

IWFF Introduction to Fly Fishing

Course Outline

The goal of this short course is to foster an appreciation of the art of fly fishing. Students will spend two full classes on fly tying and two classes on fly casting. The classes will be taught at the same time to two groups of students who will switch positions from fly casting to fly tying over a period of 4 classes.

The course is made possible by local and international companies who wish to see outdoor education made an important part of the school curriculum. Sage and Cabela's have loaned 14 rod and reel combos and Superfly and Cabela's have loaned fly tying equipment and supplies.

The course also draws on the thousands of hours of experience of the Island Waters Fly Fishing club members to provide instruction and assistance with the hands-on classes.

It is our goal that participants will develop some sense of what it is like to be a fly fisher. They will develop a beginning proficiency in fly casting by learning to execute an overhand cast and a roll cast. They also will learn the basics of fly tying and tie several flies of three different types—the Woolly Bugger, a Brown Hackle dry fly, and a Pink Handlebar salmon fly.

In the following pages is an outline of what to expect in the course.

1. Code of ethics of international federation of fly fishers.
2. Fly casting basics
3. Fly tying basics.

International Federation of Fly Fishers Code of Ethics (abridged)

(This code could be adapted for any kind of fishing!)

- Fly anglers understand and obey laws and regulations associated with the fishery.
- Fly anglers believe fly fishing is a privilege and a responsibility.
- Fly anglers conserve fisheries by limiting their catch (and release fish in a responsible manner).
- Fly anglers do not judge fellow anglers and treat them as they would expect to be treated.
- Fly anglers respect the waters occupied by other anglers so that fish are not disturbed
- When fishing from a watercraft, fly anglers do not crowd other anglers or craft or unnecessarily disturb the water.
- Fly anglers respect other angling methods and promote this Code of Angling Ethics to all anglers.

IWFF Single Handed Casting

(i) **Standard or overhand cast.** In a standard cast the fly line and rod are lifted with a smooth motion in an up and back direction. The back cast motion is stopped when the rod reaches slightly past vertical. As the fly line begins to fall or

straighten out, the forward cast begins with increasing acceleration as the wrist snaps the rod from its 1 o'clock to the 11 o'clock positions, shooting the line and fly forward toward the presentation area. This cast can be used in either single or two handed casting.

(ii) **False Casting.** False casting refers to casting backwards and forwards without actually presenting the fly to the target area. It is useful when you wish to gain distance by working out more line when you aim the fly over a certain target or when you want to remove water from a dry fly.

(iii) **Roll Casting.** In a roll cast, the fly line is not lifted from the water for the back cast but is simply pulled back along the water then cast forward. Roll casting is used to best advantage when back casting room is unavailable or when strong winds make back casting impossible.

(iv) **Hauling.** Hauling is a technique of increasing line speed or overall fly casting efficiency by using the power of both the rod arm and the free-hand arm. To accomplish a haul, the caster, just as the power stroke is applied with the fly rod, simultaneously pulls down on the taut fly line below the fly stripper guide. This pull-or-haul increases the lines outward speed. Double hauling involves hauling on both the forward and backward stroke.

(v) **Mending.** Mending line is a technique of repositioning the fly line and leader on moving water. It is accomplished by using various rod-lifting and roll casting movements. When you are fishing streams mending line is about as important as casting.

Getting Started Casting

The Casting Grip

Grasp the rod **FIRMLY** with your casting hand. Keep the thumb on **TOP** of the rod. Keep the rod butt under and in line with your forearm.

First casting practice

- Shake out about 20 feet (6 metres) of line onto the lawn. Have the line lying in a straight line, not in S curves.
- Starting with the rod off to the side, start flicking the line back and forth in back casts and forward casts. Try to make the line form candy cane shaped loops in both back and forward casts. The tighter the loops, the better!
- Keep a firm wrist and stop the rod abruptly after each stroke. Stopping the rod allows the line to form a loop off the rod tip. It also allows the rod tip to turn over to unload energy into the line **EFFICIENTLY**. This energy is what casts the line.
- After you are comfortable with casting sidearm gradually move the rod up into a more vertical position.
- If you stand with your left foot ahead of your right foot (reverse for left handers) you can watch the shape and position of your back cast by glancing back over your shoulder.

