



Bait-Casting

Sharon Rushton¹ and Shag Shahid²

Objectives

Participating young people and adults will:

1. Identify bait-casting equipment
2. Practice handling bait-casting tackle
3. Practice safe casting principles
4. Practice basic casting with bait-casting tackle
5. Have fun while learning

Youth Development Objectives

Participating young people will:

1. Practice patience and sequential learning
2. Enhance self-esteem and self-confidence
3. Enhance both gross and fine motor skills
4. Practice exercising personal responsibility
5. Practice interpersonal communication skills

Roles for Teen and Junior Leaders

¹ Former Executive Director, Future Fisherman Foundation

² Professional Angler, Panama City Florida

Best Time: Any time; intermediate or advanced lesson.

Best Location: Open area large enough to safely hold the number of kids casting at one time (park, playground, closed parking lot)

Time Required: 30 to 45 minutes per group

Equipment/Materials

bait-casting rod and reel - one per participant
practice plugs (no hooks)
casting targets (trash can lids, hoola hoops, buckets)
safety glasses or sun glasses
line clippers
swivel snaps (about size 7)

Safety Considerations: Flying casting plugs

1. Demonstrate casting techniques
2. Assist in setting up equipment and putting it away
3. Assist participants with casting technique
4. Assist in managing backlashes and bird=s nests

Potential Parental Involvement

1. See ARoles for Teen and Junior Leaders@ above
2. Arrange for or provide teaching equipment
3. Arrange for or provide teaching location
4. Arrange for or provide transportation
- 5 Arrange for or provide refreshments

Evaluation Suggestions

1. Observe casting form for any needed corrections.
2. Observe reductions in the instances of backlashes.
3. Coach young people on improving form with the tackle.
4. Observe casting accuracy and distance.

Lesson Outline

Presentation	Application
<p>I. Bait-casting equipment</p> <p>A. Reels</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Revolving spool 2. AThrowing@ line from the reel 3. Reel parts <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Foot b. Frame c. Level wind and pawl d. Free spool button or lever e. Handle f. Drag adjustment (star drag) g. Friction adjustment <p>B. Lines</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monofilament 2. Copolymer 3. Braided <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Dacron or nylon b. ASuper@ braids <p>C. Rods</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Off-set handle rods <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Traditional casting rod b. Similar to spin-cast rods c. Reel in line with guides 2. Straight handle rods <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Popping, pitching or flipping rods b. Longer grips front and rear 	<p>POINT out and DISCUSS the parts of a casting reel, using either a functional reel or a large diagram as a teaching aid.</p> <p>If possible, have participants LOCATE the parts on the reels they will be using in the lesson.</p> <p>DISPLAY and DISCUSS the variety of lines that can be used on bait casting tackle. For advanced groups consider discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each type and appropriate applications for them.</p> <p>SHOW a variety of bait-casting rods, illustrating their features and DISCUSSING their uses.</p>

and fast moving rod tips are the greatest safety considerations. Using some form of eye protection and keeping kids well separated will reduce the probability of injuries significantly, particularly if it should hit someone's eye. Line cuts are also a possibility if young people are tying lines or pulling excessively hard on lines for hung plugs. Beware overhead electric lines, plug-eating trees or similar hazards. Lawn areas are much easier on lines than are paved areas, but they may also have pests like chiggers, ticks, or stinging insects like yellow jackets or fire ants. Scout the area to avoid such problems.

References

- Basic Casting from A to Z.* Zebco.
Bassmaster Casting Kids
McClane's Secrets of Successful Fishing Sportfishing and Aquatic Resources Handbook

