

Angling for Fun

Basic Baiting Methods and Principles.

1. Mealie bomb or ground bait

This is perhaps the single most important part of successful angling even more so than what you put on the hook! One must take into account that the bomb is what attracts the fish to your swim (area that you are fishing) and keeps them there, so chances are that if your bomb is off, mouldy or stale the days fishing will be less productive than if your bomb was fresh and had a good smell to it. Another important thing to take into account is that your bomb should not come back out when you retrieve your line as this defeats the purpose of using the bomb in the first place if it comes out it is probably mixed on to hard and should be softened with a little water. Remember that you are attempting to make a feeding place with these bombs.

2. Spot casting "Kol Gooi"

Here the aim is to cast your bomb into the same spot every time. This is very important, as it does not help to cast in 20 bombs all over the place and not where you are fishing. Practice makes perfect they say, you should get out there and practice casting on the same spot over and over again, from this your fishing will only improve just ask any top angler about the importance of "kol gooi" and you will soon see just how important this concept is.

3. Hook Bait

In this section we will deal with how to put different types of bait on the hook will deal only with some of these hook baits (as the list is fairly long and full of variety remembering that the purpose of this article is to deal only with the basics). Long gone are the days of old when one used to put a ball of dough or bread the size of an pigeon egg on the hook and hope for the best.

3.1. Dough Baits (This is the most common hook bait used)

Putting on of dough type baits there are two basic ways of doing this firstly a small piece of dough is taken about the size of a grain of cooked rice and placed over the tip of the hook just covering the bend of the hook. The second way of attaching the dough to the hook is to roll a section into a thin worm and then to wrap it around the entire length of the hook such that the hook is visible through the dough one can vary the thickness of this dough worm depending on how the fish are biting. This serves two purposes one to keep the dough on the hook longer and secondly to keep the bait rather small and easier for the fish to pick up.

3.2. Bread Baits (used as backing or an alternative to dough baits)

These baits can either be used with dough baits, Floaties, marshmallows or Mealie pips, strike dough balls or on their own. One simple needs to knead a little onto the hook above the other bait or just onto the hook alone.

3.3. Floats and Marshmallows

By now I think that everyone knows what a Mealie float looks like. When using these all that needs be done is to hook them through the centre of the float. They can be used alone or in combination with any of the other baits used. As for marshmallows it becomes a little more tricky firstly you need to make sure that the marshmallow is firmly hooked through at least two places on the hook this reduces the likelihood of it coming loose quickly once again marshmallows can be used with any combination of the baits mentioned in this article.

3.4. Mealies

An all time favourite with many anglers there are two basic ways of hooking these up one way is to put the hook through the top of the Mealie pip on the smooth side, the other is to place the hook through the point where it was cut of the cob or removed from the cob and then through the top of the pip this method is far more secure than the first but it all comes down to personal preference. Mealies can also be used with any combination of baits mentioned here.

3.5. Live Bait

As most competition anglers will most likely be targeting one or two fish species namely Carp and Muddies we will concentrate on how to use earthworms. The correct way to put earthworms on the hook is to put the hook in just underneath the saddle and tread it through the worms body and then out again leaving a piece to wriggle near the point of the hook attracting the fishes attention while it's feeding around your bomb. The nice thing about earthworms is that Catfish and carp find them irresistible most of the time.

3.6. Combo's

Any combination of the above-mentioned baits can be used together on the hook in a variety of combinations.

Baiting Methods



Dough alone



Backing above with Dough



Dough with Backing on hook point



Dough with Backing in the middle



Backing with Mealie on hook point



Backing with Mealie and Dough on hook point



Dough with Mealie on hook point



Backing with worms on hook point



Worms with Mealie on hook point



Dough with worms on hook point



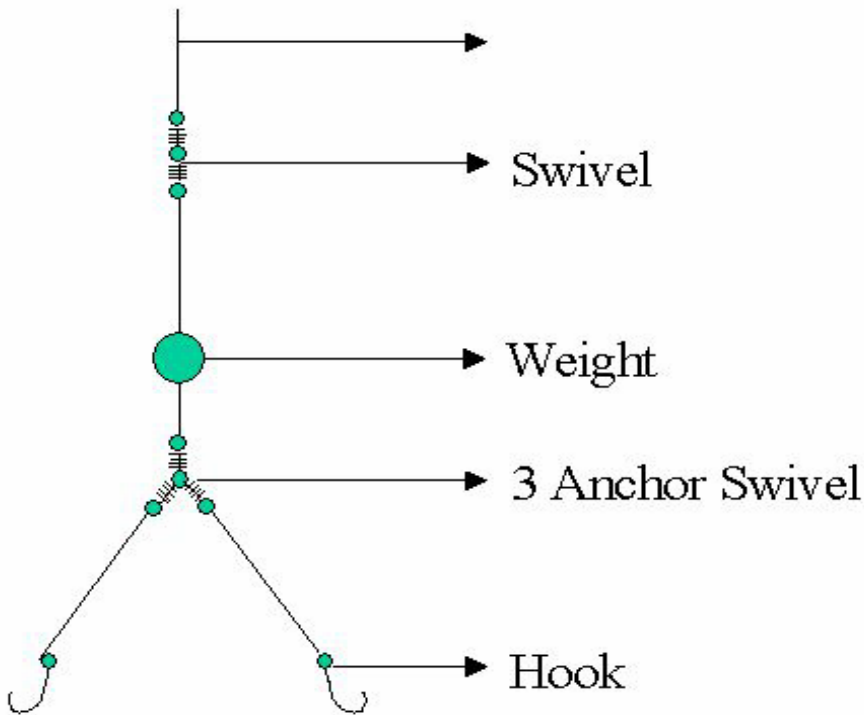
Dough with worm and Mealie on hook point



