

# Fundamental Concept

## Essentials for Casting the Fly Rod

The fly rod is a tool that in combination with a fly line and leader is used for casting a fly to a desired target. The fly is attached to a leader at the distal end of the fly line. The fly line is cast or unrolled by the tip of the fly rod and in so doing casts the fly at the end of the fly line and leader. The weight of the line carries and delivers the fly.

This generally is accomplished by moving or rotating the fly rod and its tip in the direction of the target against the resistance of the fly line in an accelerating motion that ends with a final snap or punch of the thumb followed by an abrupt stop and pause of the fly rod. The result is that the angular rotation of the fly rod causes the tip to bend against the resistance of the fly line and continue to build energy as the fly rod accelerates forward and unrolls the fly line with force as the energy of the rod is released with the tip of the rod unbending from the rear and turning over with a forward bend as the rod stops abruptly at the end of the stroke. The fundamentals and dynamics of the back and forward casts are essentially identical.

The objective is to cast the fly line with a narrow and efficient loop to consistently deliver the fly to a target with ease, confidence and accuracy.

### Essential Elements of the Fly Cast

**Grip:** The fly rod should be held in the dominant hand (i.e. right hand, if right handed) with the thumb on top of the grip. The line should be held under the first or second finger of the dominant hand and under the grip. This provides an anchor point for manipulating the line leader and fly – stripping in line and setting the hook with the non-dominant hand.

Another alternative would be to hold the rod in the dominant hand with hands apart and the non-dominant hand holding line during the cast. The hands should move in unison as the fly rod is rotated. The line would be transferred from the non-dominant hand, placed under the first or second finger of the dominant hand and pinched against the grip as the anchor point for the line. This will change slightly when “hauling” line, but this is a later topic.

**No Slack:** All slack must be removed between the fly line and the fly rod before the cast is begun; otherwise, the rod will not begin to bend or load energy against resistance of the fly line as soon as movement of the rod begins. Nor will the line begin to move. Slack can be removed by pointing the tip of the fly rod at the fly line as it lies on the water such that the fly rod and line form a straight line with one another. Any slack can be removed with the rod tip pointing at the line by stripping the slack line through the line guides and

right finger with the left hand. The line should be held with the right finger for the back and forward cast, once slack is removed.

**Control Wrist Flex – Do Not Allow Wrist to Break Over:** The fly rod must be moved by flexing the forearm forward and backward at the side and from the elbow with only a controlled amount of wrist bend. Excessive bending or breaking over of the wrist will remove bend and power from the rod tip and add arc to the rotation of the rod tip. Breaking over of the wrist, especially in the back cast, also essentially eliminates the stop or pause at the end of the stroke by allowing the rod tip to continue rotating. This dampens the energy that was stored in the loading of the rod and results in a wide loop of the fly line that does not properly complete the back or forward cast. Controlling wrist flex is key to controlling rod arc and making an effective cast.

**Rod Tip Must Rotate in a Straight Line:** The fly line follows or mimics the movement or rotation of the rod tip. Therefore, the rod tip must rotate (similar to the movement of a spoke in a wagon wheel) in a straight line towards the desired target for the fly line to also follow and unroll in a straight and accurate path towards the target. It should also be understood that rod arc and bend must match (i.e. less bend/less arc for short cast versus more bend/more arc for longer cast) to maintain a straight path of the rod tip and produce a tight, narrow loop.

**The Stroke and Rod Tip Arc/Length Must Match Line Length:** A short length of line that is being carried by the rod tip weights less than a longer length of line when being cast. The length of stroke at the hand and in turn arc length at the rod tip must match the length of line being cast in order for the rod to properly load or bend in resistance to the amount of line. Stroke is the movement of the hand and arm; whereas, arc is the movement of the rod tip, both front to back and back to front during both the forward and back casts. Generally, a short stroke and rod tip arc length is appropriate for a short line; whereas, a longer stroke and arc length is required for casting a longer line. Remember to control wrist bend, and the rod tip must rotate in a straight path. A short stroke for casting a short length of line may only require movement of the hand by rotating or flexing at the elbow, but a longer stroke will require controlled wrist flex and rotation at both the elbow and shoulder. Remember, short stroke for short line, longer stroke for longer line.

**Proper Application of Power:** The stroke and movement of the rod should not be a movement of continuous speed or power. Rather, the stroke moves slowest at its beginning and accelerates smoothly and continuously with a sudden increase in speed or power snap at the end of the stroke or arc of the rod tip followed by an abrupt stop and pause at the end of the stroke. Think of holding a paint brush full of water over your shoulder and moving it forward in an accelerating movement that ends with a snap that throws the water forward from the paint brush towards a spot on a wall. Move the paint brush too quickly at the beginning of the stroke, and the water will fall out of the brush onto your shoulder. Now, think of holding a cup of water and tossing the water over your shoulder and backward from the cup. You use the same accelerating movement as was

used to toss water from the paint brush, only in a different direction. These analogies require strokes that essentially are identical to the forward and backward casts.

**Practice:** Practice can be done in almost any back yard or open lawn area; it need not be done over water. Practice is essential for developing your confidence and proficiency and to enjoy using the fly rod as it is intended...to catch fish.

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