- c. Larger guides
 - d. Similar to stout spinning rod
- II. Safety considerations
- A. Personal responsibility
 - 1. Casting requires personal responsibility
 - a. Personal safety
 - b. Safety of others
 - c. Safe execution of cast and retrieve
 - B. Casting
 - 1. Watch back cast
 - 2. Watch for hazards
 - a. Overhead power lines
 - b. Trees or other obstacles
 - c. Other people and their lines
 - C. Retrieving
 - 1. Plugs as projectiles
 - a. Excess stress on line
 - b. Jerking to free snagged plug or lure
 - c. Possible damage to rod, line or people
- III. Casting mechanics
- A. Drag adjustment
 - 1. Purpose of drag
 - a. Prevent line breakage
 - b. Provide pressure on fish
 - c. Stronger as line is taken from spool
 - d. Maximum about 2 to b line strength
 - 2. Star wheel or drag knob
 - 3. Adjust to desired amount of drag
 - a. Have partner hold line
 - b. Adjust until line slips at desired pull
 - c. Adjust to fishing conditions
 - 1) Lighter for open water, fast fish
 - 2) Heavy for dense cover, obstructions
 - d. Adjust to angler strength and stamina
 - B. Free-spool adjustment
 - 1. Purpose
 - a. Control rotation speed on spool
 - b. Reduce line over-runs, backlashes
 - 2. Spool tensioning device or inertial dampening
 - 3. Adjustment
 - a. Tighten adjustment fully
 - b. Reel lure to just below rod tip
 - c. Release free-spool
 - d. Hold rod level with ground
 - e. Gradually loosen tension until lure slowly pulls line off reel
 - 4. May be set lighter as proficiency grows
 - 5. Set slightly heavier casting into wind
 - 6. Adjust every time lure weight changes
 - C. Grip
 - 1. Comfortable grip on rod handle

STRESS the responsibility of the casters to make sure they can safely make a cast before starting. **INCLUDE** a recommendation for sunglasses or safety glasses.

ASK participants to name some safety considerations for a person casting. **REINFORCE** their statements and **ADD** any that may be overlooked.

NOTE that a lure jerked loose from a snag may become a well armed projectile that can inflict injury.

DEMONSTRATE proper drag adjustment and **DISCUSS** the reasons for setting the drag in the manner and at the tension discussed.

NOTE that the drag adjustment should change with the fishing conditions. **ASK** why one might use a lighter drag on fast, open water fish. [*Remember drag force increases and line is stripped from the spool, and drag on the line from the water also increases it.*]

DISCUSS the free-spool adjustment or spool tensioning device and its purposes. **NOTE** that using it properly supports learning to cast with bait-casting tackle.

NOTE that older reels may use an inertia block to dampen changes in spool speed.

DEMONSTRATE and **DISCUSS** the adjustment of the spool tensioning device. Have the participants **PRACTICE** the process and **SET UP** their tackle with the practice plug.

DISCUSS changing the set up with changes in proficiency, wind direction or lure weight. Consider **POSING** scenarios for such adjustment and letting kids choose how to adjust.

DEMONSTRATE and have participants **PRACTICE** taking a

2. Forefinger extended, wrapped around trigger on rod if present
 3. Place thumb on the spool
 4. Turn hand palm down, reel handle up (right-handed casters)
 - a. Handle down (left-handed casters)
 - b. Allows free wrist movement
 - c. Spool axle rests on one bearing
 - d. Minimizes friction, eases casting
 5. Grip firm but relaxed
 - a. Excessive pressure increases fatigue
 - b. Excess pressure reduces quickness
 - c. Reduces cast length and accuracy
- D. Positioning lure
1. Important factor in bait-casting
 - a. Heavy lures approximately 1 inch from tip top
 - b. As lures get lighter, further from tip
 - 1) 4 ounce lure - about 3 inches
 - 2) 3 ounce lure - 4 - 6 inches
- E. Overhead cast
1. Most basic cast
 - a. Most casting situations
 - b. Exceptions
 - 1) Overhead obstructions
 - 2) Objects or persons behind caster
 2. Stance
 - a. Critical to executing good cast
 - b. Solid, comfortable standing position
 - c. Body angled slightly toward target
 - 1) Casting arm shoulder toward target
 - 2) Off-side foot slightly behind casting-side foot
 - d. Weight nearly equally distributed
 - 1) Slight shift to back foot on backcast
 - 2) Slight shift to forward foot for forward cast and follow through
 - e. Properly gripped rod splits target
 3. Casting mechanics
 - a. Continuous motion, explained in steps
 - b. Release free-spool
 - 1) Push free-spool button
 - 2) Place thumb on bottom edge of spool
 - a) Touching line and edge of spool
 - b) Controlling spool and line
 - c. Hold casting arm at about 35° angle
 - 1) Rod tip about eye level - 2 o'clock
 - 2) Handle above hip level
 - 3) Casting arm elbow clear of body
 - 4) Forearm in straight line with rod