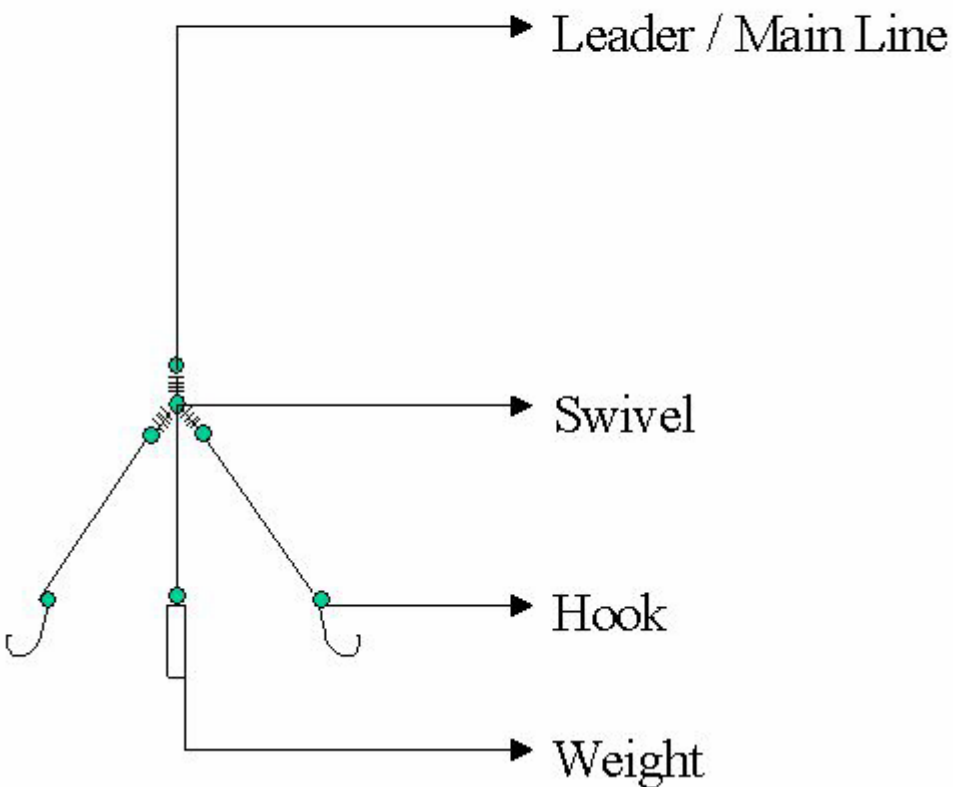
Dough with Marshmallows

Rigs for Carp and Barbel

Baby Shoe Rig

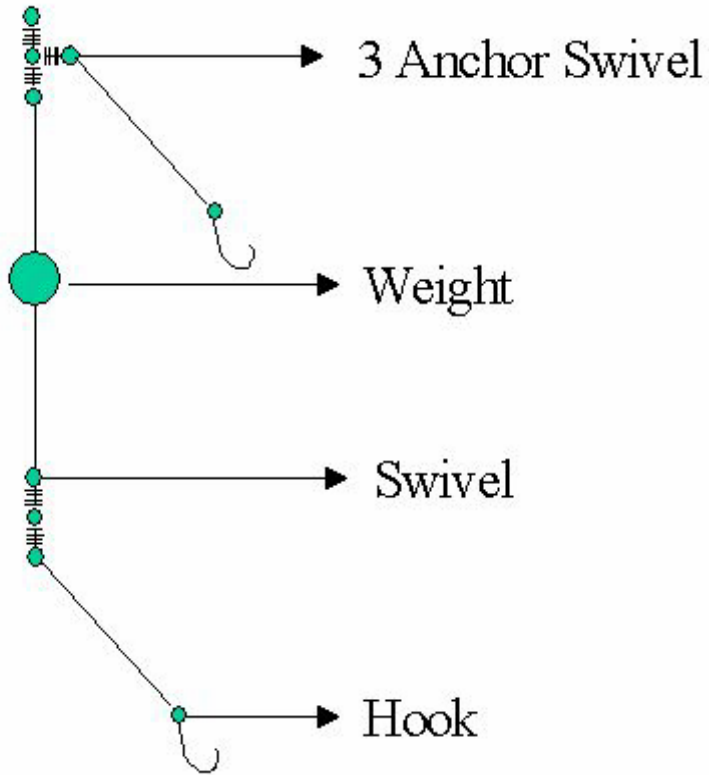


Baby Shoe II Rig



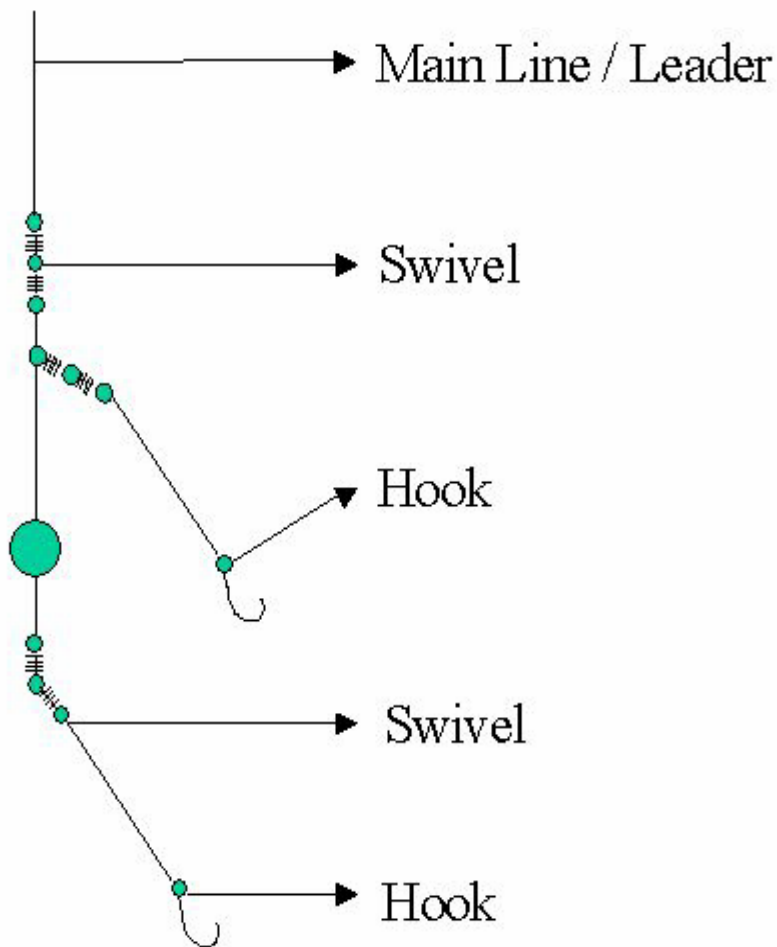
Rigs for Carp and Barbel, cont

Rietvlei Rig



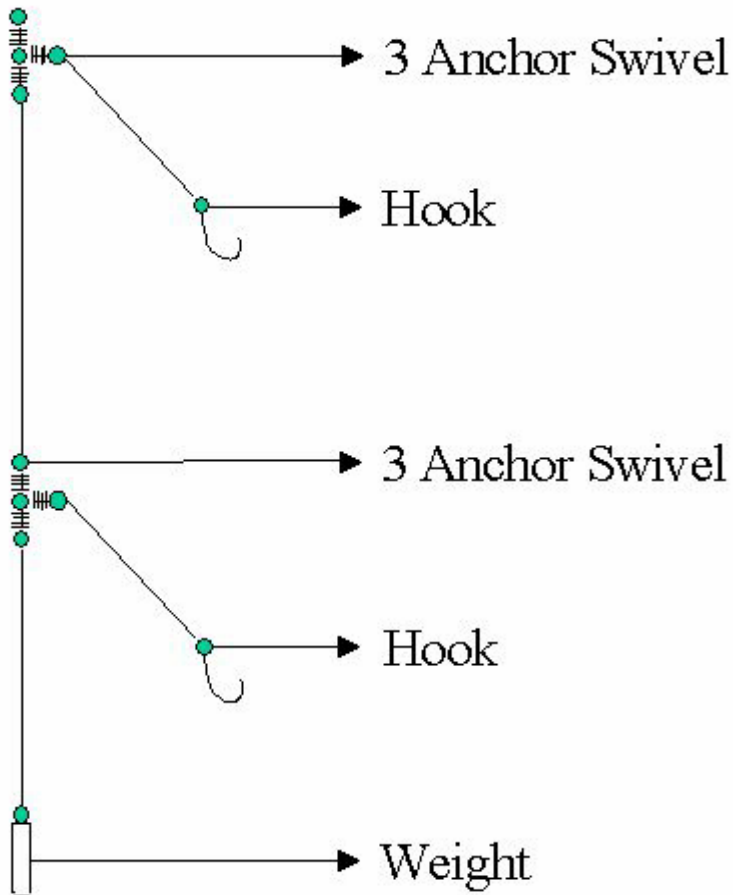
Rig for Carp

Rietvlei II Rig

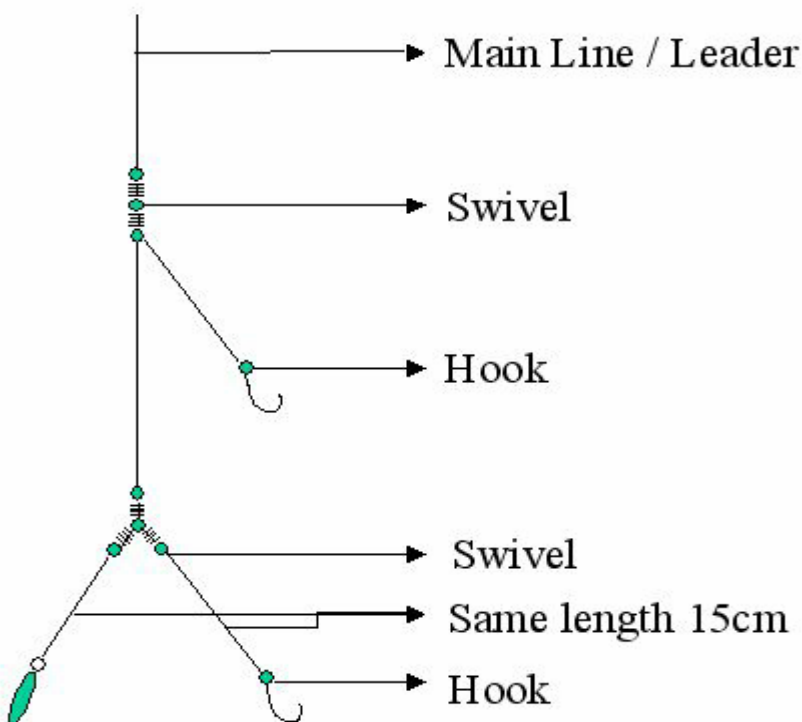


Rigs for Carp and Muddie

Vaaldam Rig

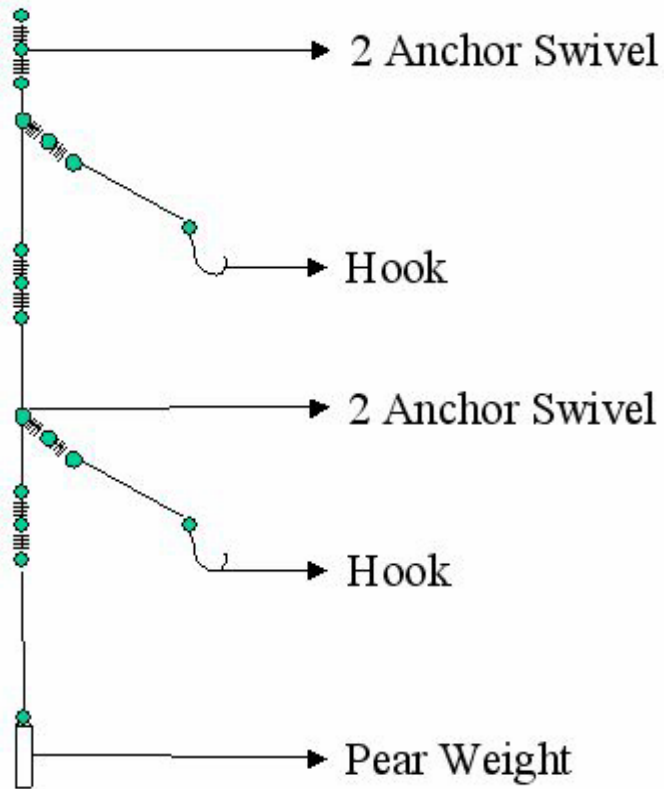


Vaaldam II Rig



Rigs for Carp and Muddie. cont

Vaaldam III Rig



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The Carp, “Cyprinus Carpio”

The Carp, a fish that lives in freshwater lakes and some slow-moving rivers, can grow to over 60lb in this country, making it one of the biggest freshwater species in South Africa second to the Barbel. Big Carp have always been hard to catch, but it was not until Flavours, Baits, Dough's and Boilies had shown its colours in our waters. Now the biggest of carp are now catchable. Today, Carp fishing has got to be one of the most popular forms of angling in South Africa. The beauty and allure of these magnificent creatures has captured the minds of so many anglers in South Africa. Although many fish bear the name carp, they are not all the same species. The species that most carp anglers fish for is called 'Cyprinus Carpio', this includes king carp and wild carp. Other species of carp include the grass carp and the crucian carp.

The different types of king carp are:

Common Carp - Common Carp originally came from Asia. They were introduced into monastery ponds in Europe in the 12th century as a food for the monks. Many exotic varieties have been bred from them (e.g. the goldfish). Common Carp have a regular scale pattern, which is much like that of other freshwater fish such as the Barbel for example. Generally, Common Carp don't grow as big as Mirror Carp.



Mirror Carp - Mirror Carp are descended from Common Carp. They were bred by monks with the purpose of breeding carp with fewer scales, which are easier to remove for cooking. The scales (which resemble mirrors, hence the name of the Mirror Carp) can grow in various different patterns making for some very beautiful fish. The fish on the right is almost



