

The Loop

The Federation of Fly Fishers



A SIX-STEP METHOD

by Bruce Richards

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 all 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). In order to address those concerns, I use a six-step method that allows an instructor to clearly and concisely analyze, communicate, and then cure casting problems.

The six steps analyze the cause of the problem from top to bottom, then the cure of the problem from bottom to top. The initial step of the CAUSE analysis is to describe 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 final step of the 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 order (bottom to top). The initial step is to explain what to do differently with the (4) BODY. The next step is to describe how the body modifies the motion of the (5) ROD, and then how that affects the (6) LINE in order to produce the desired results.

Each step should be as concisely stated as possible—extra words can be confusing, especially to 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.

The six-steps can be a learning process for the instructor, too. It is imperative that the instructor has a 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 six steps of cause and cure. Better yet, have someone else pose the scenario and analyze your six steps.

What follows is an example of the process, analyzing the typical open loops of a beginner. Assume that both 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 in most cases it really works for both the student and the instructor. In the example given, the student would likely not be throwing perfect loops after one pass through the exercise, but the loops should be improved and the stu-

dent should know why. At that point the instructor would re-analyze the student's cast, decide on the next biggest problem (or repeat the loop exercise), and then proceed to the next series of six steps.

I will grant that this tool works best for students with a more analytical mind set and may not be effective with everyone. However, 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!

Bruce Richards is known at Scientific Anglers as "Big Daddy" Bruce, Liege of Lines and Prince of Plastics. In his other life, Bruce is a member of the Board of Governors and contributes frequently to The Loop.

MAKING THE SPEY TRANSITION

by Paul Dolbec

THIS IS THE SECOND in a series of articles highlighting the enjoyment of using, and teaching others to use, a Spey rod. This article focuses on getting your student prepared to learn how to Spey Cast.

My previous article, *Spey Casting—Myths, Benefits & Differences*, dispelled some basic myths associated with Spey Casting. Like the previous article, anything that I share with you is based on my experiences as a practitioner and an instructor. As instructors we learn more about how to teach if we listen to what the student is ask-

ing, and we add more value to the student's learning process when we speak from experience.

Most of the students I have taught to Spey Cast had varying degrees of experience with a single-handed rod. For this reason, I recommend beginning the lesson with a review of the student's casting skills (pretending that you're qualifying the student for certification is a good way to do this). Once the review is over you can draw parallels between what the student already does against what it is that you will be teaching. Then, using the student's favorite 7 or 8-weight outfit, go through the following exercises together:

1) Ask the student what his or her fishing objectives are, or why he or she wants to learn this new skill. You'll find that some students are preparing to go on a trip where sinking as well as floating lines are required to be used. Find out what the student ultimately needs to know in order to succeed!

2) Ask the student to do an overhead cast to 60 feet. Does the student stop the rod properly on both the back and forward cast? If not, coach the student on doing so. Casting motions (good and bad) are magnified with a 14 to 16 foot rod.

3) Ask the student to Roll Cast to 50 feet. Again look for solid rod stops and ensure that the cast is executed crisply, while forming a tight loop on the forward cast. The set-up on the Roll Cast should be deliberate and not hurried. This skill is directly transferable to the Spey Cast. Allow the student to practice this to your satisfaction. Is the behavior consistent?

4) Have the student pick up at least forty or thirty feet of line, respectively, with each of the two casts.

5) Demonstrate the Single and Double Spey Casts using the student's outfit. Make each cast using the same terminology you used in the previous steps.

6) Now get the student to try it! The long rod comes later.

This approach is based on using the four-part method of teaching fly casting; that is, (1) pick up, (2) back cast, stop the rod, (3) forward cast, stop the rod, and (4) presentation. Parallels can then be drawn between what you are asking the student to do in Spey Casting and what he or she can already achieve in Overhead and Roll Casting. If there is a phase of Spey Casting that the student has trouble with, you might put the student back on the nine-foot, single-hander and repeat the process.

Finally, do not underestimate the hand position on the single-handed casts, and note how the student stops the rod. The hand-over-hand position used in Spey Casting is critical to making an efficient Spey Cast, and will later contribute to a positive learning experience for the student.

The next article will feature the Spey Casting stroke itself, while again drawing the parallels to what we already can do with the single-handed rod.