How much practice do you need?

To become a competent caster, you need to practice 15 minutes a day minimum for a few weeks to a month. Fishing does not count as practice! You need to concentrate on your casts and not have any distractions.

Some common Errors in Basic Casting

One of the biggest falsehoods about fly fishing is that learning how to properly cast a fly rod is extremely difficult. Over the years this misconception has prevented countless numbers of people from picking up the sport.

#1 Forcing the Cast – The force is ‘too strong’ with you

Remember the classic line from the movie Happy Gilmore, “Just tap it in...” Well, casting your fly rod is very similar to Adam Sandler learning to, “tap it in”. Some fly casters have the tendency to force the ball(fly line) where he or she wants it to go instead of letting the putter(fly rod and fly line) do the work for them.

As the rod loads the line, momentum builds up and allows the line to carry your fly where it needs to go. The most important thing is not being overly forceful with each false cast. Allow the rod to naturally load the line on the tip of the rod and give adequate time for your loop to build before moving through with the next casting step.

This will ensure you create a smooth cast that does not hurt accuracy or decrease the line’s momentum.

#2 Lowering the Rod Tip

In order to fly cast long distances it is important to keep the line up and unobstructed during your false casts. In order to do this it is extremely important to keep the rod tip up at all times. If you drop the tip on your back or forward cast then the loop you have created will begin to open, and the momentum that was in your line will dramatically decrease. Making this mistake allows your line no option other than to drop. This is something that beginning anglers often struggle with.

In order to fix this problem envision you are tossing each false cast up onto the roof of a second story building that is roughly 20 ft behind you, and one that is 20 ft in front of you. This will help you keep the rod tip up while making you focus on casting the line up and back, as well as, up and forward.

The result of doing this will be that your line will maintain momentum and your casting distance will improve.

#3 Not Hauling Line In Step With the Load of the Rod

As beginners get more comfortable with fly casting they often figure out that hauling line either in a single or double haul will drastically improve line speed, making casting in the wind much more enjoyable. While this is true, this is also where multiple problems can start.

Learning to effectively haul your line can be a difficult process. It is important to learn how to single haul properly before you can accurately time a double hauled fly cast. The single haul is executed by first beginning to lift the line off the water in front of you. As the rod tip loads and become elevated you will make a quick strip of line with your free hand. If you make that strip too soon or too late, the line will not increase the load pressure on the tip and the entire effort will be in vane.

If executed properly you will notice an increase in line speed as your loop forms tightly behind you during the backcast. In order to perform a double haul it is critical to time a second strip as the rod is loaded during your forward motion. Timing here is just as critical as before. If you get it right, your line will maintain momentum and a tight loop as it moves forward towards the target.

If you mess up timing with either haul, you will not have the accuracy or momentum needed to perform a smooth fly cast.

#4 Moving the rod Back and Forward on Different Lines

This is very common and most people never notice they are doing it unless it is pointed out to them. The mistake is made when the fly caster moves his rod in one direction during his or her back cast, but fails to maintain that same line moving forward.

You will know you are doing this if your line continues to come back on itself or is constantly creating a swinging motion during the end of the forward loop. Focusing on this casting flaw is quite simple and correct results are immediately seen each time the caster maintains the same line. Momentum and accuracy are also greatly affected by this.

#5 Casting Square With Your Body

It is very common for most people to want to stand with their shoulders squared while directly facing their target. However, this is often not the best position to be in while trying to accurately and delicately deliver a fly to a feeding fish.

Instead of squaring off your shoulders with your target, position yourself at an angle with your casting arm farthest from the target. This will force you to cast in a motion that crosses your body in front of you rather than fishing off to your side. This angle is similar to the stance you take while shooting a rifle or a shotgun. Doing this will increase accuracy and allow you to look down the line as your forward loop progresses towards the target.