Leather Carp - Leather Carp are carp, which have no scales on them at all. They are the same as Mirror Carp, but instead of having one or two or three scales, they have none. Leathers are very rare, like Fully Scaled.

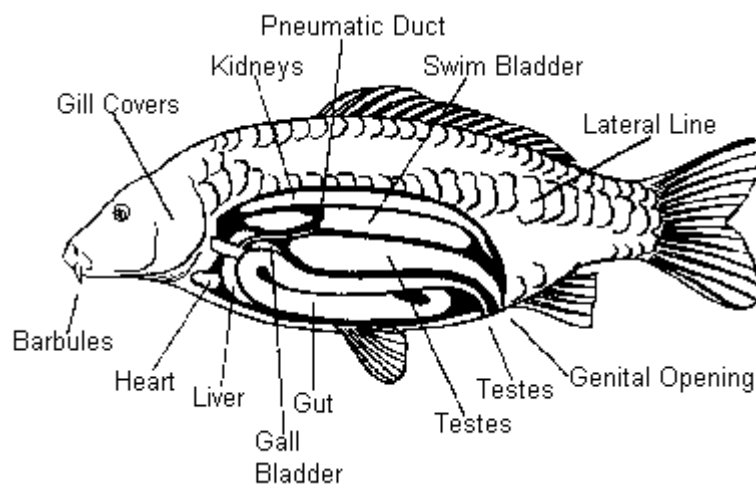


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Grass Carp - Was originally introduced for the purpose of controlling aquatic plants of which it can consume in large quantities. It has a long, mildly flat-sided body covered with large scales, colouring similar to but lighter than the Wild Carp, with a golden lustre. The Grass Carp can grow over 1metre in length and reach weights in excess of 30kg. It can occasionally be found in ponds, lakes and medium to slow flowing rivers.



Anatomy



Respiration

When a carp breathes, it takes oxygen from the water through its gills, which are situated at the back of the head of the fish. Plates of bone known as gill covers protect the gills. In order to breathe the carp takes water in through its mouth, whilst its gills are closed and then closes its mouth and opens its gills. The carp will push up the base of its mouth to force the water through its gills, which then takes the oxygen from the water and into the bloodstream, thus completing a breath.

To make sure that no water is passed out through the mouth, the carp has a flap of skin at the top of its mouth (also known as the "curtain") that seals the mouth, so that the carp can complete its proper breathing function. Unfortunately, it is commonplace to see carp without this flap of skin, due to the carelessness of anglers, who damage this part of the mouth when hooking and unhooking them. "Please be careful".

Carp do need a lot of oxygen and therefore when fishing for carp it is essential to find parts of the water that you know is well oxygenated. This can be the difference between catching and blanking.

