The ‘5 Essentials’ of Fly Casting

Rule #1

During the casting stroke, the rod tip must travel in a Straight Line Path (SLP).

- Rule #2—#5 are used together to help achieve Rule #1.

Rule #2

The casting arc, or angle at the rod butt, must vary in width with the amount of line beyond the rod tip.

- The key concept here is that the longer the cast, the longer the casting stroke.

Rule #3

There must be a Pause at the end of each stroke.

- The “pause” must be long enough for the fly line to straighten in one direction, without losing tension or dramatically falling, before casting in the opposite direction.
  - A key concept here is “timing”.
  - Do not actually wait for the tug on your back cast before starting the forward cast. By then, you’ve lost the constant tension of the fly line and added slack as back cast falls.

- Timing—Windy Conditions
  - The cadence (timing between the forward cast and the back cast) will change depending upon the wind.
  - For example, if there’s a strong wind behind the caster, the pause on the back cast is shorter than the forward cast.
  - Using the same pause time on the back cast as the forward cast in this situation would allow time for the wind to blow the line back at the caster. This creates slack in the line, which must be taken up before the caster can begin to load the rod for the forward stroke.
  - If a strong wind is at your back, it’s better to shorten the length of line on the back cast. It also helps to change the trajectory (line plane is low on back cast) and throw a wider loop size to ‘kite’ the line on the forward cast.
  - This is consistent with Gammel’s Essential Rule #3 relating pause time to the timing of the unrolling of the loop.

Rule #4

The application of power must occur in the proper amount at the proper place in the stroke.

- Proper application of power is a constant acceleration with rotational movement continued during the “stopping sequence”
(between Peak Load and Rod Straight Position, sometimes called ‘rod unload’).

- Joan Wulff describes this action as a “power snap.”
- Lefty Kreh says, “speed up and stop.”
- Constant Acceleration
- Angular Speed
- Apply Power at Position #2
- Wrist Action = Angular Motion

Rule #5

- No Slack line can occur during the casting stroke.
  - You can’t make any cast until you have the line end moving.
  - You should lift all of the line from the water before making a cast.
  - Do not actually wait for the tug on your back cast before starting the forward cast. By then, you’ve lost the constant tension of the fly line and added slack as back cast falls.
  - It’s OK if your line hand is slightly lower than your rod hand as long as both hands move in unison, and an equal distance to each other, during the casting stroke.

Fly-Casting Accuracy

Moving Hands in Unison
The line hand’s responsibilities are keeping slack from forming between this hand and the rod’s first guide.
Additional chore for the line hand is keeping the fly line from fouling on the rod handle, the reel, or your vest.

Rod Arm Mechanics
Straight Wrist Position
Closed Stance for Accuracy
Essential Elements of Accuracy
Using the thumb/rod shaft as the indicator, move your hand along the hand/target line.
When the rod shaft reaches a spot along the hand/target line that is 90° from, or perpendicular to, the target, make the power thrust. The power thrust ends when the thumb tip covers the target.

Accuracy—Stroke Length
Perfect stroke length puts the fly over the target
If the stroke is too long or curved, the fly will pass behind the target
Too short a stroke will send the line loop and fly forward of the target.

Accuracy—Power & Line Speed
If your fly line is not unrolling completely, your acceleration is at fault.
Good line speed is seen when the line loop unrolls smoothly without falling dramatically.

If there’s too much acceleration or too much power in the power snap, the line will contain waves and bumps and will collapse.

Accuracy—Perfect Line Speed

The line, leader, and fly completely unrolls a few feet above the target.

With the cast’s energy dissipated, line, leader, and fly will land lightly.

Accuracy Triangle

Accuracy—Aiming at Target

Hovering—Key Points for Pinpoint Accuracy

Increase your line speed with a powerful STOP, so that the energy passes through the fly with enough speed to hold it in the air for a second.

If you can see the fly over the target, just lower the rod or repeat the cast exactly, and drop the fly on the next one.

