

Fly Casting Drills

Casting Drills

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The ready position, usually ignored, is one of the most important things that flats anglers should practice.

Being able to cast over 100 feet is admirable, but that certainly shouldn't be the only thing that you practice before your next flats trip.

In fact, the best thing to practice is to be able to cast 40-50 feet quickly and accurately rather than 150 feet slowly.

1. Use the rod and the type of fly hookup that you are likely to use for fishing to practice your casting.
2. Practice stripping the line off the reel and restripping it as quickly as possible. You, the angler, should be ready to fish within a minute after you step on the deck.
3. Try to cast from the ready position to 50-60 feet and practice throwing to a target.
4. When you have hit the target, strip in and get back into the ready position as quickly as possible. Pay close attention to where you are stripping the line. A hula-hoop placed behind you can simulate the cockpit of the boat.
5. Practice with 2 casting objects. Go from the ready position to a section placed at 11:00 and 50 feet. Deliver your cast and then pick up and go to a target at 9:00 and 70 feet with as few false casts as possible.

Strip back in and get back into the ready position quickly. This is one of the most realistic practice situations. Visualize a fish swimming towards you and coming across the bow. Cast to the fish imagining it at 11:00. Imagine that your cast went unnoticed, pick up and cast farther at 9:00. If that doesn't do it, strip in and get ready for another shot.

6. Minimize false casts. Try to practice throwing as few false casts as possible. This will improve your speed and line shooting ability.
7. Practice throwing long casts, but practice throwing them from the ready position and not with the line extended in front of you. This will develop the skill that that you will actually use while fishing and you will also become very good at getting into the ready position quickly.
8. Throw casts 30-50 feet during practice. Short casts are sometimes difficult for anglers who have only practiced throwing distance casts. In general, on a normal trip you will cast at this distance several times a day.
9. Maintain your lines in good condition or purchase a new line for your trip. Old lines become sticky and tangle frequently. Make sure you clean lines at least once a day.
10. Try to practice with the rod that you are likely to use. For a tarpon trip practice with an 11 or 12 weight if you can get your hands on one.

If you don't own one, try to borrow one from a friend or your local tackle shop. There is a big difference between a 9 and an 11, and it is almost incomparable to a 4 or 5 weight. It will be useful to be ready and used to the bigger rod before you get on the boat.

11. To strengthen your arms and wrists, pretend that you are casting with a full wine bottle held by the neck. This will strengthen the muscles that you use for casting as much as anything.

The more you strengthen the little muscles in your forearm and wrist, the more powerfully you will be able to cast.

Even though these techniques may seem simple, they all have great value and will increase your skills and make you a better flats fisherman.

It is not enough to simply try to remember these tips; you have to practice so that all of this is second nature. Many anglers practice for their upcoming trip by constantly throwing as far as they can.

Long casts in your repertoire will increase your chances getting the fly in front of a fish, but 30-60 foot casts are heavily used while fishing the flats. Sure, you can still practice throwing 110 feet of fly line and I recommend it, but practice the most basic things too.

You have a tremendous amount invested in your flats trip when you combine the hotel and guide expenses, the time away from work and family, and all of the time that you have practiced. Quantify your investment by being fast and practiced on the small details.

If you are not a good caster at this point, don't be intimidated. The more you practise these tips the more they will become part of your good fishing habits, and you will become a better flats angler. These will not substitute good casting, but without the right preparation, the best casters in the world can't get it out of the boat.

Tight Lines,

Capt. Tom

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