proper grip for their casting. **TRY** to maintain ambidextrous instructions, e.g. casting arm, off arm, casting arm foot...

NOTE that the reel handle up or down presentation is essential for the best casting distance because it minimized spool friction. **STRESS** keeping the reel clean and well lubricated.

EMPHASIZE the need for a firm, relaxed grip to offer control, quickness, reduced fatigue, longer distance, and better accuracy.

DISCUSS lure positioning and its impact on accuracy and distance in casting.

DISCUSS the overhead cast and its utility. **DEMONSTRATE** (or have a teen leader or parent do so) one cast. Then break the cast into parts for instruction.

Have each participant **STAND** comfortably. **NOTE** the position of their feet and that this is about right for the cast.

Have each participant **ASSUME** a casting position with a common target. **ADJUST** their positions as required.

NOTE that a shift in weight from toward the rear foot on the backcast and toward the front foot on the forward cast imparts a bit of extra power (like a batter stepping into a pitch).

STRESS that the casting process is one continuing set of motions, not a series of steps, even though it is discussed in step-wise fashion.

DEMONSTRATE pressing the free-spool button and proper thumb position on the spool and line. Have each participant **PRACTICE** it one or more times.

Have each participant **EXECUTE** each of these steps in sequence and slowly. Then attempt to put them together to make a cast.

[Using an open area where obstructions are absent and no danger of catching a fish is present makes this lesson easier on the learner.]

- d. Sweep rod back to slightly beyond vertical by raising forearm and elbow
 - 1) Casting hand about eye level
 - 2) Minimize wrist bend for accuracy
 - 3) Reel handle toward face or target
- e. Stop just beyond vertical
 - 1) Precision - stop rod at same position
 - 2) Tip pulled back by lure inertia
 - 3) Loading rod fibers for cast
 - 4) Provides majority of casting power
 - 5) Butt essentially vertical
 - 6) Avoid letting rod drift back
- f. Start forward cast immediately
 - 1) No hesitation after stop
 - 2) Move arm forward, down sharply
 - 3) Snap wrist forward to boost speed
 - 4) Follow path of backcast
 - 5) Avoid over throwing cast
 - a) Reduces distance
 - b) Reduces accuracy
- g. Ease thumb pressure at 11 o'clock
 - 1) Rod still splitting target
 - 2) Rod still moving forward
 - 3) Control spool with thumb pressure
- h. Continue forward movement of rod
 - 1) Rod tip in line with flight of lure
 - 2) Increase thumb pressure
 - 3) Stop spool as lure hits target
- I. Practice to educate thumb
 - 1) Beware frustration
 - 2) Everyone gets some backlashes
 - 3) Pick them out and keep casting
- F. Trouble shooting casts
 - 1. Relatively flat trajectory desired
 - a. Less wind influence
 - b. Less slack in line
 - 2. Observe arc of line
 - a. High arc - release too early
 - b. Low, short cast - release too late
 - 3. Practice developing rhythm
 - a. Makes it look easy
 - b. Effort educating thumb worth it
- IV. Other casts
 - A. Value of other casts
 - 1. When overhead cast cannot be used
 - 2. Matching cast and situation
 - B. Flipping or pendulum cast
 - 1. Utility
 - a. Short, accurate cast
 - b. Gentle entry into water
 - c. Precise casting in tight cover
 - 2. Casting process

ASK participants if they feel the rod loading when they stop the rod on the backward arc at the vertical. **NOTE** that this is the real power that casts the lure, not the strength of their arms, shoulders or wrists.

