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**Principles Of Learning In Flycasting Instruction**

*By Michael Franz*

The six principles of learning are **Readiness, Primacy, Exercise, Effect, Intensity** and **Recency**. The following is a method for applying them to casting instruction.

Readiness:

- Place the students in a relaxed atmosphere with all anxiety removed.
- State your objectives.
- Explain how the instruction will progress.
- Break the ice and keep it melting.
- Answer questions.

Primacy:

- Say things precisely; use proper terminology without being overly technical.  
Do not allow the students to practice tasks incorrectly for extended periods.  
Use minimal supervision; students must practice a task to learn it.

Exercise:

Assign practice towards a reachable goal, because those things most often repeated are best remembered.

Effect:

- Learning is strengthened when pleasurable satisfying.  
Assign tasks that can be accomplished.  
Praise your students.

Advance toward the goal or desired effect.  
Build feelings of confidence about a reachable goal.

Avoid feelings of frustration, confusion and defeat.

- Experiences should be positive and satisfying.

Intensity:

- A vivid, dramatic, or exciting learning experience teaches more than a routine or boring experience.

A student will learn more from the real thing than a substitute.

Make learning fun!

Use training aids.

Recency

The things most recently learned are best remembered. The further a student is removed from a new fact or understanding, the more difficult it is to remember.

Plan a summary for the lesson. Repeat, re-state or reemphasize the important points of instruction within the lesson.

Use a building block technique to go from a known to an unknown.

Review the previous lesson before giving new instruction.

*Michael Franz is a Certified Casting Instructor. He holds post-certification classes for casting instructors on writing lesson plans, on laws of learning and on teaching skills. He lives in Naples, Florida*

# Casting Programs: Curricula, Insurance, Pay and Medical Preparedness

By Thomas Neil Zacoi

To the best of my knowledge, no one has identified what casting skills and techniques the certified instructor should teach to his or her students at a weekend school. I collected brochures from 40 of the top fly fishing schools in this country and found striking differences in their curricula. In an effort to find out if there is consensus regarding what students should be taught, I turned to the experts.

I mailed a questionnaire to twenty-four of the preeminent fly fishing instructors in America and asked them the following questions: (1) During a two-day, sixteen-hour beginner, intermediate or advanced school, what casting skills and techniques would you introduce to your students? (2) Do you carry insurance? (3) What is a fair wage for instructors? (4) Do you have any medical training and what provisions have you made for emergencies?

Based on the results of the eighteen people who replied, some patterns emerged. One overwhelming response was that intermediate schools are a waste of time. Therefore, I've divided the techniques and skills to be taught into two major categories – beginner and advanced. Here's what the respondents told me:

## Beginner's School

—Beginners should learn the right way to put a rod together as well as take it apart and store it safely. This would include mounting the reel and rigging the line correctly.

—Beginners should be taught the pick-up and lay-down, the roll cast, false casting and mending.

—It is essential for beginners to learn how to form and control loops.

—Beginners should be taught proper line handling techniques, including how to initially get the fly on the water and stripping and shooting line.

—If time allows, beginners can also be introduced to casting off their opposite shoulder, casting in windy conditions, changing the direction of a cast, the reach cast, the roll cast Pick-up and single-haul pick-up.

## Advanced School

—The majority of advanced students need to re-learn how to form tight, aerodynamic loops. They will also need to review the roll cast, the pick-up and lay-down and other basics.

—Advanced casters should know the double haul, single haul, oval cast, parachute cast, tuck cast and the wiggle

—If time allows, the students can also be introduced to aerial mends, casting with their non-dominant hand, curve casts to the left and right, and the saltwater quick-cast.

## Insurance and Compensation

Instructors who teach for a fly fishing shop are usually covered under a blanket insurance policy. Coverage varies however, and it's important for the individual shop owner to contact his or her agent for the specifics. Many respondents carry their own insurance, which ranged from \$300,000 to \$1,000,000. Further information on this important topic can be found in *Black's Annual Buyer's Directory—Fly Fishing Edition*. The respondents also agreed that instructor compensation should start at \$10 per hour for a first year instructor, and increase to \$25 an hour for a lead instructor. They further agreed that for an eight-hour day all instructors should be paid at least \$100.