When you recognize the perfect false cast, that’s the one you present and you don’t have to look back again before presenting the fly in a closed stance; this way you can be sure that your casting stroke is tracking perfectly.

Loop Formation

The initial shape and velocity of the loop is generated during a short time interval following the stop. Eventually the loop propagates to the end of the fly line and the attached “leader” and “fly” turn over as the line straightens at the end of the cast.

Loop Formation

“As you load the rod, the rod tip continues to accelerate until it reaches [maximum velocity] at Rod Straight Position (RSP). At RSP, forces on the rod are neutral, but as soon as it passes that point into Counter-flex, the tip starts to decelerate due to the resisting stiffness of the rod. The line does not have an equal resisting force, so the line overtakes the rod tip as soon as it starts to slow. To me, this is loop formation.” — Bruce Richards

Loop Control

The size of the loop is determined by the ending position of the rod during the forward cast.

Narrow Loops

You may want an incredibly tight loop to make a long cast into a headwind.

Wide Loops

You may want a wide loop to cast a deep nymphing rig with split shot & indicator.
You might want a wide loop to create slack for a better drag-free drift.

**Cause of Tailing Loops**

**Tailing Loop Definition**

**Cause & Cure**

- **Creeping forward on back cast**
  Learn to drift on back cast

- **Too small a casting arc for the amount of line carried beyond the rod tip.**
  Try a longer casting stroke

- **Starting the casting stroke fast and finishing slow.**
  Unloads the rod too early
  A constant, or *smooth*, acceleration to a Stop.

- **Forward-, and back cast < 180° apart**

- **Creeping Forward**
  When the rod drifts forward prematurely, it is called “creep”.
  Shortens your casting stroke thereby causing the rod tip to dip into a concave path when power is applied.
  “Drift” is the opposite of creep, meaning you push the rod farther behind you after you stop on the back cast.
  This repositioning of the rod extends your stroke for the upcoming forward cast.

**Eliminate Tailing Loops**

**Open your stance so you can observe your back cast.**
  For right-hand caster, this means stepping back with your right foot.
  Watch to ensure that when your hand stops on the back cast, it stays stopped.

**Learn how to “Drift”.**
  Added benefit is a longer casting arc.

**Tailing Loop Scenarios**

Too often with a long distance cast, we overextend the casting arm on the back cast. We reach back so far that, whether it’s for balance or comfort, we let the rod hand slip forward just a bit before the intended start of the forward cast.

When casting into a strong headwind, we often apply too much power too early in the forward cast causing the rod tip to dip.

**Tailing Loops on Demand**

Start by making a couple of 40’ false cast with narrow loops.

Accelerate at the beginning, or in the middle, of the cast instead of at the end. — Wow! A beautiful tailing loop every time.

**Roll Cast**
**Roll Cast is Very Useful in Situations**

Little or no room for a back cast.
Lift a dry fly silently from the water.
Roll casting a slack line into a straight-line upstream presentation.
Your fly is snagged on something.
Making a roll cast, allowing your leader and a small amount of the line to roll beyond the snag, and then making a back cast will often free the fly.
Roll cast to lift a sinking line to surface.
Side-arm roll cast under bushes or fallen trees.
Saltwater *Quick Cast*.
Strong wind at your back.

- Don’t have to muscle back cast into wind all day.

**Roll Cast – Key Points**

- You are modifying only the back cast.
- Do not apply significant power before midnight, i.e. the vertical rod position.
- The size of the loop created by the roll cast should not be higher above the water than your head.
- A tight loop roll cast is determined by just one key principle — the distance the rod tip drops after RSP.

**Three factors can help achieve tight loop:**

1) How low you crouch;
2) How low the rod hand is kept on the forward cast; and
3) How brief the power snap is.