NOTE that trying to Amuse@ the cast results in shorter, less accurate casting rather than increasing distance and accuracy.

EMPHASIZE the timing of the release and the need for practice to develop a feel for it.

DEMONSTRATE a proper follow through with the rod after the line is released.

STRESS that only practice can educate the thumb to apply the proper amount of frustration and **DISCUSS** the process of picking out backlashes, including your practice in that area.

DISCUSS the impacts of early or late release on the trajectory of the lure and line. **COACH** the participants to use observations of that trajectory as a teaching element to help get their timing down.

NOTE that the overhead cast is used for most situations, but that other types of casts are used frequently by anglers.

DISCUSS the pendulum cast or flipping, including its uses and execution.

DEMONSTRATE a pendulum cast or flipping, explaining the

- a. Start with 2 rod-lengths of line
 - b. Engage reel
 - c. Point rod toward target
 - d. Look directly at target
 - e. Grasp line with non-casting hand
 - f. Pull in excess line
 - 1) Extend the arm away from body
 - 2) Pull arm back
 - g. Raise rod tip at same time swinging lure back toward body
 - h. Lower rod tip then flip it upward toward target
 - i. Release line with free hand
 - j. Follow lure to target with rod tip
 - k. Can use longer lines
 - 1) With practice
 - 2) Limp, well-behaved line
 - 3) No obstructions to entangle line
3. Flipping equipment
- a. Long rod preferred - 72 to 8 feet
 - b. Quality reel
 - c. Heavy line
 - d. Lures to match fish and conditions
 - 1) Inactive fish in heavy cover
 - 2) Bass
 - a) Soft plastics
 - b) Jig and Apig@
 - 3) Trout
 - a) Live bait most common
 - b) Small marabou or bucktail jigs
 - c) Sponge or yarn flies with shot

C. Pitching

1. Position lure about rod-length from tip
2. Disengage free-spool and thumb line
3. Hold lure carefully
 - a. By bend of hook in free hand
 - b. Hand about level with waist
4. Lower rod tip
 - a. Keep line tight
 - b. Force rod to flex at tip slightly
5. Swing rod tip quickly forward and up toward target
6. Release lure at same time
7. Release thumb pressure as lure passes under rod tip
 - a. Continue upward, outward thrust
 - b. Control with light thumb pressure
 - c. Lure should arc to target
8. Careful adjustment of free spool needed

D. Underhand or flip cast

1. Excellent under obstacles

process as it is repeated several times.

Have each participant **PRACTICE** several attempts at this cast, using a small bucket or ring as a target.

DISCUSS preferences in flipping tackle and the situations in which it may be most effective.

NOTE that trout fishermen frequently use this technique for fishing live baits or small jigs in tight cover.

RELATE pitching to flipping, noting that it is similar except for the use of the reel.

DEMONSTRATE the technique one or more times, then have the participants **CAST** themselves. Be sure to **CAUTION** them about using this approach with any lure having multiple hook points.

NOTE that the underhand or flip cast is an excellent choice under

2. Delicate presentation possible
3. Made from nearly any stance
4. May be used back handed across body
5. Mechanics
 - a. Address target with rod
 - 1) Rod nearly parallel to water
 - 2) Rod straight toward target
 - b. Loading
 - 1) Lift rod to about shoulder height
 - 2) Bring tip down sharply
 - 3) Stop at starting point
 - c. Release line as rod starts to straighten
 - d. Follow through toward target
6. Easily learned by practice, difficult to describe verbally

E. Sidearm cast

1. Overhead cast rotated 90 degrees
 - a. Control of release essential
 - b. Dangerous to others on casting side
2. Excellent for cheating wind
 - a. Low trajectory
 - b. Accuracy challenging for most
3. Good under overhead obstructions
4. More wrist than arm

V. Summary

A. Applications

1. Squidding (surf casting) tackle
2. Jigging tackle
3. Plunking tackle
4. Popping tackle

B. Perfect practice makes perfect

1. Repetition of process
 - a. Basic skills
 - b. Self-critique and work on skills
2. Quality tackle, well-maintained
3. Once learned, easily applied

C. Exercise patience with yourself

obstacles or in circumstances when a gentle entry into the water is important.