## Medical Preparedness

The experts were unanimous in their opinion that all instructors, especially the school director, should have an up-to-date first aid card, have CPR training and carry a facemask, and know how to remove a hook from flesh. Every school must have a well stocked first aid kit on premises as well as a directory of emergency phone numbers, directions to the closest health care facility and a cell-phone with a fully charged battery. It is also important to find out in advance if any of your students have special dietary needs, have allergies or present a health risk. This will necessitate mailing a questionnaire to all prospective students. Last, it is imperative that the entire staff know what to do and whom to contact in an emergency. Most noted they would call 911.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on these results and the additional comments made by many of the respondents, I have drawn the following conclusions:

Fly fishing schools tend to be divided into two major categories – fishing and casting. At a "fishing school," students are exposed to all the basics, including casting, entomology, knot tying, stream etiquette, reading the water and safe wading techniques. In contrast, a "casting school" places its emphasis on teaching the widest variety of casting and fishing techniques possible, with minimal time spent on anything else. Spey casting should be reserved for a separate school.

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# Teaching Casting Mechanics On-Stream

By Phil Gay

I teach casting mechanics to beginners by first explaining them verbally while using my hands to illustrate them visually. Next, I demonstrate these mechanics with the rod. I keep the mechanics simple and tell the student I am going to ask them to repeat them. (This makes them really concentrate on the mechanics since they know they are going to be "tested".) The mechanics I teach are as follows:

## #1: Short cast, short stroke. Longer cast, longer stroke.

I tell them that there is a relationship between the length of line we are casting and how far we need to move the fly rod. I then demonstrate a short cast and a longer cast. I also demonstrate that you can't make a long cast with a short stroke.

## #2: All casting movements of the rod start slow and end fast, followed by a stop.

I use analogies like flipping something off of a spatula for the backcast and hammering or flinging the water out of a paintbrush for the forward cast. I emphasize that the back and forward cast are mirror images of each other in terms of speed and power. I then demonstrate a 25-30 foot cast using a very slow loading move followed by a very fast power snap/speed-up-and-stop so the student can visually see the slow-to-fast technique.

## #3: Short cast, short pause. Longer cast, longer pause.

I tell them there is a relationship between the length of line they are casting and how long they need to pause after the stop. I remind them that the line is the weight and that it must get out in front of or behind the rod to function as a weight to facilitate rod loading. I use the candy cane/ J-on-its-side analogy as a visual reference for proper timing. Using a 25-30 foot cast, I demonstrate correct and incorrect (both early and late) timing. I make a point of saying that late timing is less of a sin than early timing (cutting off the backcast).

## #4: The hand and rod must move forward and back in a single plane.

I demonstrate casting in plane in the vertical, at 45 degrees and 90 degrees as well as 45 degrees off the opposite shoulder. I then demonstrate sweeping or curving through multiple planes. This is best visualized in the vertical. I tell the student to always lead the rod back with the back of the thumb and push it forward with the pad of the thumb. I tell them that sweeping is usually caused by taking the rod back with the back of the hand or rolling the shoulder to see the back cast.

## On the Water

Once I've completed the explanation and demonstration of the casting mechanics I move into the pick up and lay down drill, line hand use, shooting a small amount of line, and the roll cast. All of this is done best on the water while facing downstream. Over the years I have determined that the quickest way to get students started is to get on the rod with the student and have them feel several casts with you. After I do this, I keep my hand on the rod and feel what the student is doing. (*Be sure to use proper technique when getting on the rod with the student. Be careful not to pull the student's arm out of position.*) Once off the rod, I have the student cast and I make immediate corrections to keep them from getting off-track. When necessary I get back on the rod with them. I try to limit this to about 30-40 minutes. The most common mistakes will be excessive rod motion usually associated with excessive wrist motion, lack of power on the back cast and excessive power on the forward cast, and moving the rod at a constant speed (usually too fast), just to name a few.

