



OSU EXTENSION
4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Fly Casting

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

Fly casting is the oldest way of catching fish with mechanical tackle. Casting with a fly rod, the aristocrat of fishing tackle, is different from bait and spin casting. In the last two methods, you cast a lure and its weight pulls the line from the reel. With a fly rod, you cast the line, and the light fly or lure simply goes with the line.

Selecting Your Tackle

Fly casting equipment consists on five pieces: rod, reel, line, leader, and lure. You should have several lures which include flies, popping bugs, and underwater lures.

The Rod. For the beginner, a good choice is a two piece, 8 ½ foot tubular glass rod in the medium price range. Most fly rods today are made of glass, but expensive bamboo rods are also available. For fly casting in Oklahoma, you need a rod with “bass” action, so it is heavy enough to cast bugs easily. Trout rods are generally too light for casting bugs.

The Line. Buy a “level” line. This means one even in diameter throughout, not tapered. Make sure it is the right size for your rod. Most rod manufacturers specify the size of line that will best “balance” their rods. Previous fly markings (B, C, D, etc.) were based on silk weight. New standards were developed by the Associated Fishing Tackle Manufacturers because the specific gravity of silk is heavier than nylon and lighter than Dacron, each material performs differently on the same rod. The new standards

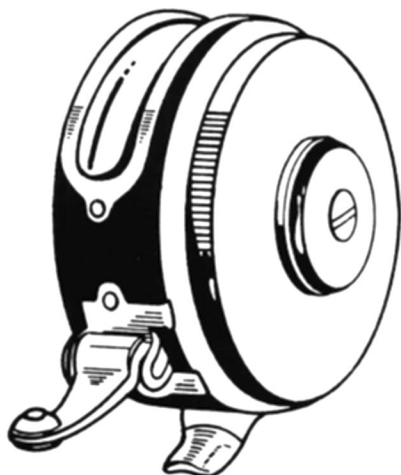
are designated by numbers 7, 8, 10, etc., the larger the number of the heavier the line. The number is preceded by a letter indicating whether it is level or tapered, and followed by F or S, indicating whether it is a floating or sinking line. When line size is indicated by letter (B, C, D, etc.), B is thicker than C; C is thicker than D.

Fly lines will sink after a period of casting, if not cared for properly. Every hour or two while fishing, you must grease, or clean the line so that it will continue to float. When you purchase your equipment, be sure to include dressing or cleaner depending on the type of line you have.

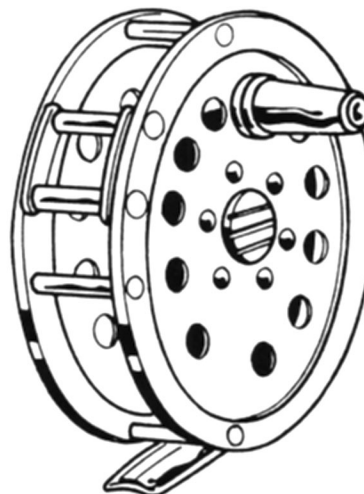
The Reel. There are two types of reels available: the single action reel is wound by hand, while the automatic reel winds and rewinds the line by itself when a lever is pressed.

Since the reel in fly casting is nothing more than a mechanical spool for holding the section of line that you are not casting, many experts prefer the single-action reel. Of course, automatic reels are good, but they are more expensive, and in fly fishing they are not used for “playing” a fish. Also, some automatic reel models are heavy and tend to throw the rod out of balance.

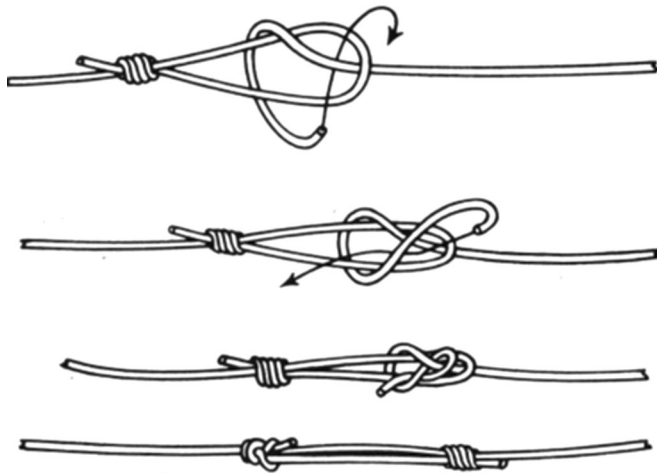
The Leader. The leader is line of another type, usually transparent, and much thinner than the fly line. It permits the lure to fall lightly on the water. Usually a leader testing 6, 8, or 10 pounds breaking weight is sufficiently strong. Make your leader six to eight feet long.