In the summer months if the water is very warm, and the fish are in the shallows, the water may not have a lot of dissolved oxygen. Also in weedy waters, the weed itself may take all of the oxygen out of the water and replace it with carbon dioxide. This may happen in the hours of darkness and also at first light, so therefore it may not be that the carp do not like the presentation of bait that you have laid down for them, but more that they are starved of oxygen and are reluctant to feed.

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Carp Senses

Carp have a similar sensory system to humans in that they are able to hear, touch, taste and smell items around them. This is important when deciding which rig to use and how its components may put the carp on its guard as it considers the hook bait. The senses of a carp are hearing, smell, sight, touch and taste.

Hearing

Carp can hear much more than we can. The carp hears by detecting sound waves passing through the water. These sound waves are converted into messages in the carp's brain and are translated into noise. The carp's hearing is very sensitive and the tiny bones in their ears called ossicles can detect and amplify the smallest of sound waves passing through water. So although the splash of a rig entering the water may attract the carp, the carp may identify this with danger eventually and treat the area with suspicion.

Taste/Smell

Carp can taste and smell items in the water and can do this in a number of ways. Nostrils near the eyes of the carp allow water to enter and its highly sensitive system can then pick up any substances, which have been dissolved into that water. The carp will then identify this as a food source or not. When a carp takes in a bait into the mouth the lining of the mouth which contains chemically sensitive cells will send a message to the carp's brain as to whether that food item is a good or bad food source. If this is so, the carp may then continue to feed until satisfied. However, if the carp decides that the item is not a good food item it will reject the item taken in and may bolt from the area (Known as "spooking" the carp). Although carp will take in many food items, they also have the ability to reject them!

Sight

Carp have the ability to see through the eyes situated on either side of the head. Carp see out of the water sideways and upwards at an angle of around 49° through each eye. Anything outside of this angle out of the water will be invisible to the carp. In water the carp's vision will be extremely limited in certain cases and extremely effective in other cases. If the water is deep, clouded, murky, full of suspended silt particles, the carp's vision will be fairly poor especially when light is at a minimum, but in shallow, clear water with bright sun the carp's ability to see items will improve. Be aware of this when using crude or obvious end tackles and presentations in such circumstances!

Touch

Nerve fibres in the carp's skin send messages to its brain so if the carp does not identify the item touched as a good food item it will reject it and may "spook" from the area. The carp has an ability to sense touch through its lateral line. The lateral line on a carp which runs from its head to its tail is made up of very fine fluid filled tubes which open to the outside by tiny pores. Similar to hairs they can detect very slight movements in the water, which assists them when locating potential good food sources and detecting items to avoid. Carp can also touch food items with their barbules, located either side of the mouth. Once a carp has located a food item it can use the barbules to touch the food source. It may well not be able to see the item with its eyes but it can assess it with its barbules just as well, if not better. The carp may well decide to take the food item in or may decide to reject it and "spook" from the area if the food item is felt to be attached to a carp rig!

No matter how attractive your food item may be, to enter the carp's mouth and to hopefully hook the carp it must pass the sensory test. Presentations of rigs may be visually unacceptable and when touched may be rejected immediately. Carp are not stupid and will use their own senses for survival, and survival means avoiding the obvious and dangerous. So take note!!!

Competitive Angling development by Trevor Van Der Schyff

An introduction into Competitive Angling

So You enjoy fishing and you want to find out how good you are and how you stack up against other anglers, you want to improve your angling skills and perhaps yearn to achieve provincial colours or even national colours in this wonderful sport.

In this development section we will try to help you as much as possible with the basics to some of the more advanced stuff helping those who are just beginning as well as those of you who would just like to learn more about the sport.

What do you need to do?

First things first you need to join a reputable angling club that has affiliation to one of the many controlling bodies in this country also investigate your potential new club and make sure that you will be able to learn a few things from the seasoned pro's in the club as there is no point joining a club if you are not going to learn anything.

Then remember to check out this section as there will be a weekly tip that will be posted and all these tips will be tried and tested before being passed on to you the aspiring angler.

Remember even if you are not planning to get into competitive angling at this stage, one is never too old to learn especially in this sport!

Good luck in all your Angling endeavours

Section A

Basic equipment that is required (Tackle)

What do I need to begin competitive angling?

1 Rods

1.1 How many rods should I have?

What you would typically need are at least two long rods of the graphite type to enable you to get the distance that is so often required at many venues where the water may be shallow for quite some distance, as well as two spare rods as the fish are not always at 120 meters or further therefore the shorter spare rods would come in handy for close range fishing as it is rather difficult to fish at close range with say 16 foot rods. Thus shorter rods in the 10-foot range are a better bet if you are only fishing at close range. It also comes in handy if something should happen to one of your rods while fishing in a competition, as you will be at somewhat of a disadvantage fishing with only one rod whilst everyone else has two.

1.2 What should you look for in a rod?

Remember that In a carp rod, you get what you pay for, buy the best you can afford and go from there.

Tip: If you do buy graphite fishing rods don't throw away your old glass fibre rods as it is very dangerous to use these graphite rods in electrical storms and near power lines and if you need to get distance you won't be able to if you have discarded these other rods in the event of a thunder storm.

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2 Reels

2.1 Centre pin reels

Nite hawk, Magnum jnr/snr Multipin and Orlando (to name but a few) somewhat cheaper than the fixed spool alternatives these reels offer a couple of things namely a huge line capacity, a free running spool and a rather noisy ratchet system. These reels are a long time favourite and are relatively cheap making them ideal for the beginner who does not have excessive amounts of cash lying about, however as with fishing rods do remember that you get what you pay for. Please do yourself a favour and research these things before you buy, ask around and get different opinions from experienced anglers then make up your own mind remembering that these items of equipment are still going to be in the shop tomorrow so don't be too impulsive and buy the first thing that the salesman shows you.

Tip: If you already own a set of these reels remember to try and fill the reel to its full capacity using wool or old line underneath your expensive good line as there is no way that you could possibly use more than 300 meters of good line when angling in a competition this will also help you cast further.

2.2 Fixed Spool reels (Coffee Grinders)

Okuma, Mitchell, Shimano and many others most of us South Africans know these reels as the classic "coffee grinder" these reels are now making up a great number of the reels used by competitive anglers. Due to their ease of use and speedy retrieval rates (as mentioned earlier), do your research and find the most appropriate for your style of fishing and of course your pocket.

Most competitive anglers are now making use of the Shimano bait runner in all its various Models be warned however that if there is a downside to these reels it's definitely in the price but if you can afford a set of these they are definitely worth the expense. Once again buy the best that you can afford.

What is a bait runner?

The bait runner is basically a fixed spool reel with a normal clutch, however when the bait runner is set to on the spool is free to turn without the clutch or the handle spinning round and round this has advantages over conventional fixed spool reels namely, you can set your drag accurately and you do not end up loosening and tightening it all the time, also it allows the fish to pick up the bait and "run" with it without feeling resistance from the reel making it very sensitive all one then does is disengage the bait runner and "strike" the fish with your drag already set to your requirements.

3 Fishing Line

Here the choice is just as vast as with the range of rods reels and everything else out there! Try and go as thin here as possible, by that I mean the diameter of the line. For most purposes try not exceed .30 millimetres as this makes attaining casting distance very difficult if not impossible. Start off with a line of between 6lbs breaking strength to a maximum of about 10lbs remember that the object is to use as thin a line as possible but strong enough for you to have confidence in it. Try to avoid the cheaper monofilament lines and rather spend that little extra on a good quality line the co-polymer lines also look out for a line with a high abrasion resistance for dealing with rocks snags and other such things, which you may encounter.

