



Equipment and Casting Basics

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Best Time: Use after can cast lesson and prior to individual types of casting techniques

Best Location: Classroom setting

Time Required: 30 to 45 minutes

Objectives:

Participants will:

1. Learn the choices they have between different kinds of equipment
2. Learn the purpose behind each type of equipment
3. Learn the best approach for selecting the right tackle
4. Learn the importance of casting accuracy

Youth Development Objectives

1. Development knowledge
2. Develop decision making skills

Evaluation Activities/Suggestions

1. Do participants fully understand the importance of each equipment
2. Can students begin to make decisions on when they might use the different kinds of equipment

Equipment/Materials

1. Either posters of or actual hands on examples of
 - a. cane pole
 - b. spinning rod
 - c. bait-cast rod
 - d. fly rod
 - e. spin-cast reel
 - f. spinning reel
 - g. bait cast reel
 - h. fly reel

Safety Considerations: None, unless rods are passed around. Then just make sure that participants do not hit each other or knock things over with the rod.

Lesson Outline

Equipment Choices

1. Pole and Line
2. Why add reels?
3. Spin-cast rod and reel
4. Spinning rod and reel
5. Bait-casting rod and reel
6. Fly Casting rod and reel
7. Specialty equipment

Selecting the right tackle

1. Select fish species first
2. Matching Tackle

Casting Basics For All Types

1. Importance of skill of casting
1. Accuracy
2. Distance
3. Versatility

Casting Safety

Summary Activity

Once students learn to cast in the future lessons, have them practice accuracy, distance and versatility as described in this chapter.

Narrative

Besides hand lining (can casting), there are five basic types of equipment that you can choose in which to extend your fishing line into the water: Pole and line; spin-cast; spinning; bait-cast and fly.

Pole and Line

A pole and line is the most simple and least expensive way of fishing. The pole can be made of cane, bamboo or a straight piece of tree branch. You do not use a reel with a pole. You tie line directly to the end of the pole, and the line is normally a little longer than the pole. Safety pins have been known to be substitutes for hooks. When fishing from the bank in an area that is near fishable cover, the angler uses the rod to swing the baited hook near the cover/structure. Some boating anglers utilize cane poles when they anchor over a fishing spot that usually contains cover/structure.

Why add a reel?

So, what are the advantages to adding a reel to the outfit? A reel stores fishing line and provides the capability of casting bait a greater distance, casting and retrieving a variety of artificial lures/flyes, and providing a more efficient way of fighting a strong fish.

Pole fishing is usually limited to natural or prepared bait on a hook or a jig. Reels provide the ability for the angler to retrieve an endless variety of lures at different speeds, and give an erratic movement when desired.

With a quality reel an angler can let a hooked fish pull line off his reel. By turning the handle the angler can control slack in the line and retrieve the fish as the line is automatically re-spooled onto the reel.

When you add a reel to your outfit you call the "pole" a rod. There are four basic types of rod and reel combinations: spin-cast, spinning, bait-cast and fly.

Spin-cast

Spin-casting reels may be described as a "closed-face spinning reel." It has a "nose cone" or "hood" (front cover) that houses the line and stationary spool. On the cast, after the line has been first released from the spool by depressing a lever or "push-button" with the thumb, the line passes from the spool through a hole in the front of the cone. Spin-casting reels are designed chiefly to be mounted on the top of a standard bait-casting or spin-casting rod. A spin-casting rod has small line guides and a straight handle.

Spin-casting tackle is ideal for beginning anglers because it works well and is easy to use. However, spin-casting tackle is not limited to beginners. Spin-casting tackle is used often while fishing for bluegill, crappie and other panfish. Specialized models are utilized by professional anglers for flipping for big bass

Spinning

The spinning reel is often referred to as an "open face reel," since the line and spool are exposed at the front of the reel. The spinning reel's spool is stationary on both the cast and the retrieve. It is the momentum of the cast lure which pulls line from the spool.

Spinning reels are properly mounted under the rod. Sometimes you'll see people using spinning reels with the reel on top (Former President George Bush). Today, most reels have handles that are easily changed for left handed people, but many left handers prefer to just turn the outfit over with the reel on top. Spinning rods have a straight handle with large line guides that are on the bottom.

Casting with a spinning outfit is similar to using spin-cast equipment. Some people find it just as easy as spin-cast and others just a little more difficult. Spinning rods and reels allow for more line to be quickly peeled off the reel, allowing for casting longer distances.