EMPHASIZE that it can be performed even from odd positions or across the body without excessive risk of getting hooked.

DEMONSTRATE the process, and have each participant **CAST** several times until they feel comfortable with the technique.

NOTE that a caster who has mastered the earlier casts will grasp this one quickly, although they may not be able to articulate what they are doing to accomplish it. [*Refer to the narrative for support.*]

NOTE that the sidearm cast is much like an overhead cast rotated 90 degrees. **DISCUSS** the increased difficulty of achieving good accuracy with this approach and its potential hazards to those around you, as well as the utility of the cast in some situations.

DEMONSTRATE the cast safely, and have the participants **DISCUSS** both the processes used and the safety considerations they should apply. Have each one **ATTEMPT** a cast or two using this method.

DISCUSS some of the applications of these bait-casting techniques to surf, boat, river and inshore saltwater fishing, **NOTING** that the differences are mostly of scale, not function.

REINFORCE the notion that skill with revolving spool reels takes time and effort to learn, even with modern, well-maintained reels. **DISCUSS** picking out backlashes and learning by doing.

Summary Activity

Set up a casting tournament or casting course with a variety of targets at varying distances. Have the participants work their way through the course, selecting the type of cast they would use and attempting to hit all of the targets. Be sure to include at least one situation where simply casting for distance is the requirement.

Lesson Narrative

Bait-Casting Equipment

Unlike the fixed spools on spin-cast and spinning reels, casting reels have a revolving spool. Once the inertia of the spool builds up, it literally throws the line off the spool toward the lure. That process produces long casts. The revolving spool allows the line to come off the spool on the cast in the same way it went on, helping to prevent twist in the line. And that feature works even when a fish pulls line off the spool against the drag. Drags on casting reels are designed to take the punishment of large fish and heavy lines, and they are often smoother than drags on the fixed spool reels. Bait-casting reels handle heavier lines with less sacrifice in casting efficiency than do fixed spool reels, and they are able to adapt to a wide range of lure weights. These factors and their durability has made these reels the prime choice of bass, inshore saltwater, and pike or musky anglers. The main drawback to bait-casting reels is that they require the angler to have an educated thumb to control the spool throughout the cast. If the spool is allowed to over-run the progress of the lure, the result is a backlash or a bird's nest. Many anglers give up before learning how to use casting tackle because they tire of the involved process of picking out the loose loops of line and getting them to lay on the spool neatly after a few of these challenges. One author stated that baitcasting was the art of throwing controlled slack. One of my fishing buddies referred to his casting skill by stating that the slack seems to have controlled itself around the spool and done a nice job of it. Never fear, everyone gets a backlash from time to time, even with today's easy-to-use reels.

Reel designs continue to advance, becoming increasingly more durable, trouble free and user friendly. This allows less experienced fishermen to use them as a matter of choice. Where heavy lures or baits are involved or where control of the bait is critical, these reels excel. They are excellent for crankbaits, spinnerbaits, plastic worms, jigs, poppers or bait under a popping cork. The fact that they can be teamed with a rod that has more backbone than most light spinning gear also aids in hook setting where hard-mouthed fish may need to have plenty of force to get the hook home. As line weights get into the 15 to 20 pound range, revolving spool reels take over the majority of the action among experienced anglers.

Bait casting rods come in two major varieties. Traditional rods have an offset handle that brings the line in direct line with the guides. Usually these rods have relatively small guides and are in lengths of about six to seven feet. Straight grip rods usually have larger guides and paired gripping surfaces. Usually they have a long handle behind the reel and an shorter one in front of it. They may or may not have a trigger or finger grip. While they come in a wide variety of actions, most baitcasting rods are a bit stiffer than spinning or spincast rods of similar length, but the main difference between them is the label applied by the manufacturer. Flipping sticks, pitching rods, squidding rods, plunking rods, and popping rods are all baitcasting rods that will find some interchangeable use with an angler who has one.