IWFF Guide to Fly Tying

It is particularly rewarding when you catch your first fish on a fly you have tied. Tour the fly fishing shops (or the Internet) to see the offerings. You can consider a fly tying kit or purchasing individual tools.

(a) Tying Vise

Prices range from around 20 dollars to several hundred. Regardless of price, the jaws must be adjustable to clamp all sizes of hooks.

(b) Thread bobbin

The thread bobbin holds the thread spool and has a tube to help lay out even wraps and tie in fly material, Prices range from \$3.00 (metal tube) to \$25.00 (ceramic tube).

(c) Scissors

An essential part of fly tying. Look for a pair that fits comfortably over your fingers and holds a sharp edge. The scissors are used for cutting thread and trimming material tied into the hook. If you are going to tie many flies with wire, buy a second cheap pair or buy a small pair of side cutters. It will save the cutting edge on your primary scissors.

(d) Whip finisher

The whip finisher is designed to finish off the fly. It can be replaced with the dextrous use of hand tied half hitches.

(e) Bodkin

Can serve two purposes. The first is to pick out material to give a more buggy appearance. The second is the application of head cement. You can create your own. A long needle or a bamboo skewer works fine.

(f) Hackle pliers

Hackle pliers aid the wrapping small feathers and some artificial materials onto the hook.

(g) Head cement

Despite securing the finished fly with a series of half hitches, fly tiers like to ensure the wrapping will not unwind. Head cement accomplishes this task. Head cement is available in all fly fishing shops. An alternate and cheaper solution is Sally Hansen "Hard as Nails" fingernail polish.

(h) Threads

Threads are sold in a variety of colours and thicknesses. Two common methods of giving thickness are the "ought" method and the "denier" method. In the first method, the **smaller** number is a thicker thread. Common thread sizes are 3/0, 6/0 and 8/0. In the second, a **larger** number is a thicker thread. Common sizes are 60, 90 and 140 denier.

(i) Hooks

Hooks come in sizes centred on zero. Smaller hooks start at 2 (large) going up by 2's to size 30 (small). Larger hooks start at 1/0 (1 ought) and go up to 8/0 or larger. Here the increasing number indicates a larger hook. Fly fishermen tend to use #6 to #16 for trout and other smaller fish and move to larger hooks for steelhead and salmon.

(j) Yarns

Yarns are used to make bodies and wings. Materials include Antron, Angora, and Polypropylene. They come in a wide variety of colours and sizes.

(k) Beads

Used to make bead head flies. Can be made from glass, plastic or metal. They add colour and/or flash to the head of the fly and in the case of metals will make the fly sink faster.

(l) Chenille

A soft, strung material that is wrapped around the hook to form a thick body. Comes in small, medium and large and in many different versions and colours (polar, cactus, ultra, UV . . . etc.). Can be plain or flashy.

(m) Deer and Elk Hair

Deer hair used on smaller dry for floatation and to simulate wings while elk hair used on larger flies.

(n) Foam

Comes in sheets and used to wrap bodies, for wings, and to make posts for parachute flies. Provides floatation.

(o) Hackle

Long, thin neck feathers from roosters used to tie wings on dry flies as well as making palmered bodies on flies like the Woolly Bugger. Hen hackles are usually used for wings.

(p) Flash materials

A wide variety of thin plastic materials used to add colour and sparkle to the fly. Can be added to tail, body or wings. Large number of brands, all different in some way . . . Krystal Flash, Fritz, Flashabou, Krinkle Flash . . . etc.

(q) Marabou

Downy feathers used for tails and wings of many streamer flies. Have great action when wet.

(r) Peacock and Ostrich Herl

Useful in tying bodies in a number of different patterns.

(s) Pheasant Tail

Used to tie legs and tails in nymph patterns.

(t) Turkey feathers

Used for wing cases and tails.

(u) Wire

Used to simulate ribbing on the bodies of insect patterns (segmentation). Gold and copper most commonly used in fine to medium size.

(j) Sources of inexpensive materials

Generally, materials are best bought at your local tackle shop or from a reputable on-line supplier, but considerable savings can be made by using some of the following sources: Dollar Stores, Craft Stores, Thrift Stores, Road Kill and friends who are hunters.