Remember, *"No Power Before Midnight!"*
Slide the line on the water s-l-o-w-l-y toward you, moving the rod tip toward the rear. *Try to keep the rod hand below the shoulder on the back cast.* This will help you make a better forward cast.
If the rod hand is held high (up to or above the ear) chances are you will automatically make a large loop — throwing part of your energy around a large curve — rather than directing it at the target area.

**Roll Cast—Modify Back Cast**

Use enough energy so that about half the line leaves the water on the back stroke. The line should travel several feet behind the caster, forming a large, loose loop sometimes called a “D Loop”.

*You must permit the line in front of you to come to a stop and “anchor” even if only for one second. This is vital to good roll casting.*

*The reason for the momentary stop is that you need to have some resistance (water tension) for the rod to pull against when the forward cast is made.*
The Off-Shoulder Roll Cast
Tilt the rod to your left side while maintaining your casting hand in the usual position on the right.
Rotate your casting hand so that the back of your hand is on top of the handle and your palm is facing out. This will cause the rod to tilt.
Aim the cast to the right of the line on the water to avoid tangling.

Long Distance Roll Cast
The key is to throw a larger D-loop behind the rod while still keeping a few feet of line and leader anchored in the water in front of you.
This larger belly is, in effect, a longer back cast.
Move the rod back until the tip points directly away from the target behind you and keep the rod hand below the shoulder.
This helps to achieve a longer casting arc.
Add a haul on the forward cast.

Roll Cast Pickup for Bass Bug
Use the Roll Pick-Up when fishing with a popping bug or deer hair fly, in which a conventional pick-up is liable to drive the bug underneath the surface, creating a loud fish-disturbing gulping sound.

The Roll Pick-Up
Permits the angler to lift a fly vertically from the water

The Switch Cast
A Basic Spey Casting Technique, similar to Roll Cast

Switch Cast – Best Case Use
Long distance
Bigger D-loop
Rod is loaded by the tension of the fly line formed in the D-loop
‘Splash & Go’ anchor

Roll Cast – Best Case Use
Short distance
Small D-loop
Anchor stops
Rod is loaded from the resistance of the anchor placement in the water

Essential Elements
1. Lift
   Lift to Unstick the Line
   ▪ If you lift too high, you may dip the rod tip as you form the D-loop causing the anchor to pile up

2. D-loop
   Sweep Back to Form D-Loop
   ▪ With Spey casts it is the weight of line contained within the D-loop that allows the rod to load.
3. **Anchor**
   Anchor — Splash and Go!
   - Too much line stick will take away energy from forward cast

4. **Forward Cast**
   Forward Cast
   - 180° Principle

**Windy Conditions**

**Casting with the Wind**

Start as a normal pickup but ... make a horizontal back cast, low and to the side.
Keeping the rod parallel to the water, stop the final acceleration by drifting the rod straight back.
Reach well back. The line should be very low, just above the water. It may even touch briefly, but this won’t hurt the cast.
Before the line straightens completely, start your forward cast.
Your final acceleration should begin just as the rod hand comes into your peripheral vision. Aim high.
Finish with the rod tip stopping in an upward direction.
By starting well back and low, and by using long strokes, you can cast high so that the line travels safely well above you. The wind behind you helps carry the line even farther forward.

**Casting Into Wind**

- **Change trajectory**
  - High back cast / Low forward cast

- **Tight loop**
  - Aim low just above water

- **Double haul**
  - Increase line speed

**Wind From Casting Side**

**Cross-Wind Solutions**

- Side-arm Cast
- Roll Cast Off-Shoulder
- Tilt Cast
- Across-the-Head Cast
- Barnegat Bay
  - Back cast presentation
- Belgian Cast
- Galway Cast
  - Two forward casts
- Change Hands—Use your Left!

**Tilt Cast**

Don’t reach across your chest!
Caveat! Do not pivot your arm from your elbow, resulting in a wide loop. This casting error is called ‘hinging’ at the elbow, similar to ‘wristing’.

Across-the-Head Cast
Tip! Put your head through ‘window’.