Tip: Remember that when using thin line it is essential to use a leader line to absorb the shock created when casting your bait into the water, a line of about 18lbs should suffice well enough for this task here one would use a harder line as the softer types tend to break under the stress of casting. (For details on how to tie a leader knot please refer to the knots section on this website)

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4 Hooks and Weights

4.1 Hooks

Things have come a long way with advances in modern technology especially when it comes to hooks there are also many brands out there on the market. Buying good quality, Brand Name, hooks pays off. They are always stronger and sharper and stay that way longer, especially the chemically sharpened types, which hardly ever need sharpening. As your hooks are part of your terminal tackle as with your line buy the best that you can get and use the hooks that you have confidence in after all you wouldn't want the hook to break or bend when you have that fish of a lifetime on the other end of your line! Bigger hooks don't always mean bigger fish the aim of competitive angling is to catch the fish that are there and most times they are not always all monsters. Try to stay on the smaller side of the spectrum (e.g. Diatchi no.3 and smaller is a good place to start), as always there are exceptions to this where larger hook sizes are more advantageous but with time, practice and experience you will learn when and when not to use these.

Tip: To test if your hooks are sharp run the point over your fingernail if it does not slide around it is sharp enough if not it would require sharpening.

4.2 Weights or Sinkers?

Here again we are spoilt for choice as a general rule always use the lightest sinkers for the conditions at hand as at certain dams the fish are very sensitive to the resistance created by the weights and chances of catching fish decrease significantly as the weight of the singer increases.

5 Tackle box equipment

Here we come to another essential part of your set-up this is perhaps one of the more important parts as in this section we will discuss the tackle box and all the items in it. The point here is to be organized and have prepared everything well in advance to arriving at the Dam/River for your competition. Accordingly your tackle box should be neat and tidy and everything in its place, so as to allow for more time spent fishing and less time wasted trying to find things or tying traces during a competition.

So you should have at least the following basic items in your tackle box

5.1 Your Dips:

Bomb dips and hook dips (Number your dips and keep a list of them inside your tackle box so you know exactly what is in each bottle). We will discuss certain basic dips that you should have in your box as a matter of course, at a later stage.

5.2 Your Pips:

Mielies, floaties, marshmallows etc.

5.3 Your Pastes:

Flavoured breads and dough's.

5.4 Your Powders:

Sweeteners, S.A. Powders for dipping bombs in, flavourings and colorants

5.5 Your Traces:

Ready made traces of varying types and weights Take at least 50 traces with you as; you never know what lies underneath the water (refer to the rigs section on this web page to learn how to make your own traces).

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5.6 Spare leaders:

Always take at least 10 spare leaders with you keep them rolled up on an old-line spool.

5.7 Spare Spools:

If your reel came with a spare spool take it with this saves time when having to change line on your reel i.e. for thicker line to suit conditions etc.

5.7 Other essential items:

In your tackle box, Snap on swivels for speedy attachment of traces onto your leader for speed fishing. Pliers, small needle nose, side cutter and normal types. A nail clipper comes in most handy. A nailbrush to keep all your bottles clean and remove excess flavourings on the outside of the bottles after you have used them. Policemen or bite indicators are a must! Spare weights, hooks and line for your reels should accompany you to the water but put these in a separate box and leave it in your car in case you need it your tackle box will be heavy enough as it is. Of course your tackle box will require a stand in case you have to fish standing in the water as well as serving to hold your rods and buckets for mielie bomb and water.

6 Other items:

At least two landing nets will suffice and a keep net with a tag on it displaying your name and club on it, as most clubs will not weigh your fish unless your name is attached to your keep net. A holder for your spare rods as these should always be ready for use if needed. Also a few spare pegs wouldn't hurt.

That about covers the basic tackle section. Please feel free to submit any queries you may have.

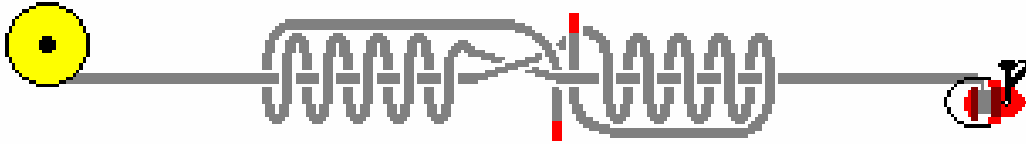
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KNOTS

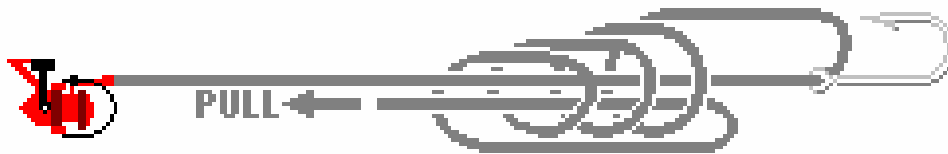
Albright Knot - Join two lines of different thicknesses.



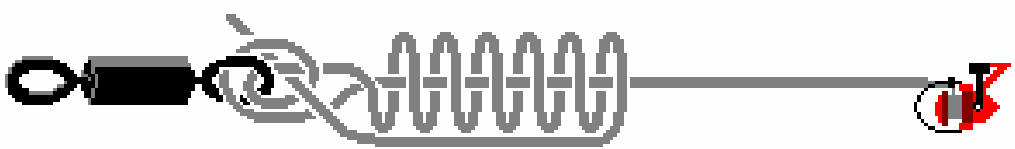
Blood Knot - Join two similar thicknesses of line.



Centauri Knot - Attach hooks through the eye to the line.



Half Blood - Attach swivels, hooks and lures to the main line.



Uni Knot - This versatile knot can be used for connecting hooks, swivels, rings and lures. Its main advantage is that it retains virtually 90% breaking strain. Easy to tie even in the dark after practice.



Grinner Knot - Attaching swivels, lures, and hooks to the main line.



Palomar Knot - An all purpose hook to line knot. Very quick to tie and reasonably strong.



Fly Fishing

Holding the rod

"When fly-fishing, always take into account the fact that any advice you have been given to believe may be one-hundred percent dead wrong"

When I first felt the urge to take a rod onto some so-called trout waters I had been given only the most rudimentary instruction and equipment. The lesson consisted of an "expert" standing behind his shop counter, a broken fly-rod and a very confused student or should I say students (there were three of us). The equipment handed to me for the day, felt foreign and looked as if it had been used in a sword fight between two enraged fly-fishers. Needless to say the fishing was terrible and a year passed before I even thought about trout again.

The next time I picked up a rod, I was buying one. I had befriended a local guide and he gave me some good advice on what equipment to buy without breaking the bank. My first rod was a Stealth 9 foot #5/6 weight. The Reel was a Daiwa Lochmore Graphite 200. The line was put on for me and I was told it was a floating fly-line. I no longer have any of those components, having broken the rod in a car boot; having lost the reel in the murky waters of the Vaal River; having replaced the fly-line which had become knotted and uneven. However I had learned to cast decently on this rod and reel. It had taken a year of frustrated "flogging" and an hour of astounded realisation.

Fly-fishers in my experience are a good humoured lot and you should never be afraid to approach one for advice, especially in exchange for a nice cold drink (Please note the quote at the beginning of the first chapter). We Fly-fishers are awfully proud of what we do and love going on and on about techniques and fly-choices etc. etc. I personally love the expression on someone's face when they've caught and released their first trout. Especially when they've succeeded thanks to advice given by me.

