



The Tailing Loop

*The Federation of Fly Fishers Newsletter for Casting Instructors
Winter 1997*

THE LESSON PLAN

Your Guide to Better Casting Instruction

by Floyd Franke

If you were given the opportunity to travel to some exotic fishing location, you would begin early to gather the information necessary to assure the success of your trip. It would be important to know, for example, where you were going, how you were going to get there and the kinds of equipment you should take. These questions, or more accurately their answers, can be used as a plan to guide you in your preparation and eventual travel. You can develop a similar plan to guide your casting instruction.

Many of the questions that would confront you as the traveling fisherman mentioned above would also be applicable to you as you plan a casting lesson. "Where are you going?" becomes "What are you going to teach?" "How are you going to get there?" becomes "How are you going to teach?" "What do you need to take?" becomes "What, if any, special equipment or preparation is required?" These questions form the basis of the lesson plan as seen in the sample below.

LESSON PLAN: ROLL CAST (45 minutes)

I. Objectives(s): Students will be able to roll cast 30 feet or more.

II. Teaching Functions:

A. Use a description of the roll cast and when to use it to focus students' attention on the lesson. (5 minutes)

B. Use a series of 6 numbered steps to demonstrate the roll cast as follows: (5 minutes)

- Lift rod tip and line.
- Adjust line either to left or right side.
- Stop! Let line fall, come to rest.
- Check for proper wrist, hand and arm position.

- Align target.
- Accelerate to a stop (Chop!).

C. Guided practice under supervision of instructor(s) using only rod butts to repeat "B" above. (5 minutes)

D. Guided practice moves to pond, where practice continues using rod and line. (25 minutes)

E. Provide closure by reviewing some of the students' roll casting faults and ways to correct them. (5 minutes)

III. Mastery: Students will make repeated roll casts of 30 feet or more without assistance.

IV. Preparation: Check for yarn flies on all rods. Bring extra yarn, spare leaders and tippet material.

Lesson plans need not be long or complicated and can be tailored to what works best for you. Notice that the model above has been expanded beyond the basic focus on what is going to be taught and how it is going to be taught. It also includes concerns for how instructional time will be divided and how the students will be expected to demonstrate their understanding and mastery.

Careful use of allocated time assures that key points are given more time than less important ones and that the lesson progresses smoothly throughout its allotted time period.

Providing opportunities for the student to demonstrate understanding or mastery is important because they can be used to focus attention on the task at hand. Furthermore, a student's performance can help an instructor decide whether to move on in the lesson or to remain on a task while trying a different teaching approach.

Lesson plans play an important role in quality casting instruction. Their value is not limited to just looking forward to where you are going, but to where you have been, as well. If, for example, a part of the lesson is found to be unsatisfac-

tory, the lesson plan can be modified to improve the lesson in the future. Whether looking ahead to an upcoming lesson or behind to a lesson just completed, using lesson plans can make you a better casting instructor.

If you find you need some help writing your lesson plans, school teachers in your community can be excellent sources of information. Writing lesson plans is an all-too-familiar part of their professional duties. In addition, if you have access to a college library, you should be able to find some good reference materials, including textbooks and study guides. Be assured that whatever time it takes to develop your own lesson plan is time well spent. Good luck and tight loops.

A NOTE ON TIMING THE HAUL

by Bob Pelzl

When performing the double haul, timing is a critical element—if the timing is off, the haul may not help at all. If the timing is too far off, it can even interfere with the cast. With beginning students, we are usually happy if they manage to haul at any time during which the rod is being loaded. The haul is working for them to some extent, but often doesn't seem to be as efficient as it could be. Further refining the timing can dramatically improve the efficiency of their haul. I have found that the following explanation often helps.