Paul was Certified while teaching for L.L. Bean. He continues to teach fly casting and fly fishing through clinics and other venues.

A DEFENSE OF FALSE CASTING

by Macauley Lord

IN HIS BOOK, *Presentation*, Gary Borger writes, "Most anglers make far, far too many false casts. Use them only when necessary—which isn't often." Few casting instructors would dispute the spirit of these assertions, but I disagree that false casting isn't often necessary. On the contrary, frequent false casting is needed in most of the fly fishing we do. At the risk of being presumptuous, I'd edit Gary's statement to read, "Most anglers make far, far too many ineffectual false casts. Use as few as necessary. Make every false cast count for as much as you can, especially when shooting line."

Unless you fish 30 feet and cast exclusively on spring creeks, you false cast a lot. To illustrate the point, let's take these two scenarios:

- You are on the Madison, casting upstream to pockets and stripping slack as the line drifts toward you. To get the fly back upstream you must make two or three false casts—as few as necessary—that includes shooting.

- You are streamer-fishing for stripers, smallmouth, browns, or any species that requires you to animate the fly by stripping in the line. How do you get the fly back out there? You make a series of false casts—again, as few as necessary—combined with shooting.

Almost any fishing that requires you to strip in the line, whether it is to animate the fly or to control slack during a dead-drift, also requires that that you false cast and shoot line to get the fly back out again. The chief exception to this is when you need only one cast to shoot the line back out to your required fishing distance. Think

about how many times in your typical non-spring-creek fishing day when you have to make multiple strokes—false casts—in order to shoot the line back out to where you need it to go.

In fairness to Gary and the other esteemed instructors who say similar things, I think his comments about false casting were made mostly with short-cast, dead-drift trout fishing in mind. Any instructor winces when seeing someone quartering upstream on the Yellowstone's Buffalo Ford, waving the rod endlessly back-and-forth to no apparent end. But, I think we instructors have conflated a term—false casting—with an action for which we have no specific term—false casting combined with shooting.

Rather than emphasize to our students that they should false cast as little as possible, I think we should stress that they need to make as few false casts as possible to achieve the goal. We should be particularly careful to teach them to shoot the maximum amount of line they can with each false cast, or to use the fewest number of strokes to dry the fly or change direction, thereby reducing the number of such casts they must make. This is a subtle restatement of what Gary writes in *Presentation*, but I think it is an important one.

Gary Borger Responds:

How can one argue with a statement that expounds efficient use of false casting? I certainly will not. However, I still contend that even "limited use" of false casting to extend line, dry the fly, change directions, and generally look cool is over-done. For example, the angler casts 45 feet and retrieves the fly 15 feet. There is absolutely no need to false cast to extend the line back to 45 feet. A slip-shoot on the pickup, a shoot on the

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back, and a forward shoot would easily extend the line to 60 feet with no false casting. My point was not to eliminate false casting but to push anglers to get creative in line handling to maximize the length of time the fly is in the water. I agree with Macauley: "Make as few false casts as possible to achieve the goal," and I'll further add, the fewer the better.

Macauley Lord is a member of the Board of Governors and is the Head Instructor at the L.L. Bean fly fishing schools. He is also an Editor emeritus of The Loop.

STATE OF THE LOOP

by The Editor

THERE IS NOW a greater sense of unity between the North American and European Fly Casting Instructor Certification Programs. This is thanks to efforts by people like Marty Seldon and Günter Feuerstein, as well as a very successful Euro/American casting and teaching demonstration at the Idaho Falls International Conclave. As a result, *The Loop* is now being distributed in Europe, and hopefully, future issues will contain tips and tricks from FFF Instructors on the other side of the pond. If you are on-line, point your browser to: <http://members.xoom.com/FFFEurope>.

NEW MASTER INSTRUCTORS

Tim Rajeff - Washington
Berris Samples - Utah
Chris Seipio - British Columbia, Canada
George Simon, Sr. - New York
Norman Wallachy - Ontario, Canada

COMING EVENTS

Pre-Registration is REQUIRED!
 Contact Evelyn Taylor at (406) 585-7592

PENSACOLA, FLORIDA - May 15; South Eastern Council Conclave; Basic with Tom Jindra.

GRAYLING, MICHIGAN - June 19; Great Lakes Council Conclave; Basic with John Van Dalen.