Belgian Wind Cast
Start the Belgian Cast with a sweeping lift (usually side-arm) into a back cast.
Do a curving power snap, tipping the curve to end a little higher than it began
Drift upward to reposition by changing rod planes. This sets up the off-shoulder forward cast.
Use a straight-line power snap on the forward cast.

Belgian Cast—Advantages
- Acquiring distance very quickly
- Keeping flies apart on a multi-fly leader
- Cast with the wind

Double Hauling

Benefits of Hauling
“Hands apart, [hands together]...recover”  Al Kyte
Pantomining the ‘downup’ motion of the line hand (left hand, if you are right-handed) is key to learning the first time. Mel Krieger
- Allows you to deliver all casts with less effort.
- Allows you to form a tighter loop than you could form with the casting stroke alone.
- Adds distance to a long cast.

Often exaggerated and misunderstood. Probably less than 10% extra distance on a good cast.
For a poor cast, maybe nothing at all.

Double Haul—Key Points
- A short cast requires a short haul & vice versa;
  A long cast requires a longer haul.
- The “DownUp” is not a jerk, rather a smooth accelerated pull.
  The haul should be timed to coincide with rod-butt rotation. Paul Arden
  - As the rod casting hand accelerates, the line hand is accelerating the haul.
  If you jerk the line on the haul, a tailing loop will result.
  You must “feed” line, or recover, in order to avoid slack.
  Release the line (haul) as soon as the loop is formed on the forward cast.

Double Haul Lesson Plan
Step 1  Pantomime
• “...starting the hauling movement early simplifies the communication of a complicated movement. When both hands do different things at the same time, as when hauling, it seems easier to start those movements together. So [Al Kyte] teaches a generalized movement pattern, then, at some point, may fine-tune that coordination by slowing down or delaying the start of the haul.”

**Step 2 Rod Butt and Rubber Band**

- The rubber band adds an exaggerated feel of the line’s tension, which reminds you to complete the “up” part of the “downup”.
- Some people have trouble visualizing what their pantomiming hand movements are supposed to represent—it all seems too abstract.
- The “up” part is sometimes referred to as “feeding the line” during the double haul. You **must** feed line to double haul.

**Step 3 One Haul at a Time**

- Make your back cast on grass, executing your “downup” haul with 35’ of line.
  
  > As the line falls to the grass behind you, check to make sure your line hand has complete the “up” movement toward your rod.

- Take a few steps forward if need to straighten the line on the grass and make your forward cast and second “downup” haul.
- Combine the two hauls after you have repeated these movements enough to feel confident. False casting your hauls increases your feel of the line and of the timing that works.

**Step 4 Practice the Double Haul with a Sidearm Cast**

- Strip out 40 feet of fly line on the grass.

- Start moving both hands back together to the side and, about halfway through your back cast, make a short haul. The line moving on the grass should become airborne with your haul and fall again to the grass behind your rod.

- Then start forward with both hands together, and halfway through your forward cast, make your second haul. Continue back and forth, eventually keeping the line in the air, combining hauls.

**Step 5 Shooting Line**

- Lift your line off the grass in front and make your first “downup” haul on the back cast.
- With the line straightening in the air behind you, make your forward cast.
As you do, pull “down” and back on the line, releasing it when your line hand is farthest back and your rod extended forward.

*There is no “up” movement on the last haul.*

**Fine Tuning the Double Haul**

- **Rod Action**
  Fast-action rods seem best timed to a quick, short haul; A full-flexing rod seems best matched to a more leisurely haul.

- **Various Applications**
  - A quick, short haul to tighten up my casting loops.
  - A longer, slower haul to smooth out my timing or to cast in a relaxed, effortless manner.
  - A long, quick haul to impart high energy to the fly line for my longest casts.

**Distance Cast**

- **Long Cast = Long line carry, long rod strokes, long hand motion, long haul.**

  Apply constant acceleration by moving both the hand and the rod through a longer arc.