I have written this booklet to get the general idea of fly fishing across to you the reader. I do not claim to be an expert, but these hints and lessons are from my own experience as a fly fisher, guide and tutor. I hope you find it instructive and good-humored. So many fly fishers take themselves too seriously for their own good. Always remember we're not fishing for survival, but for fun, and when the day comes when I'm not having fun anymore, I'll take up something else, maybe bass fishing....

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"The ART"

Fly fishing is the most challenging, intriguing and frustrating way of catching trout. It is not always the best or most effective but it is the most demanding and rewarding. Fly fishing, whether you are fishing a river or stream, lake or reservoir, falls into two main areas: dry fly fishing and nymph or wet fly fishing. Dry fly fishing is what most people think about if they do, in fact, give fishing any thought. Both forms use an artificial fly tied from feathers, thread, hair and fur designed to represent usually, but not always, some type of natural fly that is likely to be eaten by a trout. The artificial might represent the nymphal or underwater form of a fly that has not yet hatched or the winged insect as it sits on the surface of the water.

The only times I received good advice that first year was right at the beginning (what to buy) and right at the end (how to cast). The last bit of advice "given" to me was also from an expert who had written many books in the States and who's name was mentioned with awe in fly-fishing circles. Lefty Kreh is his name and I'm sure that in time you, the reader, will come across some publication or television program of his. At this point you may be wondering what profound advice was given. Well I'll tell you. But I'll highlight it, and underline it... and stand it alone just in case you haven't read all the above and want to get to the point as quickly as possible.

PRACTICE YOUR CASTING AS FAR AWAY FROM WATER AS POSSIBLE!

There is nothing more disturbing to a beginner, who cannot cast more than two meters in front of himself, than other fly-fishers who are landing trout. There is nothing more disturbing to an experienced fly-fisher who is trying to perfect or fine tune his casting, than the presence of a rising trout. Only once you are far away from water can you concentrate in a Zen-like fashion on the technique that will ultimately have trout (and members of the opposite sex) throwing themselves in wanton abandonment at you and your tackle.

It often helps to have another person in attendance to point out what you are doing wrong. I find that those who practice their casting while being read to from this booklet will learn a lot quicker. I believe that with the proper instruction almost any adult can learn to cast in less than an hour. While you may not have all the techniques down pat, you will be able to "get your line out" without causing undue disturbance on the water. And you will catch trout.

Having another person around to talk you through the casting technique will also get you accustomed to another aspect of fly-fishing as hinted at in this quote.

"Any fly-fisherman not plagued by suggestions is fishing alone..."
-Beatrice Cook

The next thing to mention before we get into the technical stuff is this: Everybody has their own style for casting.

I can only give you the basics. In this booklet I will tell you what to expect from your rod and fly-line, and what to do with them. Everything else will be up to you.

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Your posture is your own and I've had much success with letting students develop their own style. No doubt other instructors will rubbish my techniques but I will leave that up to you to decide.

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Tackle

In conventional, coarse or spin fishing a heavy weight (lure or sinker) is used to pull the almost weightless fishing-line out to where the fish is. In fly-fishing a weighted fly-line is used to pull an almost weightless fly out to your target.

The reel stores the fly-line (ultimately the most important part of your outfit) and is attached to the fly-rod. When fly-fishing for trout and other smaller species of fish the reel becomes less important. Many trout are brought in by simply retrieving the line by hand, instead of cranking the reel. Occasionally you will catch a larger fish and you will have to use the reel to bring the hooked prey in. But in general your reel is simply used to store your line and unless you are specifically hunting larger prey - Barbel or saltwater species) -almost any graphite or metal alloy reel will suffice. Stepping up to larger trout and bass fly-fishing, we need some of the reels "features." A palming rim and drag system now become important. Even a disc drag system is useful for fishing these bigger fish. With big game fish like the saltwater species in addition to a palming rim a really good disc drag system is helpful.

On the very beginning of your reel's axis is about 20-30 meters of backing line. This line has two functions. Firstly it increases the diameter of the axis and prevents your fly line from being damaged through over tightening. Attached to the backing is about 30 meters of fly-line which comes in different types (floating, intermediate and sinking) and colours. In general floating lines are brightly coloured or clear, intermediate lines are clear or dark blue/brown/green and sinking lines darkly coloured to black. The fly-line in turn is attached to about 2 meters of clear leader. The leader is clear and is the part of the line onto which you will tie the fly. As you tie more and more flies, your leader it will get shorter and worn, so that you will need to replace this section with clear tippet and tie your fly onto that. As a beginner it is quite likely that the line will get damaged and have to be thrown away. Leave the choice of a more expensive line until you buy a better rod.

The fly-rod is usually made of graphite (although split-cane and fibreglass are the higher and lower extremes respectively). With the advanced technology in use today I have found that almost any graphite fly-rod costing more than R200.00 will allow fly-fishers to cast to the best of their abilities.

The rod's numbers should correspond to the fly-line weight number. Numbering starts from #0 and can reach as high as #16 with #0 being the lightest river rod and #16 being the heaviest saltwater fly-rod suited for marlin and tarpon. The numbering system may be paired e.g. #4/5 or #8/9. This simply means that line used with the rod may be of one weight or the other, although I prefer the heavier line in almost all cases. Thus if I have a #4/5 fly-rod I will use a 5 weight fly-line but a 4 weight line will also work well. A 3 weight line would be too light, and a 6 weight line would be too heavy for the rod and will affect your casting. Fly-rods are almost always multi-piece and break into 2, 3, 4 or even 7 pieces. The more pieces however, the higher the price and quality of graphite becomes. The length of a rod varies between 6 and 9 foot and really depends on personal preference. I

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find that ladies generally prefer a shorter, lighter rod (more accuracy) and gents a longer, heavier rod (more distance) but this is a personal choice.

General rules of thumb in rod/line selection: fishing in small streams for small trout - line weights 3 to 5, 5 being most popular; Rods, usually graphite, 7 to 8 feet in length. With medium size rivers and dams/lakes for trout and bass of most sizes - Line weights 5 to 7, 6 being most popular; Rods in length 8 to 9 feet. Again, it is easier to cast further with a longer rod. For really big lakes and light saltwater - lines 7 to 9, 8 and 9 weights being most popular; Graphite rods of 9 to 10 feet, 9 foot being most popular. Really big fish like Tarpon are usually fished with 12 weight lines and 9 to 9½ foot rods.

Rods also come with different actions, too many and too detailed to be explained here. All that the beginner needs to know is that there are stiff rods and soft rods. Stiff rods are easier to cast and have less shock-absorbing capabilities. Although you will have more fun retrieving a hooked fish, a tight line may cause the leader to snap, or the fish may well lose the fly due to a momentary slackening of the line. Soft rods allow you to use thinner tippet material and therefore present the fly more naturally. You can use more delicate equipment knowing that your rod will absorb most shocks, which might otherwise result in the loss of a fish

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Starter Equipment

The most common number rod purchased by beginners is a stiff, #5/6, 9 foot fly-rod. Almost any medium sized reel will do, but the lighter the better. Always make sure there is a little resistance when cranking the reel as there is nothing more irritating than a loose reel fouling the line and interfering with your concentration and casting. Certain "combo" kits are on the market, but the cheaper fibreglass rods should be avoided as they can be very difficult to cast with.

I prefer to teach students with floating line, due to its high visibility and versatility. (If you want your floating line to sink use a heavy fly. But if you want your sinking line to float... forget about it!) Intermediate line is all right but a beginner should not lose sight of his fly-line and so floating line is the way to go.