Safety Considerations Before the Cast

Participants must take personal responsibility for their actions when learning to cast. They are in control of the rod and reel. They determine when and where they will make the cast or its components, and only they can determine if it is safe to do so. Learning that from the beginning is essential. Getting swatted with a casting plug can hurt, but once hooks are added both pain and serious injury can be inflicted if someone does not get in the habit of paying attention to where their plug is at all times. An angler needs to be aware of where his/her plug 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.

Once the cast has been made, the plug can get hung up (this can happen during practice too). Caution participants about putting too much pressure to retrieve the snagged plug, particularly pressure applied by the rod. If the lure or practice plug comes loose it can shoot back toward the angler or others like a bullet. Caution in attempting to dislodge a hung lure or practice plug can prevent injuries.

Casting Mechanics and Preparation

Each reel should be equipped with well-laid line, and the rod and reel should be rigged with the guides threaded and the casting plug tied to the end of the line. A large swivel snap may be used if desired to prevent line twisting from the rolling of the practice plug on retrieve. If the equipment is not set up have the participants assist in threading their own line and tying on their own casting plug.

Drag Adjustment B Nearly all modern bait casting reels have drags that can be adjusted to slip under very light pressure or tightened down to a fully locked spool. The pressure is usually adjusted by turning a knob or star-shaped wheel known as a star drag. Basic physics dictates that the drag gets stronger as the amount of line on the spool decreases. The drag should be adjusted to no more than about 2 to 3 lb of the breaking strength of the line. Adjust the drag by having someone hold the line at least a rod-length away, applying pressure on the line with the rod, and adjusting the drag until the line slips under the amount of pressure you can comfortably apply. Some fishing conditions may call for a very tight drag, while others may need a drag set much more lightly.

Free Spool Adjustment B Since bait-casting reels throw the line off the spool toward the lure, they are often the reel of choice for throwing moderately heavy lures a maximum distance. Their advantage can become a problem if the lures are too light for the casting style of the angler, as the reel over-runs and throws the excess slack into a backlash or a bird's nest. To combat that problem reels are equipped with a spool tensioning device that controls the inertia of the spool. Adjustment of that device is important, particularly to the beginning bait-caster, every time the weight of the lure being cast is changed. To make the adjustment, tighten the tension adjustment fully. Reel the lure up to just below the rod tip. Depress and release the free-spool button (usually located somewhere that is easily reached by your thumb) or throw the free spool lever so the reel is in free spool mode. Holding the rod level with the ground and gradually loosen the tension until the practice plug slowly pulls line off the reel. As you become more proficient, you can back off the tension a bit to lengthen your casts. If casting into the wind, however, you may want to increase that tension just a bit to compensate for the wind's influence on the lure. Remember to adjust the free spool tension every time you change lure weights.

Grip B Having a proper grip is the first step in casting well. Grip the rod by its handle with forefinger extended and wrapped comfortably around the trigger on the rod. Place your thumb on the spool and turn your hand so your palm faces down and the reel handle is up (for right-handers) so it stares you in the face. Left-handers holding the reel in a similar fashion will have the handle under the reel. Holding the rod and reel in this fashion allows free movement of the wrist while causing the spool to rest on only one of its bearings, minimizing friction for easier casting. The grip should be firm but relaxed. Excessive pressure on the handle fatigues the caster quickly and reduces the quickness required for good casting.

Positioning the Lure B Lure position relative to the tip of the rod is vitally important in bait-casting. Heavy lures should be within about an inch of the top. As the lures get lighter, they should be positioned progressively further from the tip. For example, a 1/2 ounce lure should be about 3 inches from the top guide and a 3 ounce lure should be 4 - 6 inches below the tip.

Overhead Cast

The overhead cast is the most basic cast. It can be used most of the time unless obstructions are in the way of the cast or something or someone is directly behind the caster. The stance is important to executing a

good cast with accuracy, and casting mechanics handles the process of getting the lure to the position desired.