“When executing the double haul, the line hand should accelerate the haul so that its velocity is greatest at the instant of greatest rod deflection in order to impart the maximum added velocity to the fly line. This is accomplished with a short, rapid tug with the line hand when the rod is maximally loaded. If applied at this time, most of the energy will go into directly accelerating the line, and only a small amount will go into further bending the rod. If applied at any other time during the casting stroke, more of the energy will go into bending the rod and therefore will not be available to accelerate the line. It is true that some of the energy stored in the bent rod will be recovered by the fly line; however, accelerating the line directly with the haul is more efficient.”



“YOUR CHOLESTEROL LEVEL IS FINE BUT YOUR DOUBLE-HAUL NEEDS WORK.”

THE ONE-TIME LESSON

By Gretchen Yearous

My fishing club, the San Diego Flyfishers, teaches casting every Sunday, free to the general public. Most of the private lessons I do are with a student who wants a tune-up or a first lesson before going on that dream trip. Whether it is a tune-up, a request for help with casting sink tips, shooting heads, or dry flies, the basics prevail in all styles. I think my role as a teacher (especially in these types of requests) is to give students simple guidelines for self-check when they are out in the wild, away from tutelage. In order to help the memory retain more of the basics, I invented the acronym “STEW”. Your casting is really in a STEW when you forget to follow the basics.

S = SLACK — check to see if you are starting your cast high, such as 11:00, instead of lowering the rod tip to 9:00, pulling in the slack and then starting the backcast. Too much slack prevents proper rod loading.

TE = TEMPO, RHYTHM, TIMING, PAUSE — practice different pause times to find the best performance relative to line length and rod design. Speed up and slow down the cast. Note: this is when tailing loops may form. Keep the stroke smooth, with the acceleration stage between 10:00 and 1:00 on the backcast.

W = Wrist — what is the wrist doing? Is the thumb pointed parallel to the ground at the top of the backcast? Are you flipping the wrist like a flimsy towel or is the wrist under control, stopping the thumb at midnight and completing the cast with a firm forward stop? If you are too wristy, try energizing the rod using mostly the forearm instead of mostly the wrist.

Most first-time students aren't ready for heavy terminology, so a quick acronym helps. The more experienced student may benefit from relating the elements of STEW to rod design, engineering, physics, line trajectory, loop, arc, line speed, etc.

A couple of analogies combined with STEW bring my best results. I feel I have accomplished one of my goals when the student realizes what it is to let the rod do the work. An easy visual analogy that works for me is to compare operating a gun with casting a flyrod. They both have to be loaded, and aimed at a target. The gun fires the bullet, just as the rod shoots the line after the caster has used proper technique to load and unload their rod. Steering a car is similar: oversteer and crash. Oversteer your flyrod and pile up your line.

John Vanderhoof, who has long been involved with international casting tournaments, stresses to instructors that they should have a very large bag of analogies. This is especially true when you have only one hour to achieve groundbreaking results.

VIDEO REVIEW

FFF's "15 Most Common Casting Errors".

Available in VHS videocassette from the FFF office in Bozeman, MT. Price—\$13.95, includes shipping

In the world of science, the word "elegant" is used to describe a demonstration characterized by precision, neatness and simplicity. FFF's new video, the first ever for fly casting instructors, fits that description perfectly.

In order to help casting instructors hone their skills in analyzing casting faults, the Casting Certification Program has produced a brief, masterful video that takes us through fifteen of the most common casting faults. Divided into two sections, the first part of the tape shows a caster demonstrating the fifteen errors. He does each one four times identically so your eye can "learn" through repetition. Each error is numbered on-screen so the viewer can refer to the accompanying text for a description. For example, #8 in the text reads, "The forward cast starts fast and ends slow." The video shows him doing just that, on four successive casts.

In the second section, he shows the fifteen errors being demonstrated alternately three times with a correct cast. The accompanying text for #9 reads, "The caster attempts to shoot line but releases it too early. The line should not be released until after the rod is stopped at the end of the forward stroke. This common error is corrected by having the caster say 'Stop, shoot.'" The alternating correct and incorrect casts in the video illustrate this perfectly.