Both spin-cast and spinning can be utilized with very light line and light artificial bait. Many freshwater spin-cast and spinning reels are limited to 10 pound test line and under. They used to be limited also to monofilament line but new developments in line have given the angler greater choices. Spinning and spin-cast are preferable over the bait-cast in windy situations.

Bait-cast

Unlike the other two types of reels, the casting reel's line spool turns as you cast. The revolving spool allows the line to come off the spool on the cast in the same way it went on. This helps prevent twist in the line that is sometimes a problem with spin-cast and spinning reels. Bait-casting reels handle line tests much higher than either the spin-cast or spinning reel. Because of the durability of bait-cast reels, they are a favorite choice for many serious bass anglers. The main drawback to bait-casting reels is that they require the angler to control the spool throughout the cast. Over-runs known to almost everyone as the "birds nest" are common to the inexperienced user.

Reel designs continue to advance becoming increasingly more durable and trouble free than ever before allowing less experienced fishermen to utilize this reel as a choice. Bait-cast reels are excellent for crankbaits, spinnerbaits, plastic worms, jigs etc.

Flyfishing

Flyfishing tackle is different from all other types. In flyfishing, you are casting the line that carries the "fly." With other fishing tackle the weight of a bait or lure pulls line from a reel. In flyfishing the reel is only used to store the line. Flyfishing can be utilized for a majority of species from bluegill and trout to bonefish and tarpon.

Specialty Equipment

Saltwater tackle requires special equipment because saltwater will corrode any aluminum, steel or iron parts. If a freshwater reel is used for saltwater fishing, be sure to rinse it thoroughly in fresh water. There are reels for surf fishing, bay and pier fishing, rolling, etc. Saltwater reels of all types have a few things in common. They usually are sturdily built, corrosion resistant, have strong drags and hold hundreds of yards of heavy-test line.

Ice fishing is a very specialized sport. One-to three-foot rods are most often used. Simple reels are used to hold the line. Ice fishing can also be done with tip-ups. Tip-ups fit over a hole in the ice. When a fish hits, it releases a lever. This causes a flag to tip up, alerting the angler.

Selecting the Right Tackle

Each of the different types of rods listed above come in a variety of lengths and strengths. Reels come in a variety of sizes as well. So how do you choose what is best for you?

Select fish species first

The first consideration in tackle choice is the species of fish sought. The size, food habits, and depth preferred by the species is critical in choosing tackle. Heavy tackle is recommended for large fish, while light tackle should be used for small fish. Fish that are strong and make long runs must be raised off the bottom with a stout rod and strong line.

Cover and habitat are also important considerations in tackle selection. You can use lighter tackle to fish for river smallmouth than fishing for similar size largemouth in brush and long jams. Open-water barracuda can be caught on light tackle while reef-hiding grouper of the same size require heavy tackle.

Food preferences of fish also determine tackle choice. The preference of trout for mayflies, caddis flies, stone flies, and small aquatic insects makes the fly rod ideal for stream fishing. Bottom feeding fish caught by still fishing do not require a rod or reel that will cast well as do fish that strike lures presented by casting. Heavy-action rods are preferred for fish that strike surface lures because the stiff rod allows the angler to work the lure properly.

The kind and type of water also determines tackle selection. Ponds and small streams can be fished with light tackle because they usually contain smaller fish. Offshore saltwater fishing requires the use of large, heavy tackle for the much larger fish.

Matching Tackle

Some anglers say that their fishing tackle must be balanced to work properly. A better way of saying this is to use the word "matched." This is because the word "balanced" doesn't mean how well a rod and reel balances on an angler's finger or in a hand, although that is important for fishing comfort. What it really means is that each element of the entire fishing outfit -- rod, reel, line, and lure -- is in proper relation to each of the other elements.

Many anglers choose the rod and reel first and then their lure and line size. It is usually best to work in reverse. The type of fish you seek and the fishing conditions will determine the type and size of the lure or bait. The types of sizes of lures determine what size line should be used. To fish effectively, the line size and the lure weight determine the type and size of reel and the necessary rod length and strength. Therefore, using matched tackle means that the rod you use must have an appropriately sized reel, line, and lure. If your tackle is matched, you'll be able to fish more easily, more efficiently, and more effectively.

Casting

Understanding fish habitat and behavior coupled with effective casting abilities are what separate the successful angler from the angler who occasionally makes a catch. You can be the best caster, but if you don't know the best target areas to shoot for your skill does you little good. On the otherhand, if you understand where fish should be hiding out, but you can't get your bait to that area, again your knowledge does you little good. Becoming an effective caster involves an understanding of the equipment, learning the fundamentals of different types of casts, and practice.