Stance B Stand firmly and comfortably with your body angled slightly toward the target so that your casting arm's shoulder is now pointed toward the target and your off-side foot is slightly behind your casting-side foot. Body weight should be nearly equally distributed as the cast is initiated, but it will shift to the back foot then the forward foot as the cast is made. Holding the rod with the proper grip, position it so it splits your view of your target.

The Cast B The dynamics of the cast will be explained one step at a time, but they are carried out as a single fluid set of motions.

1. Push the free-spool button and place the thumb of the casting hand on the bottom edge of the spool, touching the line and the edge of the spool. An educated thumb is what keeps the reel from over-running while allowing a maximum distance cast. Always keep the thumb on the spool, feathering the spool until the cast is complete.
2. Hold the casting arm to about a 35° angle. This will place the tip at eye level (2 o'clock position) and the rod handle above the level of the hip. The casting arm elbow should be clear of the body, slightly above and in line with the forward hip. The forearm should be in a straight line with the rod, making the rod an extension of the arm.
3. Sweep the rod back to slightly beyond the vertical by raising the forearm and elbow bringing the casting hand to about eye level. For best casting accuracy, minimize the amount of wrist bend on the backstroke and bring the rod and reel up with the handle facing you (or facing away from you) squarely. Precision is achieved by always bringing the rod to the same position. Stop the rod at the vertical position -- the reel handle still toward (or away from) you and about eye level. The rod will continue back under the inertia of the lure or practice plug, loading the force of the backcast into its fibers. This loading of the rod provides the majority of the casting power. The rod should remain on a direct line toward or away from the target throughout the cast and the butt of the rod should remain essentially vertical. Avoid letting it drift back over the shoulder, since this actually reduces the power in the cast.
4. Without hesitation and as soon as you stop on the backcast, start the forward cast. Bring the arm forward and down sharply, allowing the wrist to snap forward for increased speed. Follow the same path as was followed in the back cast. Shag Shahid suggests assuming the tip of the rod is the end of your arm and the plug is a baseball. Simply throw the tip of the rod as though it were a baseball; but like throwing a baseball, avoid throwing too hard and losing control. The rod will do the work without too much effort on the casters part.
5. As the rod reaches the 11 o'clock position, ease off on the thumb pressure. (The rod should still be splitting your target and moving forward.) This will send the lure in flight. Control the spool speed with your thumb while continuing the forward cast. This will lower the rod tip to follow the line of flight of the lure. Increase the pressure on the spool with the thumb as you follow through with the cast, stopping the spool as the lure hits the water at its final destination. Even with the assistance of a free-spool adjustment, the only way to learn to control the line for both long casts and freedom from backlashes is to practice until the thumb becomes educated. Even experienced casters will encounter an over-run from time to time, usually at the worst possible moment. Do not allow yourself to become too frustrated if the first few attempts require a bit of untangling.

Practice also will reduce the arc of the outgoing line, thus reducing the influence of wind on your accuracy. If the line arcs high, the release point was a bit early. If the lure or practice plug powers into the ground or water in front of you, the release point was a bit late. With practice you will develop a rhythm that will seem almost second nature. Only you and other casters adept with bait casting tackle will know the effort required to educate your thumb.

Other Casts

Since the overhead cast cannot be used in all situations, anglers are encouraged to learn a side cast, flipping, and pitching. You use the same grip as explained in this lesson, but the stance and arm action are the essentially the same for all types of casting and spinning gear.

Flipping (Pendulum Cast)

The pendulum cast (more popularly called flippin=) is used when a short, accurate cast is called for. To aim, hold the rod in direct line with the target and look directly at the target. To learn the cast, start with about two rod-lengths of line beyond the rod tip. The reel should be engaged for this cast. Grasp the line with the non-casting hand and extend the arm away from the body to pull in about a rod-length of line. At the same time, raise the tip of the rod causing the lure to swing back toward you. When the lure swings back toward your body, lower the rod tip and flip the rod up and toward the target, feeding the remaining line with the free hand. The lure should touch down on target and quite softly. Follow through by keeping the rod tip pointed directly at the target. With practice an angler can become very accurate with this technique, and much longer lengths of line can be handled if there are not obstructions to entangle the line.