In a novel approach, there is no voice-over. The soundtrack consists solely of sounds from the caster's rod, line and reel as they make the noises we have heard so many times from our novice students—the sound the line makes when the caster releases it too early as he attempts to shoot it, and the sound it makes when she does not pause between her back cast and forward cast.

In the concise written introduction, we are instructed to watch the movements of the caster's hand, arm, rod, and line. When we combine in our mind the video, the text and the soundtrack, we have a powerful learning experience. We also come to understand how much more effective we can be as teachers when we can clearly demonstrate the wrong way and the right way, side by side.

There is a very effective subtext to this tape—keep things simple and focus on essentials. The tape is just 13 minutes long, the text is printed on two sides of a single 8" by 7" sheet, and the camera work enables us to see precisely what a casting instructor should see. The producer of this tape has choreographed our learning experience in just the way (I think) he would have us teach our students—elegantly.

by Macauley Lord

COMING EVENTS

PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED!

March 1; Washington Council Conclave, Bellevue, WA; Basic & Master Certification with Steve Rajeff & Denise Maxwell; contact Don Simonson (206) 932-4925

March 1; Fred Hall Sports Show, Long Beach, CA; Basic with the Rohrs; contact Allan Rohrer (714) 756-9286

March 29; Western Rocky Mtn Conclave, Logan, UT; Basic with Bob Jacklin; contact John Neuhold (801) 752-3864 or njohn@sisna.com

April 5; Livingston, MT; Basic Certification with Rod Walinchus; contact Evelyn Taylor (406) 585-7592

May 3; Livingston, MT; Basic Certification with Rod Walinchus; contact Evelyn Taylor (406) 585-7592

May 1-3; Southeast Council Conclave, Pensacola, FL; Basic & Master Certification with Tom Jindra & Jon Cave; contact Tom Jindra (504) 392-7511

August 6 & 8; Grand Rapids, MI; International Fly Fishing Show/Conclave; Basic & Master Certification; contact Evelyn Taylor (406) 585-7592



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We welcome your articles, letters, teaching tips and cartoons. All materials should be submitted to the National Office: FFF Casting Program, P.O. Box 1595, Bozeman, MT 59771. (406) 585-7596 Fax

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THE TEACHER AND THE BEGINNER

by Bob Stehwen

As casting instructors our goal is to teach the beginner good casting techniques. We want them to have a good start so they can better enjoy the sport of fly fishing. More often than not, we teach the roll cast and basic overhead cast. Then we send our students on their way and most are going to go fishing—but are they really ready?

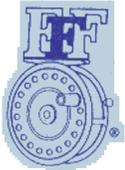
We have taught them to cast but where can they fish? The beginner is restricted to medium-to-large streams or lakes where they have plenty of room. Small streams must be meadow streams with no trees so they have room for a back cast. Many areas of our country have lots of small-to-medium streams with very brushy banks. There can even be overhanging trees. Granted, we have taught our students the roll cast but I really do not consider that enough ammunition for them to go astream.

I suggest we give our novice students credit for their ability to learn, and expand our instruction to include horizontal and possibly backhand casting. Some instructors already suggest that students come slightly off vertical to see loop formation or to watch their back cast. Why not take things a little farther and teach them the horizontal cast? After I explain that this cast is simply the vertical cast tipped to different angles to one side, my students seem

to pick it up quite quickly. With a short line they also become more aware of loop shape and formation and they more easily notice when their cast is overpowered or underpowered. These things all benefit the vertical cast as well. Most importantly, it starts the students thinking and asking questions. What can we use this for? What fishing situations do these casts apply to? A better dialogue is established between student and instructor.

I tell them that they can now better fish some of the small brushy streams in our area. They can stay out of the water and use the horizontal cast to avoid the brush and also keep from spooking fish by wading up the middle of the stream. The rod is kept low and reduces movement the fish might see in such close quarters. Another benefit is that if they do make a mistake in judgment or timing their fly isn't caught in a tree or bush eight feet or more off the ground.

Feedback from past students has continually reinforced my belief that the extra effort to teach just one more casting technique pays big dividends for my students and possibly for yours also.



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