  This longer stroke allows the caster to smoothly apply more power to the rod over a longer distance without overloading the rod and causing a tailing loop.

  ‘Overloading’ the rod causes rod tip to dip below a straight-line path usually causing a tailing loop.

- **Double haul to increase line speed**
  - As the length of the line being carried is increases, the length of the haul should increase too.
  - The haul should be timed to coincide with rod-butt rotation.

- **#1 Problem – Applying Power Too Soon**
  The most common error among distance casters is to apply their maximum force too early in the stroke! This casting error will cause a tailing loop.

- **#2 Problem – Rod-Butt Rotation too early**
  Starting wrist rotation on forward cast too soon is another common mistake. This casting error will open up your loop and dramatically reduce line speed.

**Rotation Problems**

- Almost impossible to attain 75-, to 85-foot long distance cast if you have rotation problem.
- Swinging outward from the shoulder (unintentional body rotation) – Twisting of the arm and/or wrist while casting will result in a curve at the end of the line.
Not only are the loops no longer cutting through the air in a single plane, but they do not go where the caster intends. If your elbow leaves your side during the back cast stroke, your rod hand likely will move through a curved path. Also, the farther away your rod hand is from your body during the stroke, the less power you have. Swinging outward from the shoulder will take the fly line in an undesirable arc approaching 270°. This violates Essential Rule #1 — The rod tip must follow a straight line path.

Expert casters keep their hands ahead of the rod butt as long as possible before final rotation begins. If you start too early, it opens up the loop! Any slack that remains in the line when the forward cast begins can interfere with the distance of that cast.

Relaxing Your Way to Distance

- It may be counterintuitive, but try to relax as you try for distance.
- Flailing with all your might to throw that line out there will not work.
- Distance is not found in how much energy you apply, it is found in how precisely you apply it, i.e constant acceleration is the rule.

Going For Distance -- What the Experts Do Differently

Why do Some Casters cast so far, and with so little effort?

Back Cast—Stage #1

Narrow Loop

Experts increase casting arc and stroke length to perfectly match the bend in the rod, thus moving the rod tip along a straight line path during the acceleration phase of the cast.

Perfect Timing

Drift

Elite distance casters move the rod through a wider range of motion than good casters. They accomplish this by letting the rod “drift” down in back an additional 10-15 degrees after the stop of the back cast.

How to ‘Drift’ on back cast

‘Thrusting’ upward with rod hand
Then, ‘Stop’ abruptly!
‘Lay Back’ the fly rod after the stop by relaxing your wrist

Body Movement

As you load the back cast, bring your elbow back to the side of your body to position your arm for inward rotation at the
shoulder. Look back at the unrolling line if it helps, and stop the rod abruptly.
As you start shifting weight forward, rotate your trunk to increase the forward movement of your casting shoulder as well as to reposition the elbow in front.

Forward Cast—Stage #2

Maximum Rod Bend

Experts apply ‘constant acceleration’.
This is the most important variable in casting for distance.
A common error is to apply the maximum force too early in the stroke.

These two additional key variables contribute to ‘Loading’ the rod on forward cast.
1. Stroke length
2. Body movement

One of the best ways of forcing a deep bend is to aerialize more line. The added mass of the fly line adds tension to the fly line resulting in loading (bending) the rod deeper.
Shoot line on final back cast. We can get away with a lot of overhang on the last back cast.

Efficient Double Haul

‘Hands apart, hands together’ (literally)
Experts keep their ‘rod hand’ and ‘line hand’ close together.
You will create slack if you allow your line hand to be far apart from the rod hand. This violates Rule #5 -- No Slack line can occur during the casting stroke.

Delay the ‘haul’.
Enhance the acceleration by coordinating your haul with the final arm and wrist action of your casting arm.

Shooting Heads

Extreme Distance
A Shooting Head is essentially a two-piece, weight-forward line. The heavy head section (generally 30 feet or less) is attached to a long length (100 feet or more) of small-diameter running line via a blind splice or interlocking loop connection.