Regardless of what type of equipment you select to fish with, certain skills need to be developed with any that you select. Accuracy is of utmost importance and to become accurate in different situations you must be able to control distance and be versatile in a number of ways.

Accuracy

Accuracy is the ability to cast your lure/bait to the spot you want it to land. Many times, the best fishing spots are around structure such as trees, brush, boat docks, piers, and rocks. Some situations require you to be able to get your bait within a three-inch area without getting hung-up in the mean time. Being in that three-inch area or an inch or two outside that area may mean the difference of catching a record fish and not catching a fish at all. Sometimes you have only one chance at hitting the spot because a misplaced lure may spook the fish.

Practice for accuracy does not have to take place on the water. You can do it in a number of places, including your living room. I wouldn't try an overhead cast in your living room but flipping and pitching can be practiced with little danger. Most people practice in their yard. Never practice with hooks. Either use a casting plug or remove the hooks from a crankbait before practicing.

Always practice with a target. A target can be a number of things.... a hula hoop, rope or lawn hose drawn in a circle, wastepaper baskets. Yards normally contain many natural targets... trees, shrubs, and rocks. When first learning to cast with new equipment, place or use a target in an open area until you begin to develop some control and begin hitting your target. Then you can move to more complicated targets like the base of trees and points under the shrubs.

Distance

Many beginning anglers like to see how far they can cast. However, distance without accuracy is useless. Being able to control distance is part of accuracy. You first need to judge how far a target is away and then cast that distance.

Rarely do anglers need to make long cast. Some anglers fishing from the shoreline think the farther they get their bait the better chance they'll have of catching fish. However, in many situations the fish may be within five feet of their feet. They may have better luck casting right down the shoreline. There are situations where being able to cast a long distance is important. You may see fish surfacing after some bait fish a long way out. If you can reach them, you'll have a chance of catching those fish. When fishing some deep crank baits, making a long cast is important because the lure will stay deeper longer. Usually in this situation, you have figured out what depth the fish are at and are fishing parallel to the bank so that the lure will stay in that depth the maximum amount of time.

Versatility

To achieve accuracy in a variety of situations an angler has to be versatile. An angler may have one favorite rod and reel, but rarely does he/she utilize the same kind of lure or bait every time they go. You may be in different water conditions or fishing for different kinds of fish and therefore use a variety of pound tests for your line which effects casting. Rarely are the wind conditions the same and even throughout one day of fishing an angler may have to adapt to many changes in the wind. Your casting may be done while you sit, stand, stand on uneven shoreline or rocks, bounce around in a boat, stand in waist deep water, or half bent over under a tree limb.

Versatility can be learned through practice. While practicing in the yard, change the weight of your casting plug, use different pound test line, put yourself into some of the positions that you may encounter on your fishing trips. Practice on windy days and rainy days.

To be versatile also means knowing more than one way of casting so that you can use the best technique for the bait you select and the conditions you are fishing in. Many avid anglers keep more than one rod handy so they can easily switch to match the condition. They may be using an overhand cast to get their crankbait out a good distance, then come along a nice overhanging tree. They may use a underhand cast to slide their lure under the tree. If that doesn't produce they may switch to a soft plastic bait and flip it to the base of the tree.

The key to successful casting is practice!

Casting Safety

Participants need to learn that they have to take responsibility for their actions. Casting plugs can hurt but once hooks are added great pain can be inflicted if someone does not get in the habit of paying attention to where there plug is at all times. Anglers need to be aware of their bait/plug from the time they begin their cast until the time it is retrieved. That means looking behind, overhead and in front.

The back cast is the greatest concern. Fishermen get so intense about where they are going to cast to that they sometimes forget to look behind them to see if their back cast is going to hit someone or get hung in a tree. When you are fishing from the bank, someone may come up behind to watch you or just be causally walking by. When in a boat, most anglers know their partner(s) are there, but don't realize that their back cast can reach their partner(s).

On the forward cast most anglers are aware of other people, but sometimes forget about power lines and overhanging trees. Be cautious also of throwing over someone else's line. Never cast directly at another person.

Once the cast has been made, the plug can get hung up including during practice. Caution, participants about putting too much pressure to retrieve the snagged plug. Also caution about grabbing the line to pull it free. Monofilament line can cut through the skin. Instead have anglers wrap the line around the rod handle and use it to pull the line free. Once it comes loose it can shoot back like a bullet and hurt whomever it hits. Alert anyone around you before you begin to pull so they can avoid getting hit if the plug flies free.

References

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