Most anglers who flip will use a long rod B seven and a half to eight feet, a quality bait-casting reel or spin-cast reel, and heavy line. Flipping works best on fish that are inactive and holding tight to whatever cover is available. The two most popular lures for flipping for bass are the plastic worm or the Ajig and pig,@ a jig with a pork frog. The lure is eased down into the cover and the angler watches the line for any twitch. Many anglers who fish for trout use a similar technique with monofilament line and a fly rod, allowing them to place a baited hook exactly where they want it without causing too much commotion in the process.

Pitching (Caution, only use this with single hook lure or practice plug)

First, let out enough line to permit the lure to reach to the reel. Hold the lure carefully by the very rear part of the hook with the free hand about level with your waist. Lower the rod tip keeping the line tight and flexing the rod tip slightly. Quickly swing the rod tip forward and up toward the target, letting go of the lure with your free hand. As the lure passes underneath the tip of the rod, release thumb pressure on the line and continue to raise the tip of the rod. The lure should then fly just above the target and touch down softly 20 feet away. Careful adjustment of the free spool device on your reel is advised for good pitching.

Flip Cast or Underhand Cast

The underhand cast, also known as a flip cast, provides a lot of versatility allowing casts under a wide range of situations, including working under obstacles. This cast can be made from almost any stance, including one that is backhanded or across the body. It starts with the rod approximately parallel with the water and about waist high. As the cast is started, the rod and forearm form a straight line toward the target. The rod is loaded by bringing the tip sharply downward and extending the rod toward the target, releasing the line as the rod straightens. It is easily learned by practice, but a bit hard to describe verbally. Practitioners= descriptions also vary.

A. J. McClane (in *McClane's Secrets of Successful Fishing*) gave instructions for the cast as follows.

"Begin the underhand cast by making an upward lift with the rod keeping a stiff wrist and forearm and pivoting on the elbow. When the tip reaches should level, reverse the direction immediately with a crisp, downward push so that the rod returns to its starting position and stops abruptly. The weight of the lure will cause the rod tip to flex down and in toward your feet. As the rod recovers from its bend and begins upward, release the line (or release thumb pressure on bait-cast). The lure will snap outward in a low arc. Do not attempt to push the rod forward. When the underhand cast is executed properly by the angler, the casting bend of the rod itself will provide sufficient velocity to the lure."

In their *Basic Fishing Aquatic Skills Series* the Missouri Department of Conservation suggests using only the wrist in the following suggested procedure.

"The back cast in the flip cast is actually a down cast. The entire casting motion is accomplished by using only the right wrist. The arms do not move during the entire cast. Moving the arms is

the most common error made by beginners. Arm action defeats the action of the rod and spoils the cast. The right wrist provides all the motion and the left hand acts as a fulcrum.

"To begin the cast, [release the line] and hold it, raise the rod tip about 12 inches with the right wrist, then immediately snap the rod *tip* down sharply; this serves to bend or load the rod. Next as the rod begins to straighten, release the line. The action of the rod cast the plug, the arms do not. The secret to this cast is timing. The [line must be released] at the precise moment the rod begins to straighten."

As anglers gain experience with fishing situations, all sorts of casting techniques will find a place in their tools. Learning how to handle the basic casting techniques with bait-casting tackle transfers to squidding tackle, jigging tackle, or the use of plunking tackle on steelhead and salmon. Where distance and power are needed, revolving spool reels have numerous applications. Except for trolling, all of them require the angler to know how to cast.

Practice, Practice, Practice

The big difference between a beginner and a skilled bait-caster lies in repetition of correct casting processes. As the beginner learns the basic skills and practices them, their ability to use their tackle increases. Quality tackle, well maintained is very important in helping to develop bait-casting skills. Good luck in learning the art of throwing controlled slack.