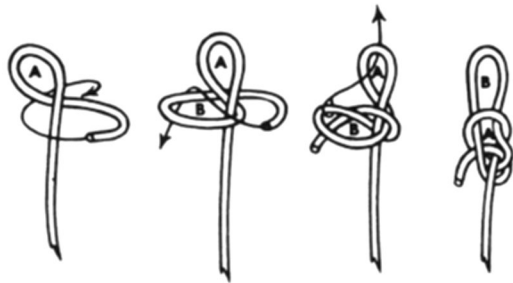
AUTOMATIC REEL



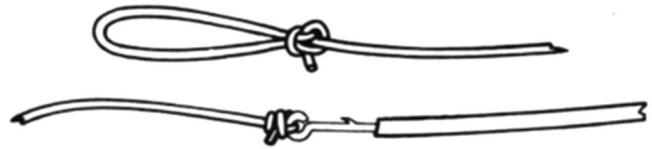
SINGLE ACTION REEL



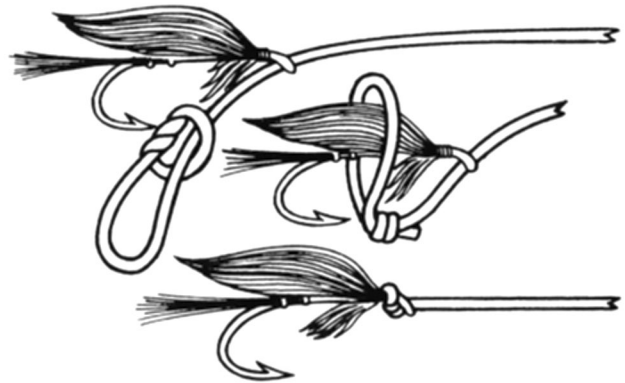
TUCKED SHEET BEND KNOT



PERFECTION LOOP KNOT



BARBED EYELET



TURLE KNOT

There are several ways to attach leader to lure. You can use a barbed eyelet, which most sporting good stores carry; push the barb into the end of the line, and tie the leader through the eyelet. Or, tie a perfection loop knot. Directions for tying these knots are illustrated above.

The Lure. Tie a bug or fly onto the other end of the leader, using a turle knot. In your assortment of lures you should have some small popping bugs for bluegills, larger bugs for bass, and a couple of underwater spinners.

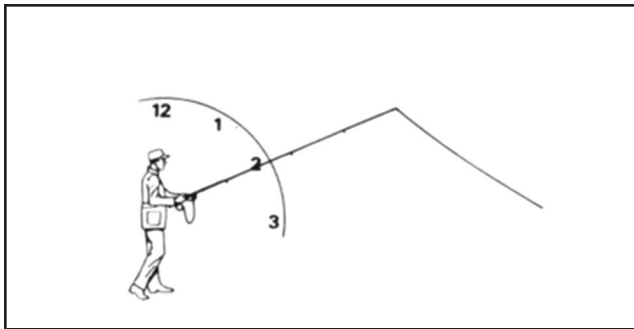
Casting with a Fly Rod

Learn to cast with proper form either on lawn or water, before you try to catch a fish. This means that you will use

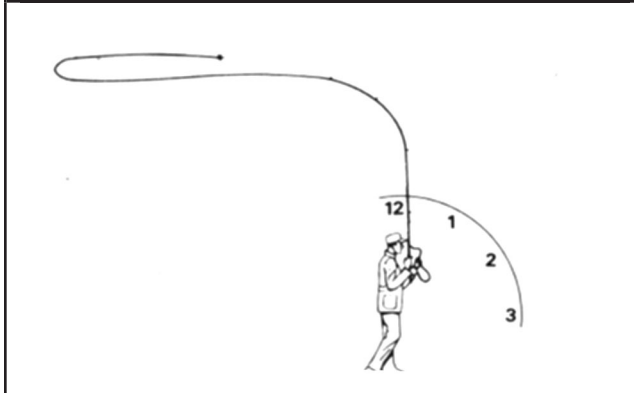
rod, reel, line, and leader, but not a lure with a hook. If you do practice with a hook, you will concentrate on catching fish, and never master the art of good casting. Practice an hour or so daily, and you will become a fairly good fly caster within a week.

Before you begin, pull 15 to 20 feet of line through the rod guides, which are the metal eyelets where the line is strung. Let the line lie in front of you on the lawn or water. Hold the rod in your right hand, with your thumb lying on the top of the handle. The reel and guides will be on the underside of the rod. With your left hand, grasp the line near the reel.