Other items that you will always need include a "priest" for despatching any fish that you intend to keep to eat. Do not try to kill fish with a stone or piece of tree branch. Treat them with the respect they deserve and kill them swiftly and cleanly whilst still in the landing net as this makes a lively fish that much easier to hold. It is surprising how hard one can hit a fish, I know this from personal experience, having missed the fish and hit my hand!

Fly boxes are another essential requirement, ideally one for dry flies and one for nymphs and wet flies. You will need a landing net with a reasonable length of handle. Landing nets are not the easiest piece of equipment to carry. Some nets have a clip on them which can be used to clip them on to the webbing strap of a tackle bag or a belt. Others are available that can be clipped to a loop on the back of a waistcoat. A pair of polarised sunglasses is another essential item. Wearing them will protect your eyes from damage by a fly when casting, particularly on windy days, and make seeing fish in the water that much easier. Many casting instructors will insist on their pupils wearing glasses at all times. A pair of small scissors or special a fisherman's nipper is needed to trim the ends of nylon, either when attaching a length of nylon - or tippet - to your cast and again when tying the fly to the end of the tippet. Scissors or line clippers can be attached to the front of a waistcoat with a zinger or pin-on reel. This is a spring-loaded device with a retractable length of wire or nylon: in use pull the scissors and line out of the reel. Then when you let go, the line is retracted out of the way. Finally you need something to hold everything. A bag used to be the first choice and whilst still popular with the more traditional angler, they do weigh down on one shoulder. I would recommend an inexpensive waistcoat with lots of pockets.

We now need to move on to expendable items of equipment. You will need a number of ready-made leaders which are used to connect your fly to the end of the fly line. You can buy continuous tapered leaders in different lengths and with different breaking strains. You will also need a couple of spools of different strengths of nylon to attach to the end of the leader as a tippet, to which the fly is finally attached. The strength you choose will depend on the size of flies you fish and the likely size of the fish that you are hoping to catch. Don't be tempted to use too fine tippets as you may well end up leaving your fly in the mouth of the fish. Using nylon a bit heavier than strictly necessary, will increase your chance of landing a fish.

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KNOTS

"Easy as pie once you know what you're doing", as they say. But then they haven't tried tying knots in invisible line, with frozen fingers, in fading light and a howling wind to boot.

Knots are both the flyfishers bane and godsend. A proper knot will allow you to play a fish far beyond the snapping strength of the line. However knots also probably account for 90% of all lost fish, and some of those knots, you didn't even tie!

Knots have a habit of tying themselves, especially into your leader section. After a good fly fishing session your line inevitably picks up wind-knots, caused by the motion of the line as it folds over itself. It always helps to check your leader periodically for these knots. If knots are present they can weaken your line in the following way. As the knot tightens (say for instance in the off-chance that you hook a trout or neighboring fly fisher) and the filaments of line rub against each other, friction is caused which heats up the line. The leader is made of very thin and fragile nylon / plastic material which can melt when subjected to high temperatures. And voila, either your line snaps or is weakened. So how do we prevent this from happening? Easy. If you do find knots you have three choices.

Firstly, if you catch them early enough you can try and untie them. Your line might have a little kink in it which you'll want to remove. You can do this by holding the line either side of the knot and quickly pulling it across your trouser leg (or bare leg for the macho types). Two or three quick pulls will straighten the line (or snap it, if the weakening has already occurred).

Secondly if you're using an inexpensive leader or simple level tippet material or simply don't care about spending extra on a new leader, you can remove and replace the whole lot, or cut it off just above the windknot and replace the section with tippet material.

Thirdly for those who feel that they can risk losing a trout put the knotted line in your mouth, with the knot lying on your tongue. Using your saliva to lubricate the knot (preventing friction and weakening to some extent) gently pull the opposite ends of the leader and tighten the knot. You will have to judge for yourself how tight to pull the knot, but keep in mind the harder you pull the more likely the line is to snap and give your tongue a small shock.

This wetting of the line in your mouth is used whenever you tie knots in your leader (line to leader, leader to tippet, leader or tippet to fly) and you should never forget this important part of knot tying.

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HOLDING THE ROD

Certain instructors prefer to teach that one should always reel in with your favoured hand (i.e. right hand if you're right-handed) and your casting should be done with your other hand. They believe that valuable time is wasted when transferring the rod from hand to hand, if you are casting with the same hand as you would to reel. This technique has its merits as it allows you to cast with either hand should the occasion present itself. It is indeed far easier to learn to cast with your preferred hand if you have already learned on the other. I however prefer to use my favoured hand to reel in and teach this practice.

Hold the rod in your favoured hand by its grip (cork or foam) with the reel hanging downwards. A new rod usually comes with the cork grip wrapped in plastic. Its amazing how few beginners actually know to remove this. The reels crank should be facing away from your body. This will allow you to crank with your favoured hand once you transfer the rod to your less favoured hand. The reel's line should be coming out of the reel, parallel with the rod. The line should not be passing over or touching any of the reels parts. If you cannot get the line to do this, chances are the line has been reeled on in the wrong direction and you will need to unspool and respool the whole lot in the right direction. Be very careful when doing this as frustrating knots develop very quickly and can ruin the whole set-up. My favourite method is to spool the line around an object with a large diameter like an empty toilet roll or cool drink bottle. The rod should feel light and balanced in your hand when set up.

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CASTING PART 1

Casting is the most basic fly-fishing skill. It is the foundation on which all other angling skills and knowledge rest.

Unfortunately, some fly fishers believe they can practice while they are fishing. This doesn't work and it squanders precious fishing time. Practice has to be done when and where you can concentrate on the casting, and not the fishing.

Firstly, remove the fly if its attached to your leader. Spool off about ten - fifteen meters of fly line (not including the leader). It is very difficult to cast with too much fly line. Hold the rod in your favoured hand (as per the previous illustration). Pass the fly line between your fingers and the rod-grip so that you're not tempted to let out any extra line. Your other hand is going to have no part in the initial casting instructions. In fact, put your hand in your pocket to keep it from having a say in the proceedings (Don't worry, it will have a part to play later).

Holding the rod out in front of you, tuck your elbow into your hip and try to keep it there. If you feel uncomfortable hold it out away from your body. The key to this exercise is to minimize any body movement. Initially this will be difficult, but your body will soon understand. Raise the tip of the rod until it is about 20 degrees off vertical (at about Ten or Eleven O' Clock in front of you). Slowly move the rod through vertical to the same angle behind you (Two or Three O' Clock behind you). For now, repeat this motion using only your wrist. Do it slowly back and forth so that you get used to where the stopping points are.

Basically the "art of fly-fishing" is no more than flicking the line ahead of you and behind you. To achieve maximum efficiency you need to flick the line as close to horizontal as possible. Now that you know where the stopping points are, lay the fly line out behind you in a straight line. Using the same motion (i.e. Rod held at Two O' Clock behind you, passed through vertical, stopped DEAD at Ten O' Clock in front of you) but with a lot more force, throw the line out in front of you and stop. If you have done this correctly the line will pass over your shoulder, fold over itself, straighten and fall to the ground mirroring the previous situation. KEEP THE ROD UP AT THE 10 O' CLOCK POSITION. If this did not work first time, try it again, and again until it works. You should be able to do this in a few repeats. Some people feel uncomfortable holding the rod completely vertical. I suggest you tilt the rod away from you to about 45 degrees, but use the same motion.

