



SHOOTING A FLY LINE

Instructor Nick Hart knows exactly when to let go

PRACTICE TIPS

NEWCOMER

- 1) Set up ready to make an overhead cast, with a little spare line pulled off the reel waiting on the ground by your feet. For obvious reasons, don't stand on the line.
- 2) Trap the line against the cork with the first finger of your casting hand to provide an anchor. Start a false cast using a timing chant such as "tick – tock"
- 3) Make two back casts using this chant, but on the third, chant "tick – tock – release". As you say "tock" the rod will

have travelled into the forward cast and stopped. As you say "release" allow your finger to open and release the line.

- 4) When you're confident that the line is shooting, replace the finger with your redundant hand. This method allows your casting arm to coordinate the process of shooting line effectively before introducing the line-control hand.

INTERMEDIATE

- 1) Set-up as per the newcomer with your spare hand anchoring the line, ensuring that this hand and your casting hand

remain not much further than 12 inches apart during the cast to assist with line tension.

- 2) Use the "tick – tock – release" chant to assist with timing and momentarily open the line control hand on each forward cast as you say "release" allowing a few feet of line to extend. As the line straightens, trap it once more ready to make another back cast.
- 3) If the cast is working, the line will shoot up through the rings.
- 4) Repeat for a maximum of three false casts (count the back casts, not the

ALTHOUGH casting a fly is actually far easier than it may seem at first, there are undoubtedly a great number of processes taking place at once. The whole point is to deliver a perfectly-presented artificial to our unsuspecting quarry, but before that can happen we need to load the rod, create line speed, form a loop and throw in some accuracy for good measure!

These aspects of casting will largely be determined by your casting arm, meanwhile your opposite hand also has a job to do. I call this the 'line-control hand'. The line-control hand holds the fly line during the casting stroke, creating an anchor, which ensures the line cannot fall slack during our cast. Tension in the line maintains tension in the rod, otherwise known as 'loading'. While this is an important job in itself, the hand also allows line to slip through the rings at a given point, to increase the amount of line weight the rod has to work with.

If all of these processes come together as one, the rod will coil into a delicious bend and then recoil to transfer energy into the line. Provided the line-control hand releases fly line at the correct point, the energy (line speed) will pull any slack, waiting patiently by our feet, out over the water. This is called 'shooting line'.

This description may seem daunting for newcomers, but shooting line is not difficult. At first it seems like we'll never grasp it, but with practise it soon becomes second nature. Before we look at tips on how to shoot fly line let's ensure our tackle is up to the job.

FLY LINE CARE

MAKE sure there is plenty of backing on the reel to store the line in open coils. Use a large or mid-arbour reel to further reduce line memory. Buy a cleaner too (there are several on the market) and regularly rub down the line, although commercial line cleaning products are only really suitable for floating densities. Sinkers can be looked after with a wash down now and again in a very mild

forward casts), shooting the greatest amount of line on the final forward cast and ensuring your line-control hand is completely removed from the line to ensure optimum amounts of speed and momentum.

ADVANCED

1) A chant may be required to set up timing but for the very experienced this should now be subconscious. If using a chant it will need to be altered to cope with the extra line being cast. For example "tick – pause – tock – pause". Note that the

GLOSSARY

ARBOR Central part of a fly reel.

BACKING Thin line/cord that increases the diameter of a reel spool, attached to the fly line and designed to reduce memory within it. Also assists when playing a fish that takes all the fly line during a run.

DOUBLE HAUL A series of coordinated pulls made with the line-controlling hand to increase line speed by developing more load within the rod blank.

LINE MEMORY A line retaining coils within its length rather than remaining straight. A coiled line will greatly reduce its ability to shoot.

LINE SPEED Term used to discuss the

amount of momentum/velocity within the line created during a cast.

LOAD A rod flexing due to tension created by the weight of a fly line during a casting stroke.

LOOP The shape of a fly line as it unrolls during casts.

OVERHANG Running line of a weight-forward profile, extended outside of the rod tip during the cast.

SHOOT The process of extending fly line through the rod-tip during a cast.

WEIGHT FORWARD Popular fly line profile with most of its weight positioned in the forward section, tapering into running line which is extended during the shooting process.


detergent to remove any grime. This care will pay huge dividends as a slick line will pass through the rod rings with ease, making the whole process of casting (and shooting line) far more enjoyable.

Fly line quality varies enormously. Generally speaking we get what we pay for and, when purchasing equipment, it's worth forking out for a premium product in a weight-forward profile. I'd rather cast with a not so great rod and an awesome line than the other way around!

Quality, well-maintained tackle will help to shoot line effectively but it can only provide optimum performance when coupled to good technique. Good technique means practice, but also the ability to break down the cast. Try shooting line without any attention to the correct release point and the line either clatters into our back or falls in a heap on the water. The timing required to shoot line is simple, only ever let it go once the rod has come to a complete standstill. At this point the blank will have transferred energy into the line and, as the rod stops, a loop (hopefully aerodynamic) will form,

setting off at speed across the water. The momentum in the line will now be enough to pull the slack line we have left waiting on the ground, ready to shoot.

A decent line and a little coordination is all that's needed to shoot a line, but be aware of a trap. Many anglers want to cast to the horizon and attempt to do so without any thought about the processes taking place. Pulling lots of line from the reel to expose the backing before trying to shoot the lot, without building the length up steadily, usually results in lots of line remaining at your feet! This is frustrating but also impedes our cast, because the momentum in the line is lost if it doesn't have enough speed to beat the drag caused by this excess line.

So, practise with a sensible amount of line, aiming to shoot it until it thumps the reel. When you can achieve this result on virtually every cast, add a foot or so of line (not yards) and continue. Over time your brain will coordinate the timing required to cope with the extra line and before long you'll be subconsciously shooting great distances with ease. 

length of the pause will depend entirely on the amount of line that you are attempting to turnover in order to load the rod.

2) Release line as the rod stops and the loop forms, but experiment to find the optimum moment and for seriously long casts try shooting line into the back cast.

3) With practice you'll be able to overhang a weight-forward fly line, a technique which allows running line to pass through the rod tip as well as the head section. However, this will only be achievable with immense line speed assisted by a well-timed double-haul.

4) Practise the above to perfection and a back shoot can be used to cope with a reasonably strong headwind. Don't shoot the line on the forward stroke in these conditions, instead anchor it with the line-control hand while leaning slightly forward. This will change the angle of the forward presentation and improve turnover.

NEXT MONTH
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Part 1 Stalking the margins