Purpose of Shooting Heads
Extreme distance casting
Deliver your fly to different depths based on the sink rate of the head material

Overhang (O) is the amount of running line between the tip-top guide and the head.
Guidelines for dealing with Shooting Heads
Get a min/max assessment of “overhang”—the amount of running line between the tip-top guide and the head.

*If the knot btw the running line and shooting head is sliding in-and-out of the rod’s tip-top guide as you haul, the overhang is too short.*

*If the point btw the running line and head feels as if it is becoming “jointed,” or if ripples begin to develop in the head as you cast, the overhang is too long.*

**Fine-Tuning Overhang**

Steve Rajeff says, “Overhang is the tool for determining the rate of turn-over of the head.”

The ideal cast is one where the shooting head just comes straight as the cast finishes.

Many interrelated factors determine optimal overhang and trajectory.

*Finding the right combination is trial & error.*

**Essential Rules of Casting SH’s**

Short cast, shorter overhang

Long cast, longer overhang

This is directly related to head turn-over times—the length of time it takes for the line loop to unroll.

Longer heads will travel farther than shorter heads

**How to Handle Wind w/ SH’s**

In a tailwind—which will push the cast and increase hang-time—longer overhang is needed to slow turn-over.

A headwind requires just the opposite: less overhang to compliment the shortened hang-time and more rapid turn-over.

**Shooting Head Trajectory**

The ‘Tumble’ Problem—If you do not use enough overhang for the situation, the line will unroll while still high up. This will cause the heavier rear-end of the line to begin to overtake the light front taper. “Tumble” is the result.

The Solution—Increase angle of release 5°-30° above horizontal.

More specifically, a longer head will require higher angles and a shorter head will require lower angles.

**SH’s Rated by Grain Weight**

**Shooting Head Length**

For 6-wt. rod, SH Length = 30 feet

For 7-wt. rod, SH Length = 35-40 feet

**Level Sinking Lines**

Cortland’s lead-core lines, ex. LC-13

RIO’s tungsten-based T-8, T-11, T-14

Scientific Anglers Express 14+
**Custom Shooting Heads**
Select a level line that will yield an appropriate total weight to match the rod you plan to use. 
For a 9-wt. rod you would want to begin with a 30-foot section of line that weighs something like 14 grains per foot. 

*It would be inappropriate to use a T-8 (which weighs 8 grains per foot) to make a shooting head for a 9-wt. rod. At a full 30 feet, a T-8 would weigh only 240 grains, which is way too light for a 9-wt. rod.*

Using the 9-wt. rod as the example from previous slide, this 30-foot section will feel too heavy. The total grain weight of 420 is way outside the range for a 9-wt. rod. 
Start cutting the line back in 1-foot increments—until the line feels properly matched to the rod. 
You’ll need to cut off ~5 feet to achieve a proper match.

**Factory-made Shooting Heads**
For 10-wt. rods & heavier, Scientific Anglers’ Deep Water Express is easy to work with. 

*30 feet long & available in total weights of 400, 550, 700 and 850 grains.*

Follow SA’s chart to help you in the process of cutting the line to match a particular rod.

**Aerial Mends**
Aerial mends can be made in four different directions: **Right, Left, Up, Down.**
- Check Cast
- Mending the Line
- Reach Cast—Right
- Reach Cast—Left
- Slip Line as You Reach Upstream
- Reach Cast—Up
- Pile Cast
- Slack Cast
- Curve Mend

**Change of Direction**
Re-positioning the fly line from a Downstream Position to an Upstream Position, Progressing from 45°—180°
- False Casting
  - False Casting—Disadvantages
    - *Takes too much time.*
    - *Spooks every fish in the pool.*
    - *Uses up too much of the caster’s energy.*
Roll Pick-up
Aerial Spey Cast
Parallel Cast—River Left & Right
Wye Cast—River Left & Right
Snake Roll—River Right ONLY
  It can help to picture the rod tip drawing the ‘e’ shape along a brick wall that runs 90 degrees to the target off your downstream shoulder. Keep the rod tip on the wall, as far away from you as possible, throughout the cast.
Snake Roll—Common Mistake
Caveat! If the rod tip leaves the wall at the end of the back cast, it will hook the belly behind you and the line will hit you on the forward stroke, pulling the belly off course from the 180-degree plane.