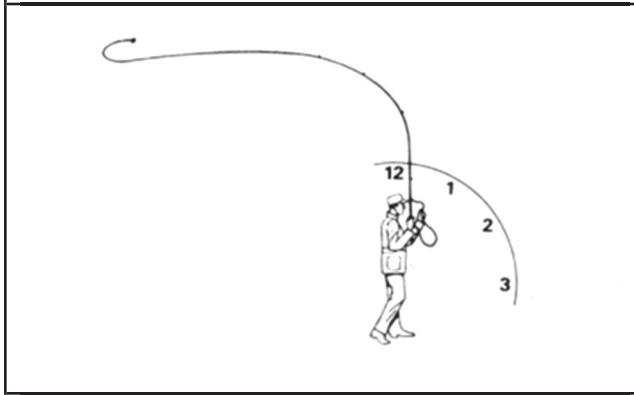
It will be easier to understand the following directions for casting if you visualize yourself standing with your left shoulder against the face of a large clock.



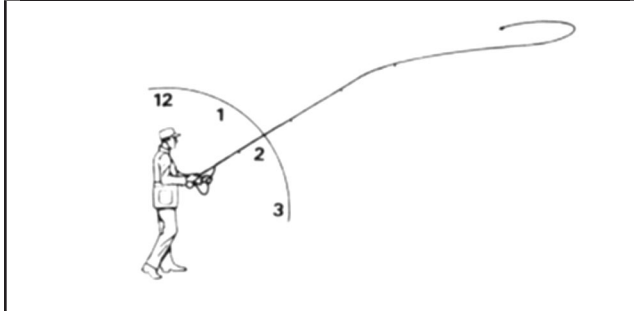
Step 1. Holding the rod almost horizontal to the ground, begin pulling in, with your left hand, the line lying on the lawn or water. You are now ready to begin the cast.



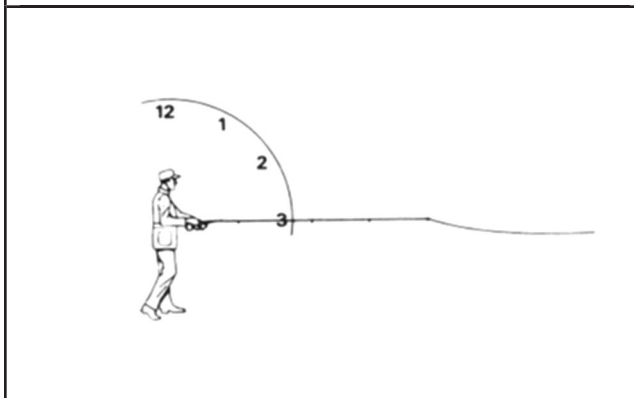
Step 2. Continue pulling with your left hand until the end of the line moves. Then swing the rod upward with a brisk motion until it is straight up, or at the 12 o'clock position.



Step 3. Stop the rod at this position. The line will sail over your head, behind you, and will bend the rod slightly backward.



Step 4. Just before the end of the line straightens out behind you, swing the rod quickly forward, and stop for a split second at the 2 o'clock position to allow the line to sail over your head.



Step 5. As the leader nears the ground, lower the rod until it is horizontal to the water or ground. This will allow the line and bug to land smoothly.

Perfecting Your Technique

Since the greatest fault of the beginner is not giving the line time to straighten out in the backcast (Step 2), it may be helpful to rhythmically count “one-two-three” during the cast. Follow the directions for casting, counting “one” as you lift the rod upward in Step 2. The rod will get to the 12 o’clock position before you can say “two.” Count “two”; then, as you say “three,” whip the rod forward. By holding the rod up for the whole length of count “two,” you give the line time to almost straighten out behind you before you begin the forward cast.

Keep in mind that in casting, the wrist and forearm are used, not the upper arm. You can teach yourself this trick by placing a folded newspaper between the upper part of your arm and your side. If the newspaper falls, you are casting incorrectly—using your upper arm rather than wrist and forearm.

It pays to master skill in casting before you ever tie a lure to a leader.

False Casting

If you want to make a longer cast, you can lengthen your line by “false casting.” This means swinging the rod forward and backward several times without letting the line touch the water.

First, pull a few extra feet of line from the reel before beginning to haul in line through the tip guide (as in Step 1). Then, following the same procedure as in casting, as you bring the rod forward (Step 4), release the extra line from your left hand. Before the leader flying overhead touches water, begin another backcast, at the same time pulling more extra line from the reel as you make the next backcast. To make a shorter cast, pull out less than 15 feet of line.

Fishing With a Fly Rod

After the line strikes the water, wait a moment; then begin moving the lure across the water toward you by slowly pulling the line in while twitching the rod tip slightly to make the lure look like a live insect. After you have moved the lure in 3 or 4 feet, make another cast.

When a fish strikes, quickly snap the rod upward at the same instant or else you will not hook it. Once it has taken the hook, keep a bend in the rod tip while you pull in line and fish together. When you reach upward to pull in more line, clasp it against the rod handle with the fingers of the right hand. Or, instead of pressing it against the rod, simply grasp the line between the right thumb and forefinger.

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