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Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service • Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources

## Bait Casting

Bait casting is primarily used to catch large fish, such as bass, pickerel, and pike, which prey on smaller fish. In this method of fishing, a lure or bait is cast into the water and its weight pulls the line from the reel. The bait is retrieved by rewinding the line on a reel with a moving spool.

### Equipment

Bait casting equipment consists of four pieces: rod, reel, line, and lure.

The rod, made of tubular or solid glass, sometimes bamboo or metal, is from 5 to 6 1/2 feet long, and is classified by "action" (weight) as medium, light, and very light. The reel houses a spool operated with a right-hand crank, which turns the spool, winding the line. Reel capacity for holding line varies by brand, size, and price. The line may be either braided silk, nylon, or monofilament, and it is available in a variety of breaking strengths, from 4 to more than 20 pounds.

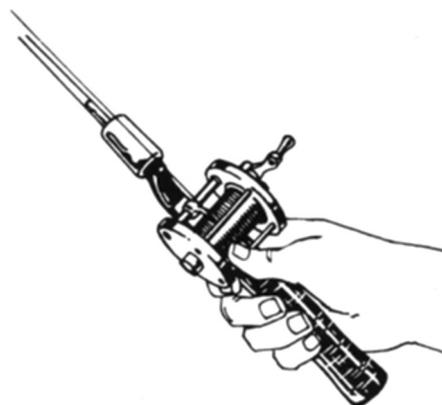
Casting lures are classified by the way they behave. They are called floating, diving, or sinking baits. Made of wood, plastic, metal, rubber, or hair, lures are also known as "plugs," spoons, or spinners. They vary in weight from 1/4 to 5/8 ounce.

### Selecting your tackle

For the beginner and for general fishing, the most suitable outfit is one in the light-action, medium-price range. The components of such an outfit are a light-action rod 5 or 5 1/2 feet long, a reel with a standard-width spool, a 12 to 15 pound breaking-weight-test line, and a lure weighing about 5/8 ounce.

After you have developed skill and experience in using bait-casting tackle, you may wish to purchase a very light outfit for getting greater accuracy and distance in your casts. The lighter the breaking-weight of a line, the farther and more accurate the lure can be cast.

A very light action outfit consists of the following: a 6 to 6 1/2 foot, very light action rod of tubular glass or bamboo; a small, narrow spool reel; a 6 to 10 pound test line; and 1/4 to 3/8 ounce lures. Very light action outfits are usually the best, but are expensive, costing \$75 and more for rod, reel, a half-dozen lures, and a couple of spools of light test line.



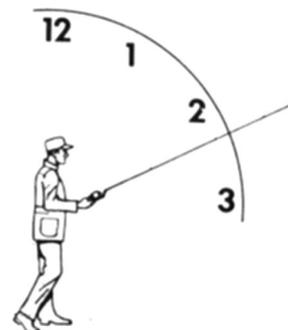
### Casting Directions

Before beginning, make sure the reel spool is filled almost to the edges with line. A spool 1/2 to 3/4 full will not give the accurate performance of a full spool. If you do not have enough line to fill up the spool, use a cork arbor on the inner half or fill it with old line.

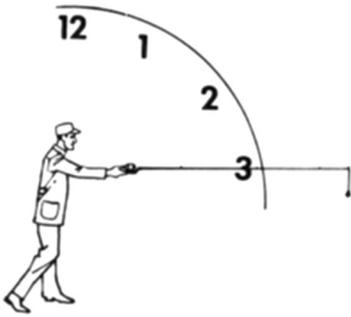
For practice casts, use an old lure with the hooks removed, or a practice plug. A grassy lawn or a pond is a good place to practice. To increase your accuracy, aim at an old 26-inch inflated bicycle inner tube placed on the ground or anchored by string and weights in a pond.

In reading these directions, imagine you are standing with your left shoulder against a large clock face.

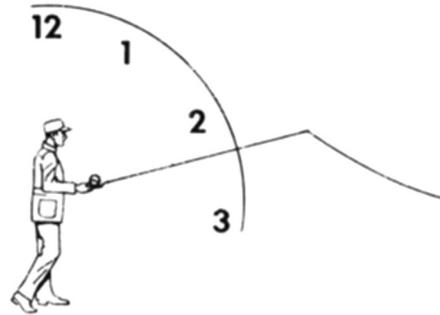
**Step 1.** Hold the rod handle in your right hand with thumb on the left rim of the spool, stopping the line. Make sure the reel crank is up.



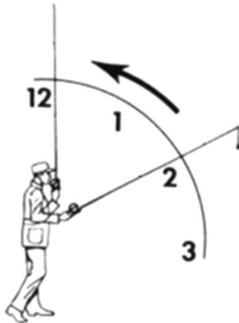
**Step 2.** Aim the plug, which should hang two or three inches from the rod tip, toward the spot where you want the lure to land.



**Step 5.** Just before the plug strikes the ground or water, stop the spinning spool with your thumb, quickly change the rod handle to the left hand, and crank the plug in with your right hand.



**Step 3.** Begin with the rod held at the 2 o'clock position, and then swing it quickly upward until the tip is pointed skyward, at the 12 o'clock position.



It is important to keep the rod at a 1 to 2 o'clock position while fishing. With it in this position, a fish striking the lure will have the spring of the rod to pull against. If the rod tip points at the plug while you are reeling in the fish, he will pull directly against the line, resulting in a lost fish or a broken line.

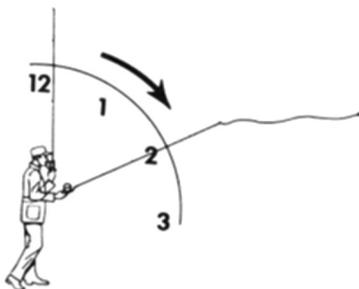
Retrieving a fishing lure is a matter of technique. You will get best results with most floating lures by letting them lie still for several moments. Then reel them in with jerky, "popping" movements. Sinking lures must be reeled in immediately or they will catch on to underwater trash.

It is important that you learn to use your lures effectively. The bait caster, who knows his lures, is the one who brings home the most fish.

**Step 4.** As the rod tip bends backward, reverse the movement, switching the rod quickly forward and downward. At the same moment, release your thumb slightly to let the spool unwind and the lure go out. Never remove the thumb entirely from the reel spool when casting. If you do, the spool will spin faster than the line will unwind, and you will have a line snarl or "birds nest."

Here is a good tip that may save a fish. Break off about three feet of the line before each fishing trip. This line has been worn thin by constant friction through the rod tip guide and is weaker than the spooled line.

Try to master correct form - it is important for fishing enjoyment as well as safety. Use your wrist and hand only in casting. Do not let the forearm move more than the slightest bit. And never cast "side wise" (with the rod switched parallel to the ground or water). Your casting movements should always be vertical.



o become a good caster you need only two things: serviceable, balanced equipment and plenty of practice.

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