

# The Six-Step Teaching Method

by Bruce Richards

Since the inception of the FFF Casting Instructor Certification program I have had the pleasure of working with, and certifying, quite a few instructors. About half the instructors I've tested have failed. Some have not been able to make the necessary casts, but more have failed because they did not exhibit the ability to adequately analyze and correct casting flaws. Some of them fully understood casting, but lacked a method to clearly and concisely communicate that knowledge to a student. If followed, this 6 step procedure provides a logical way for an instructor to analyze any casting problem, and communicate the cure in a way that most students will understand.

The heart of good instruction is communication. Too many instructors try to cure a casting problem before the student even knows what the problem is or why it is a problem. Also, some instructors try to cure every problem they see at once, and don't use clear, concise language that the student will understand. All of these things lead to a confused and often frustrated student, and instructor.

I have been using a six-step method that helps instructors more effectively convey their knowledge to a student.

The six steps analyze the cause of the problem from "top to bottom", then the cure of the problem from "bottom to top". The first step of the CAUSE is describing to the student what is wrong with the (1) LINE. The next step is to explain what the (2) ROD is doing to cause the line problem. The last step of the cause analysis is to explain what the (3) BODY (usually hand/wrist/arm) is doing to make the rod and line misbehave.

The CURE part of the process tackles the same steps, but in reverse, "bottom to top" order. First, explain what to do differently with the (4) BODY. Next describe what this makes the (5) ROD do differently, and then how that affects the (6) LINE to get the desired results.

Each step should be as concisely stated as possible, extra words can confuse, especially beginners. Only work on one flaw at a time, start with the one that is most detrimental to progress. Speak slowly and clearly and demonstrate

what you mean with the rod if appropriate. If you demonstrate, make sure you cast as slowly as possible and exaggerate what is right and wrong so the difference is clear to the student.

This can be an interesting exercise for an instructor. It is imperative that the instructor has a very thorough understanding of the dynamics of both good casting and bad. If you try this and find you struggle with any of the steps it may indicate that your understanding is not as complete as you thought. I often suggest posing a particular casting problem then writing down the 6 steps of cause and cure. Better yet, have someone else pose the scenario and analyze your 6 steps.

Here is an example of the process, analyzing a typical beginners big loops. Assume loops and loop terminology have been explained to the student.

**CAUSE (top to bottom, line to body)**

LINE – “See the big, wide loop we talked about?”

ROD – “Remember that the big, wide loops are caused when the rod tip travels in a big, wide arc?”

BODY – “See how your wrist is bending a lot and how that makes the rod tip travel in the big arc?”

**CURE (bottom to top, body to line)**

BODY – “Don’t bend your wrist so much”

ROD – “See how that makes the rod tip travel in a much straighter line?”

Line – “Look, your loop got much smaller”

I know this seems simplistic, but it really works for both the student and the instructor in most cases. The student will probably not be throwing perfect loops after the exercise, but the loops should be improved and the student should know why. At this point the instructor should re-analyze the students cast, decide what is now the biggest problem, and proceed to the next series of 6 steps. It may be that the loops are still too big in which case the same steps would be repeated. The caster might be throwing tight loops now, but they are tailing. Applying the 6 step process to tailing loops works exactly the same.

I will grant that this tool works best for students with a more analytical mind set and may not be effective with everyone, but then no instructional technique is. I have found that it works with a large majority of students, and

offers a good, clear, easy to remember guideline for an instructor to follow. Every casting flaw can be addressed with this process, but it does demand a complete understanding of all casts. Pose a scenario for yourself and see how you do!