops, or fly-fishing clubs. If one is not available, take the balanced rod, reel, and line you have bought to your back yard. You'll need at least 120 feet (60 feet in each direction) of lawn with no overhead obstructions.

## The Casting Grip



*The proper grip is important. Keeping your thumb on top of the rod helps you apply greater force in a short casting stroke.*



Mark your fly line with an indelible marker at 30 feet. The marker will indicate how much line you have out when you cast. Place hats or some other objects on the lawn 30 and 60 feet from where you will stand. The markers will help you develop the sense of distance that is critical in casting accurately to fish.

## The Grip

Grasp the rod firmly with your casting hand and place your thumb on top of the rod grip. When you are learning casting keep the rod butt under and in line with your wrist and forearm. That way the rod will remain in plane during your cast. If the rod comes out of plane during the cast the tip wanders and the line follows the tip, wandering and spoiling the cast.

Stand on the lawn with your feet slightly apart. Thread the line off the reel and up through the line guides and out the tip top of the rod. Tie a 9-foot leader onto the end of the line using the tube knot and tie a small piece of yarn to the end of the tippet. Stand on the lawn with your feet slightly apart. Pull about 20 feet of line off the reel and lay it out on the lawn to the right of where you stand (to the left if you are left-handed). Make sure the line is drawn tight on the lawn and is not lying in S-curves (number 1 in the illustration below) or it will not cast well.

Using a horizontal sidearm cast, flick the rod tip forward from your right to your left (from your left to your right if you are left handed) and watch the line form a loop and roll out to your left (2) and then settle to the grass.

Using your arm and a flick of your wrist together (the way you'd throw a frisbee backward and a baseball forward), cast the line repeatedly back and forth in backcasts and forward casts (2, 3). Try to make the line form candy-cane-shaped loops in both your backcasts and forward casts. Loop formation is the intent of your casting--the tighter the loops, the better the cast.

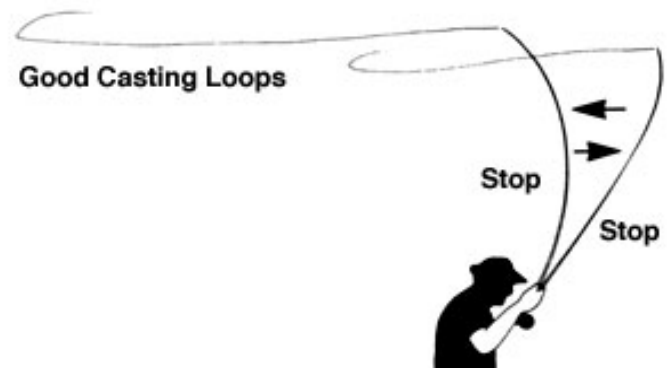
As you stroke the rod back and forth (2, 3), keep a firm wrist and stop the rod abruptly after each stroke. Stopping the rod allows the line to form a loop off the rod tip. It also allows the rod's tip to turn over to unload energy into the line efficiently. The energy in the rod casts the line. You must stop the rod when making both the forward cast and the backcast to become a good fly caster.

After casting sidearm for 15 minutes, or

## Your First Practice

The casting principles remain the same for all casting positions. Start your practice with a sidearm cast then move to 45-degree casts and finally to vertical casts. Try to maintain good casting loops. Longer casts require a wider casting arc.

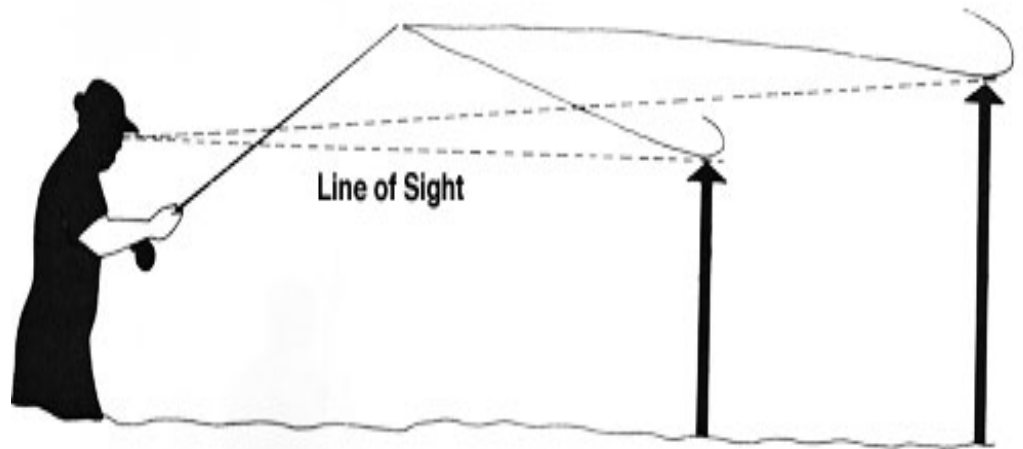
## Loading the Rod:



