FLY CASTING:
FALSE CASTING OVERVIEW

CONSERVATION / EDUCATION / COMMUNITY
OVERVIEW

WHAT IS FALSE CASTING?
False casting is the classic back and forth fly casting motion everyone has seen. It is necessary to false cast when fly fishing because we’re casting a long, weighted line instead of a simple weight, bait or lure as used in spin or bait casting. False casting allows us to change cast distance, change direction, and dry a wet fly.

Learning how to false cast is an important step in the process of learning to cast so you can go fishing. The skills needed for false casting depend on a good understanding of the Fundamentals of a Cast and knowing the Pick Up and Lay Down (PULD) cast. Make sure you have mastered those two segments before you start false casting.

HOW TO FALSE CAST
Any false cast starts by picking the line up from the water or grass. You learned how to do that in the Pick Up/Lay Down segment. Start with about 30 ft. of line laying out straight in front of you and the rod tip low, no more than 1 ft. from the ground, and pointing at the line. Now at medium speed, raise the rod tip to about 10:30. At medium speed, this “lift” will take about 1 second. Done properly, the lift will drag the line across the ground or water, but not lift it from the ground or water. When the rod reaches the 10:30 position, quickly accelerate the rod to 1:30 and stop it there.

When you “stop” the rod at 1:30, the rod tip will decelerate and the fly line will overtake it forming a loop. As you learned in the Pick Up/Lay Down segment, wait for the loop to nearly straighten (fly line straight, leader still in a loop, see diagram below) then smoothly accelerate the rod forward, back to 10:30, and stop. At this point in a PULD cast, you would lower the rod to the ground or water and “lay down”, or deliver the line and fly. When false casting, you don’t deliver the fly at this point, instead you make another backcast. This process is repeated until the desired goal (change of direction or distance or fly drying) is accomplished and the line is delivered as in the PULD cast.

WHEN TO START THE NEXT CAST

Leader Line

TOO EARLY  TOO LATE  NOW!
ADJUSTMENTS

The suggested casting arc of 10:30 to 1:30 is a good place to start, but won’t always result in the loop you want, depending on how much line you are casting, and how hard you are casting. As you learned in the foundation cast segment, how much you bend the rod determines the casting arc. Here’s how to adjust:

Look at the top leg of your loop. If it is not relatively straight, you need to adjust your casting arc. If the top leg is a big upward curve, your casting arc is too wide, as seen below. Note that the rod tip at positions A and C is much lower than at position B and that the rod tip path is an upward curve.

By narrowing your casting arc, you raise the rod tip at either end of the casting stroke, which allows the rod tip path, and loop top leg, to be much straighter, as seen below.

If the top leg of your loop dips down toward the bottom leg, that indicates that your casting arc is probably too narrow, as seen below. You can see that the rod tip is higher at each end of the casting stroke than in the middle, resulting in a dipping tip path. Widening the casting arc slightly will cure this problem.

At this point, you should have a good understanding of what a good foundation cast is, how to do a simple Pick Up/Lay Down cast, and how to false cast and deliver the line. That knowledge and skill is really all you need to go fishing!

Author: Bruce Richards | Casting Board of Governors – Emeritus | Master Certified Casting Instructor

Fly Fishers International Inc. has express permission from the author to use this material. This material may be reproduced, but cannot be altered without author’s approval.
FLY FISHERS INTERNATIONAL has been an organized voice for fly fishers since 1964. We represent all aspects of fly fishing—from the art of fly tying and casting instruction, to the protection of and access to fisheries around the world.

A 501c3 non-profit organization, FFI is driven by three fundamental pillars: CONSERVATION, EDUCATION, AND COMMUNITY. Together, these pillars provide the foundation for our vision of the future of fly fishing—a future in which anglers have access to prime waters and fish can thrive in healthy, protected habitats; in which learning never stops and artistry is not forgotten; and that recognizes the true value of camaraderie. If we want this legacy to be experienced by future generations, we have to work to make that happen.

JOIN FLY FISHERS INTERNATIONAL TODAY to help ensure that fly fishing can continue to instill the kind of passion it does today in so many of us.