Tension Cast, aka Water Haul
Snap-T Cast — Sideways
  If you make the snapping motion in a slightly semicircular fashion, it will cause the line to be cast with a vertically-oriented loop.
  Lends itself to “high-stick” nymphing

**Curve Casts**

*There are only two ways in which to cast a fly: straight or curved.*

Positive vs. Negative

(+): Any curved cast that causes the end of the line to turn in *towards* your body is a “positive curve.”

(-): Any curved cast that causes the end of the line to turn out *away* from your body is a “negative curve.”

A “True” Curve Cast

Positive Curve
Climbing Hook Cast
Corkscrew Cast
Overpowered Hook Curve
Tuck Cast
Under-Powered Curve

**Saltwater Quick Cast**

Speed Cast—Ready Position
  Strip 20’ of line outside the rod tip.
  Hold the fly between the thumb and index finger of the line hand.

  *Be sure the hook point is UP!*

Coil the leader and hold the end of the fly line at the Nail knot between your middle finger and ring finger.

Speed Cast—Express Delivery
  Start with a Roll (pickup) cast and then follow with a back cast.
It is critical that the roll pickup tracks toward the target to ensure accuracy and eliminate slack during the false casts.

The momentum of the moving line will pull the fly from between your fingers to held load the rod. The fly should not be thrown into the air or otherwise released prematurely as the resulting slack will fail to load the rod adequately.

Shoot line on both the back cast and the forward cast!

**Spey Casting**

**Sources:**
- “Basic SPEY & Two Handed Fly Rod Casting” by Jim Vincent with Simon Gawesworth
- “Two-Handed Fly Casting” by Al Buhr
- “Spey Casting “ by Simon Gawesworth

**Spey Casting—Grip #1**

Two-handed casting utilizes the leverage between the upper and the lower hands, which allows casting to be easily mastered from the right or left.

**Single & Double Distal Grip**

**Rod Butt Leads the Tip**

The hands work together to pull the rod butt forward drawing a straight-line path. The further the hands draw forward the longer the stroke. The upper and lower hands are opposing each other developing the leverage that loads the rod.

**Rod Tip Follows Convex Path—A Casting Error Caused by the Following:**

1. Excessive use of the top hand. Lower hand has no linear movement
2. Dominant top hand punches forward as the upper arm extends.

**Ambidextrous Hands**

All Spey casts should be mastered with either the right or the left hand.

Two-handed casting utilizes the leverage between the upper and the lower hands, which allows casting to be easily mastered from the right or left.

**Lower-, Upper Hand Casting**

Use your lower (left) hand to complement the motion and speed of your upper (right) hand.

**Major Elements of Spey Cast**

**Lift**

Proper lift techniques ensure a smooth transition from spey line downstream, called the “dangle”, to correct placement at the anchor point.
Keep the hands ahead of the rod tip
Shotgun lift most popular
Crescent lift is derivative of shotgun lift

*Popularized by Al Buhr*

**D-, or V, back-loop**
Begin to form *before* the anchor lands.
D-loop is fully tensioned
D-loop is directed straight back from the anchor & 180 degrees from target

**Anchor**
Anchor point is the gateway to success.
Avoid the Bloody L
Can be “L” shaped or a heap of slack
The D/V loop will pull the leader into alignment as a normal part of the cast.