Next, I put the student cross-current and introduce the basic reach cast, mending, and the use of the rolling pickup. I explain the importance of good drifts and that the reach cast and mending are essential skills in achieving these drifts. I try to never get the student casting more than 45 degrees up stream so that they can control their drifts with simple reach casts/mends and don't have to recover too much line before the next cast.

I also introduce them to my guide terminology as it relates to casting and fishing. I learned to do this after working with a student who was also an engineer. After telling him to pull several times when the strike indicator went down I humorously asked him, "What part of pull don't you understand?" He said, "I don't understand any of it." I said, "Any of it? Pull seems pretty simple to me." He said, "No it's not! I don't know when to pull, how to pull, how hard to pull or what to do after I pull." Now I explain these things ahead of time.

*Phil Gay, a retired naval officer and pilot, commanded the aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy during the Gulf War. He serves on the Board of Governors and lives in Alexandria, VA.*

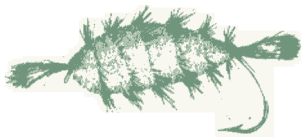
It seems as though few fly fishers will admit they need help, let alone additional instruction. Most of the respondents agreed that many students, especially men, tend to overestimate their ability. Consequently, none of the experts offer an intermediate school, and most have given up on offering an advanced school. Those instructors who do offer advanced instruction mentioned that too many of the self-proclaimed "advanced students," need to spend considerable time reviewing the basics.

Regardless of a student's ability and the type of school he or she attends, the professional, certified instructor must be prepared for *all* emergencies, as well as be able to teach and correct a wide variety of fly fishing and fly casting problems – from the rudimentary to the complex.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank the following people who took time out of their busy schedules to participate in this survey: Fran Betters, Gary Borger, Jason Borger, Al Caucchi, Floyd Franke, Joe Humphreys, Lefty Kreh, Mel Krieger, Mike Mercer, Lori-Ann Murphy, Harry Murray, Andy Puyans, Ed Shenk, Doug Swisher, Randi Swisher, Rhea Topping, Craig Uecker and Emily Zeiders.

*Tom Zacoï is a Certified Casting Instructor and the author of Intelligent Troutng and Flies, Ties & Lies: Including Chauncy Lively's Favorite Flies. He lives in Venetia, PA.*



## **Helping Handle**

*By Allan Rohrer*

There is one very important skill that all good instructors must have in common to be successful. The instructor must be able to explain how to correct the student's casting errors in a way the student understands so that the student correct his own errors.

Here is a prop I have used in teaching students to make a good stroke: it's just a short section of wood. I take an old broom—you could also use a dowel—and saw off about a 14-inch-long section of the handle. I paint the tip-end black, adding a small half-inch section of white paint at the very tip-top for visibility.

It's been my experience that when students are casting with a rod and line, they watch the fly line rather than their arm and hand movements. With only the broom handle, you can illustrate several things such as arm, elbow and hand movement. Also, you can mention power application, stopping front-and-back and tip travel, without their being distracted by looking at the line when they make a cast. By alternating back and forth between the casting rod and the broom handle, many are able to correct several problems. Try it, and get a handle on some common casting problems.

*Allan Rohrer is a founding member of the Board of Governors and has been a pillar of the Long Beach Casting Club for decades. He lives in Newport Beach, CA.*

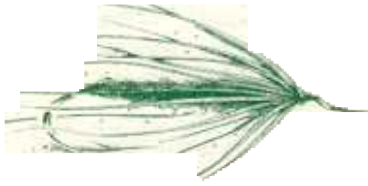
## **From The Editor**

We have a new Program Administrator in **Julie Nelson**, who was brought in to fill Evelyn Taylor's shoes. She has a degree in fisheries biology with a minor in how to tactfully get a recalcitrant Loop editor to do his job. If you haven't already, you'll find that it's a pleasure to work with her.