Loading energy into the rod requires good timing, not strength. You should feel the rod bend as you cast. Stop the rod immediately after the back stroke and the forward stroke.

## Aiming the Cast

Unless it's windy, you should not aim your cast directly at your target; instead, aim just above it. The longer the cast, the higher you should aim.



until you feel comfortable with the feel of the line and the rod, try casting the rod at a 45-degree angle (4) and then vertically (5). You'll use all these casting positions when you are fishing, so get used to them. You want to groove your casting stroke in the position that is most comfortable for you--sidearm, 45 degrees, or vertical. The casting principles remain the same for all casting positions. The sidearm cast allows you to watch the line and thus to teach yourself timing and loop formation.

## Aiming The Cast

For short casts you aim about four feet above the water (or lawn). As your casts get longer aim higher to allow the line and fly more time to reach the target. Learning to aim accurately is a hallmark of expert casting. You should spend considerable practice time learning to aim and to hit targets on the lawn.

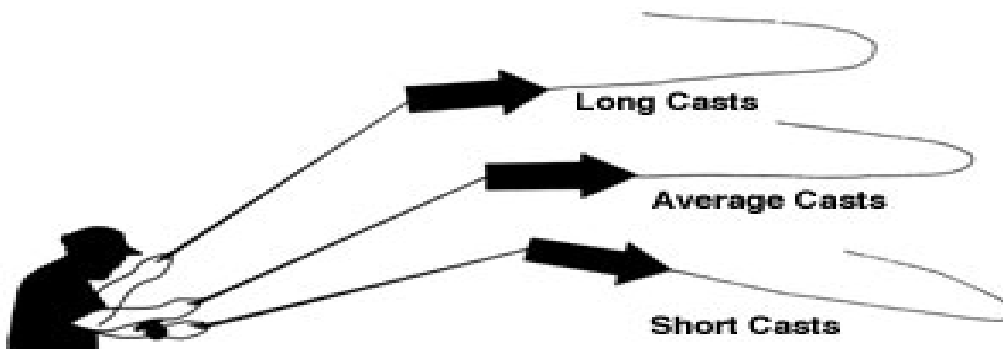
Using the practice steps you should be able to teach yourself how to cast the line, leader, and yarn (fly) from 15 to 30 feet in your first hour of practice. Now you can present a fly to bass and panfish in a pond or

to fish in a stream or on the ocean. Expert casting takes practice, but 15 minutes a day (every day in summer) of practice can make you an expert caster in one season. Here are some helpful tips when practicing casting or when fishing.

1. Wear protective glasses (polarized sunglasses) to prevent eye injury.
2. Push yourself to greater (measured) distances in casting the yarn fly only after you achieve competence at the shorter distances--15 feet, then 20, then 30 and so on.
3. Have a good caster watch and critique your casting.

## Directing the Rod Tip

**The farther you intend to cast, the higher you must aim. The line will travel in the direction that you stop the rod tip.**



## Basic casting errors and how to correct them:

**Problem:** Backcast dropping to the lawn or water.

**Fault:** The rod tip is flopping over (pointing too low), sending the cast to the ground.

**Correction:** Stop the rod tip high. Keep a firm casting wrist.

**Problem:** Tailing loops.

**Fault:** Stroking the rod too hard or too soon.

**Correction:** Stroke more gently. Allow the line time to straighten out in the backcast completely before stroking the forward cast.

**Problem:** Fly snaps off with a crack in the backcast.

**Fault and Correction:** Same as for tailing loops.

**Problem:** The cast dies before reaching the target.

**Fault:** Underpowered cast caused by loose line or by a floppy wrist stroke.

**Corrections:** Tighten the line before the pickup for the backcast. Use a firm wrist stroke on the backcast and forward cast and stop the rod immediately after the stroke.