Basic Ideas for Beginner Fly Tiers

Start by crimping the barb and putting a hook in the tying vise. Try to set the hook so the point does not stick outside of the jaws of the vise. If the point sticks out it will sometimes catch on your tying thread and other materials. It can also break the thread, which is a pain to deal with!

Holding the end of the thread in your left hand, wrap a few turns of thread around the hook shank about 1/8 to 3/16 inch (3 to 5 mm) back from the hook eye. Put enough wraps back and forth to secure the thread to the hook. Cut off the excess thread you were holding in your left hand.

Cover the hook with a layer of thread by wrapping up to the curve of the hook.

From this point, every fly pattern will have its own specific "recipe" to tie it. The usual method is to tie in the tail material first, followed by the material(s) for the body, in the reverse order in which they are to be used (for instance, if you are going to tie a chenille body with a hackle over top, tie in the hackle first, then the body).

Once you have completed the body, tie in the wing material, then any "beard" you might add (this often represents the legs of the insect nymph you are trying to imitate).

The last step is to tie in the head using an appropriate number of wraps then coating the loops of thread with head cement. (Sally Hansen "Hard as Nails" Nail polish is one of the best to use.) It must be good if you can get grown men to go into the cosmetics department to buy it! Dollar Stores will often stock the nail polish for \$1 or \$2 per bottle.

Wooly Buzzer Recipe

1. Use #8 to #12 hook. Cover the body with black 6/0 thread
2. Tie in a nice piece of black marabou for a tail. Wind the thread up to where you started. Moisten the feather (spit works fine!) and measure it so the tail is the same length as the hook shank. Wind the rest of the feather up to the thread and tie off. Wind the thread back down to the tail.

3. Tie in some light wire, then a hackle (by the tip), , then a 2 inch (5 cm) piece of chenille.
4. Wind the thread back to the start.
5. Spiral the chenille up to the eye and tie off.
6. Wind the hackle up between turns of the chenille. Tie off.
7. Wind the wire in the opposite direction up to the eye being careful not to tie down too many of the hackle fibres. Tie off.
8. Make a neat head from thread and whip finish. Coat with head cement.

Brown Hackle Dry Fly

1. Use a #10 to #16 dry fly hook. Cover the body with brown or black 6/0 thread. Use 8/0 for smaller flies.
2. Tie on a sparse tail using brown hackle fibres and extend them about shank length past the end of the fly.
3. Tie in 2 peacock herls then wind the thread forward to about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the shaft length from the eye.
4. Wind the herl forward to where the thread was wound.
5. Use a hackle with fibres about $1\frac{1}{2}$ times the gap size of the hook. Trim the butt end using your scissors then attach the hackle so the "dull" side will be forward when you wrap the hackle around the shaft.
6. Wind the hackle 3 or 4 turns around the shaft then tie down with the thread and clip off the hackle.
7. Build up a small head using the thread and whip finish (or use half hitches). Coat with head cement.

Pink Handlebar Fly

1. Use a #6 to #8 salt water hook. If you are going to use in strong current, slide on a $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3 mm) metal bead and/or add some wraps of lead wire to the body over the thread wraps.
2. Cover the body with the thread down to a position just above and behind the hook point. Tie in a sparse amount of crystal flash for the tail. Trim to about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the shank length.
3. Tie in a $\frac{1}{8}$ " wide strip of laser wrap (the strips can be cut using a razor blade and a metal ruler), edgebright or other handlebar material. Tie in a piece of $\frac{1}{8}$ " silver tinsel or holographic tinsel.
4. Spiral the tinsel forward to within $\frac{3}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the hook eye. Tie off and cut off excess.
5. Spiral the pink handlebar forward to the same point and tie off.
6. Tie in a sparse clump (less than 10 fibres) of pink bucktail or polar bear for a wing on the top of the fly at the head. Make the wing extend as far as the tail. Add a few strands of flash material.
7. Make a neat head of pink thread (if not using a bead head) and whip finish then coat with head cement.