GATLINBURG, TENNESSEE - August 4 & 6; International Fly Fishing Show & Conclave: Basic & Masters.

GATLINBURG, TENNESSEE - August (To Be Announced); Roundtable for Casting Instructors.

MOUNTAIN HOME, ARKANSAS - October 2; Southern Council Conclave; Basic with Tom Jindra.

SPECIAL FEATURE: INSTRUCTOR COURSES AT GATLINBURG

Look for the Registration Form in the spring Flyfisher for the International Fly Fishing Show & Conclave in Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR TEACHING THE DOUBLE HAUL *with Floyd Franke, assisted by Joan Wulff & John Gayewski:* This clinic is designed specifically for casting instructors. Participants will have an opportunity to explore, through demonstrations and discussions, several approaches for teaching the double haul.

BASIC CERTIFICATION PREPARATION (two hours) *with Tom White.*

HOW TO TEACH FLY CASTING BETTER *with Bruce Richards:* This course will teach you how to analyze casting flaws and effectively correct them. Logical, step by step approach that makes accurate analysis and correction of all casting flaws simply. Proven technique provides instructor with an instructional guideline to follow, and the student concise logical instruction. Teaching experience is preferred but not necessary and you must be a competent caster.

INSTRUCTION FOR INSTRUCTORS *with Joan Wulff, assisted by Floyd Franke and John Gayewski:* Many instructors tend to talk and demonstrate too much. Hands-on teaching saves time and imparts an understanding of speed and power within the mechanics.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A FLY CASTING INSTRUCTOR *with John Van Dalen:* Here's a great opportunity to learn teaching techniques from

a member of our Casting Board of Governors who has been instructing instructors for many years.

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WE WELCOME YOUR SUBMISSIONS via typewriter, FAX, disk, or e-mail. Please attach a *short* instructor bio (1-3 sentences), including your location and Certification level. Please indicate whether or not you are willing to allow for your submission's possible re-publication on the Program's Website. Any illustrations should be in black ink on white paper, or if submitted digitally, in TIFF format at 300dpi (if possible). *The Loop* reserves the right to accept or decline any submission for any reason, and to edit any submission as it sees fit. All submissions should be sent to the National Office:

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THE LOOP LIBRARY

by James Henshall

Submitted by Mel Krieger

Introduction by The Editor

FLY CASTING INSTRUCTORS need a good reference library. This section of *The Loop* features snippets of casting knowledge from books and articles by masters of the art.

This piece is actually appearing here due to the American Museum of Fly Fishing (<http://www.amff.com>) and Mel Krieger. Last year, I received a notice from the Museum that included an excerpt from James Henshall's 1881 publication, *The Book of the Black Bass*. The excerpt showed musical notation being used to describe casting. A week later I got a note from Mel Krieger. In his note, Mel included the same Museum notice and thought it would be a great way to lighten *The Loop* up a bit. I agreed one-hundred percent with Mel,

so here it is: Casting with the Henshall rhythm, complete with breathtaking sentence structure.

"When the line and leader are on a straight line behind him, he brings the rod forward with a gradually increasing rate of speed, until the rod is slightly in advance of him, say at an angle of fifteen degrees off the perpendicular; then, for the first time, the right elbow leaves the body, and, at the same time, the rod is turned in the hand in the opposite direction; that is, with the back of the hand toward the angler, so that, at the end of the cast, the reel is below the rod, while the back of the hand is upward, and, without stopping the motion of the rod, the right arm is projected forward to its full extent, and on a line with the shoulder. This is the second part of the forward movement, and consists in merely following the direction of the flies with the tip of the rod, so as to ease their rapid upward flight, and allow them to descend without confusion, and to settle upon the water noiselessly.

Thus we see that the backward movement is in one time and one motion, and the forward movement in one time and two motions, as the military have it, or according to the following formula of time:

$$1. \text{ } \downarrow = 2. \text{ (a) } \downarrow \text{ (b) } \downarrow$$

No. 1 represents the backward throw, in one motion, in the time of a half note. No. 2 represents the forward cast, in one time and two motions, *a* and *b*, in the time of two quarter notes. This is not considered fishing by note, but the relative time of making the different motions in casting the fly approaches very nearly that of the formula given."

Mel Krieger is a member of the Board of Governors and...well, I think everybody knows about Mel.