**Forward Cast**
Has a small loop, ex 2’-3’ size
Forward cast delivered without the line sagging and dropping behind the loop
Line should land in a straight line, with the leader straight

**The Single Spey**

**A Two-Directional Switch Cast**

**The Casting Circle—Full Left; Center; and Full Right**

**Single Spey — Shotgun Lift**
Start with the line straight on the dangle and rod tip low to the water surface. Raise the arms in a manner similar to raising a shotgun to the shoulder.
Raise the rod tip from the low position to a 30° incline, or about eye level, kin a vertical lift. This is the top of the lift. At this point, about half of the line out will aerialize from the water surface. The remaining line will clear during the start of the sweep. Do not make the lift by tilting the rod, but *raise the rod with the arms to the top of the lift*.
From the top of the lift, in a continuous motion, sweep the rod from downstream to upstream. This sweep scribes a shallow dish or dip with the path of the rod tip. From the top of the lift, the tip path is scribed slightly downward, applying the thrust to lift the remaining line clear from the water surface. Then, direct the tip path upward. This positions the line on a rising incline and assures the leader will set on the water prior to the line and is key to forming a good anchor.

**Single Spey — Crescent Lift**
Crescent Lift: with the rod-tip in or close to the water, rotate the palm of your upper hand to the sky while starting to gently lift the rod-tip before you sweep back to the set. As the sweep lifts the line clear from the water, always track in a rising line path. This is critical with the Crescent Lift. The leader needs to set to the water surface prior to the line in order to form a smooth anchor.

“Bloody L” and “Pile Anchor”
The Bloody L — A casting fault.
The line anchors, skewed in a crook that is not parallel to the path of the forward stroke.
Pile Anchor — A casting fault.
The line is piling into the anchor point due to the belly of the line contacting the water surface prior to the leader.

The Bloody L — Causes
The Bloody L is caused by lifting/sweeping too slow with the anchor landing too far downstream; or
Finishing the lift/sweep too high will almost always results in the dreaded rod-tip dip as you start to form the D-loop.

The Bloody L — Correction
Reduce the abrupt power applied at the lift and smooth the movements of the lift. If a dish or dip is used during the sweep, smooth and flatten the movements.

Perry Poke
A Perry Poke is a line reposition move that can be added to any Spey-type cast just prior to the forward cast.

Perry Poke Uses
Salvage a cast that resulted from an incomplete or weak line-positioning move
Casting heavy sinking lines & bulky flies
Useful for casting in limited backcast areas because the “poke” allows the caster to load off the water’s surface tension to form a minimal D-loop

Snap-T
A great alternative to the Single Spey
Favorite cast of the Skagit-style (Sunk Line) Steelheaders
Left hand UP on River Right

Circle Cast
Similar to the Snap-T
Scribe an Oval Circle
Sweep Upriver & Fold the Line

The Double Spey
A Line Position Move Followed by a Switch Cast Move to a New Forward Direction

Single vs. Double Spey
The single Spey uses a single set of movements thru the casting circle prior to the formation of the D-loop.
The double Spey uses a bi-directional (double) set of movements thru the casting circle prior to the formation of the D-loop.
  *For right-handed casters, it is easier to use when standing on the right bank of a river.*
  *A double Spey or reverse double Spey, is used when a strong downstream wind is present.*

The 3 “D’s”
In a Downstream wind
Use a Double spey
Use your Downstream arm
Double Spey—Safety

Snake Roll
A Substitute for the Double Spey
Snake Roll—River Right
  *It can help to picture the rod tip drawing the ‘e’ shape along a brick wall that runs 90 degrees to the target off your downstream shoulder. Keep the rod tip on the wall, as far away from you as possible, throughout the cast.*

Snake Roll—Common Mistake
  *Caveat! If the rod tip leaves the wall at the end of the back cast, it will hook the belly behind you and the line will hit you on the forward stroke, pulling the belly off course from the 180-degree plane.*

Snake Roll - **Right Hand**
*Pause at One O’Clock before forward cast*

Snake Roll - **Left Hand**
*Pause at One O’Clock before forward cast*

Spey Cast Decision Chart