More than ever, I am impressed by the submissions The Loop is receiving from its readers. Over the years, you have grown more discerning about what you read, what you teach and how you teach it. That's another indication to me that our program is doing what it set out to do. A special thanks to those of you who submitted responses to Mel's question about line stretch. Many of them came via the **online casting instructor's forum** run by Master Instructor Guy Manning. There's some impressive deep thinking about casting going on at that site. To sign up, contact Guy at [grhen@ix.netcom.com](mailto:grhen@ix.netcom.com).

A committee formed by the BOG has developed an extensive **Master Test Study Guide** for those wishing to prepare for the Master test. The guide, still in draft form, is based on a program developed by Master Instructor Dusty Sprague. The version I've seen will eliminate the unease many Master applicants have felt in wondering if they are adequately prepared for the test. Dusty's work on the Master Study Guide is an example of how one Master can make a big difference in the training of casting instructors around the country.

Another reminder, **all Masters are invited to observe the Board of Governors' Annual Meeting** in Livingston on Tuesday, August 6. We hope to see all of you there!



## Nighttime Videotaping

By Bill Gammel

As a casting instructor, you are required to do some in-depth analysis of the casting stroke. This generally arises in one of three ways. Most often you will be asked to help a caster correct a difficult casting problem. You will need to be able to watch the cast and identify the problem. Sometimes you will need to explain a bit of fly casting theory or a specific technique and will need to show the movement of the rod in order to thoroughly explain the topic. Thirdly, you will evaluate new teaching methods or casting theories developed by your peers. I spend a good deal of time determining whether or not the new method or theory is logical. Not all statements being made today about fly casting pass this test. Therefore, I suggest that each instructor be skeptical of all fly casting instruction. Do not assume a statement is logical until you have personally analyzed it. If you do this, you will be sure that you are correct when using the method or teaching the theory. This will give you a great deal of confidence when discussing or teaching fly casting.

Videotape analysis is my preferred method of reviewing a cast. It is a big help with problem-solving and theory review. Some of us have spent countless hours poring over poorly lit home video, straining to see the intricate parts of the fly cast. With a little effort, this problem can be easily fixed by videotaping yourself at night. Most towns have a lighted golf course range. I have found that for the price of a basket of balls, the owners really don't care if you golf or fly cast. The night-lights will provide a direct illumination of the line throughout the cast and the loops and the activity of the line will be easily seen on video. However, the rod often does not show up well. Therefore, I wrap the blank with white Teflon plumber's tape, which makes the rod highly visible on the video screen.

The tape can be removed and will leave no residue. It is extremely light and I have noticed no change in the action of the rod. This little bit of effort will allow you to easily see the movement of the rod and the all-important rod tip path. With a light-colored line, white rod, and pitch-black background, nighttime videotaping will allow you to learn more about fly casting than you ever thought possible.

*Bill Gammel is a member of the Board of Governors and the author of The Essentials of Fly Casting, published by the FFF. His new video is entitled Teaching Yourself To Fly Cast. He lives Highlands, TX.*

## 2002 Black's Annual Buyer's Directory Available

*Black's Annual Buyer's Directory: Fly Fishing Edition* is a publication that lists sources for flyfishing equipment, shows, expos, and instruction. All the FFF instructors who are currently certified at time of publication each year are listed as FFF certified casting instructors in the directory. The guide lists each caster by city and state as well as providing contact information. The guide also contains several editorials and charts that are of interest to the fly fishing community.

The 2002 edition of *Black's* is available for instructors for only the cost of shipping and handling, \$3.50. If you would like to order one of *Black's 2002 Annual Buyer's Directories*, you may contact Julie Nelson at the FFF National Office (406-585-7592) or send a check or money order to the following address:

FFF  
Attn: Black's  
P.O. Box 1595  
Bozeman, MT 59771