I personally had so much trouble with the vertical position, that I learnt to cast virtually in the horizontal plane. The benefits of casting in the vertical plane is that your line is the high off the ground and all its hazards (grass, trees, other flyfishers) and will get caught, tangled and snagged less often.

Right, you've got the forward cast down pat and now for the back cast. One important thing to remember is that THE BACK CAST IS NO DIFFERENT TO THE FORWARD CAST, except of course that its going backwards. So you've got your line in front of you. You're holding the rod at the 10 O' Clock position. Flick your wrist backwards through vertical (again with a sharp force) and stop DEAD at Two O' Clock in front of you, keeping the rod up. This time the rod should flick the line

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backward, horizontally. Again the line should fold over itself, straighten and fall to the ground. Didn't work? Try again until it does. Unless you get this part right you might as well not even venture out onto the water. People will laugh and probably point their fingers at you which is never good for morale. You have to remember that both forward and backward cast rely on each other. Ultimately without doing one cast correctly you will not be set up for the next.

I've noticed that with beginners the line often hits the rod on the forward cast. Some ascribe this to wind blowing the line across the rod's path. Others believe that this is due to the hand not coming to a complete stop on the forward cast. However do not be overly concerned as within a few minutes of casting practice one tends to adjust slightly (perhaps subconsciously) and the line can fly backwards and forwards without any hindrance.

Just a small note on the wind. I've always found my casting to be better when there is a little breeze about. A little bit of wind resistance in any direction allows one to use the force of the moving air to add strength to your cast. Dead calm days are hard work and long casts are almost impossible using conventional casting methods. Of course when the wind picks up to more than a breeze your casting can suffer. Always try keep the wind coming from your non-casting side, even if it means moving to a different fishing spot. In this way the wind blows your line away from you and it won't tangle. In cases where you do not want to move away, simply face the opposite direction (away from the water) because as we mentioned before: THE BACKWARD CAST IS NO DIFFERENT TO THE FORWARD CAST. And if they're no different, does it really matter which way you're facing?

OK. Now lets put the whole shebang together. But before we start on this little adventure get yourself a hard-hat and flack jacket 'cause we're gonna do some serious grass flogging here. ONLY KIDDING. After all, this is only fly-fishing not bullwhipping. All you might need is a pair of sun glasses which will save your poor eyes from the harsh African sun.

Put the line out in front of you (we'll start with a back cast), rod up at the Ten O' Clock position. You're going to cast backwards, stop the wrist dead, watch the line fold over, pass behind you, straighten and.....JUST BEFORE IT DROPS TO THE GROUND perform the forward cast, flicking the line forward, just as you practiced before. The key here is waiting for the line to straighten before the forward cast comes in to play. If you hear a whipping sound, you haven't waited long enough (i.e. the line was still traveling backwards when you began the forward cast).

When you go out onto the water and you hear this whipping sound, check your fly, because chances are you've just cracked it off. If the line hits the ground you're waiting too long between casts and you'll end up tangling your line in the grass behind you, or whipping the water and chasing the trout away. If your line hits the ground check to see that you haven't lost your fly, snapped your leader, or caused knots (which will weaken your leader).

Another little note. Periodically check to see whether your fly is still attached to your line. I've experienced many dismayed moments wondering how long I'd been fishing without a fly. And as we all know, while being very eco-friendly, flyless fly-

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fishing is not very productive (Unless you're practicing that is - so there's your excuse for next time it happens).

So you've performed the back cast, followed onto the forward cast and surprise, surprise, now you attempt another back cast. Same principle. Watch the line fly forward (wrist held steady) and straighten. If you have a problem following the flight of the line against the sky with your eyes, watch the tip of the rod. As the line straightens it will start to pull and bend the tip of the rod in the direction of the line. When this occurs, the rod is said to be "loaded". The perfect time to cast is when the rod tip is loaded.

Before the line drops to the ground flick it backwards and then forwards and... Wayhay!!! You're casting. Well not actually. What you're doing now is called false casting. Only when your line finally comes to rest on the water is it called a cast. But for now we'll call it casting. It just sounds better. Do not perform this casting exercise more than 4 or 5 times in a row. One cast is a whole backward/forward cycle. Any more casts than this and your arm will get tired and your casting will deteriorate.

If it's not working for you, go back to the beginning of this chapter and start again. Otherwise here are some troubleshooters.

1. Line doesn't straighten behind or in front of me or hits the ground.
 - a. You're not casting with enough power. The line drops before it straightens.
 - b. Your arm is not coming to a complete stop and is disturbing the flight of the line.
 - c. Your arm is stopping beyond the Ten or Two O' Clock point, effectively throwing the line into the ground instead of horizontally.
 - d. You're waiting too long between casts.
 - e. You're using too much line (reel some in).
 - f. You're not gripping the line tightly between fingers and rod grip, allowing line to slip out as you cast.
 - g. You're not watching your line or your rod-tip.
2. I hear a whipping cracking sound or I get tailing loops (line gets caught up in itself while casting).
 - a. You're not waiting for the line to straighten before starting your next cast.
 - b. You're not watching your line or your rod-tip.
 - c. You're casting with too much force.
3. Line hits my rod.
 - a. Wind is blowing from your casting side. Face the opposite direction or have the wind coming from directly in front or behind you.
 - b. You're not watching your line or your rod-tip.
4. Line doesn't fold over itself in a tight "U" shape, but rather in a wide "C" shape.
 - a. You're not using enough force in your cast.

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- b. Your wrist isn't coming to a complete stop.
- c. You're not watching your line or your rod-tip.

From the above points you've probably noticed that one point keeps coming up, namely: You're not watching your line or your rod-tip. Yes, this is very important and until you "get the feel" of casting and your body knows what to do without any interference from your interfering know-it-all head, keep watching that line.

"Only through practice, practice and more practice will one become proficient in the art of flyfishing. Fly fishing combines the peaceful relaxation of being in the great outdoors with the adrenaline rush of a trout taking the fly. Learning to cast correctly allows the mind to wander free, while the body searches the waters for a lurking trout. And then, maybe, you won't mind so much that the trout isn't taking the fly."

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CASTING PART2

Lets make believe that you're on some beautiful, pristine lake's shore. Birds are singing, bugs are buzzing, trout are leaping, rising in sheer joy with absolute disregard for their own personal safety. You've hiked for miles to get here, as far away as possible from your dreary non fly-fishing life as possible. Keeping yourself hidden behind a large tree trunk you assemble your gear and you prepare to cast. Beautiful candy-cane shapes appear in the air as your fly line streaks out over the frolicking trout. Ker-Splash! Your line hits the water like a speedboat on av-gas! Water splashes everywhere. Trout disappear, birds fall silent, a bug crawls down your neck, an empty crisps packet floats by and a 16 wheeler gasoline truck roars by! Bugger!

I've seen it a million times: Perfect casting, terrible presentation.

So how do we place that line with the minimum of fuss? Firstly, the shorter your fly line, the easier this is to do. So, try and creep up as close as possible to your target. As mentioned before, the longer your line, the more difficult it is to cast, and if your casting isn't up to scratch, neither will is placement. Lets see now. You've got the false casting down pat. Backwards and forwards, no more than 3 or 4 times. Let the line drop. Start again.

Important point. In fact: VERY IMPORTANT POINT. Let your last false cast be NO DIFFERENT from the previous false casts. Just because it happens to be your last cast, it doesn't change the laws of physics. So your last false cast is coming up. Rod stops dead at 10 or Two O' Clock (Depending on which direction you're casting). Wrist holds steady. Line flies over your shoulder straightens and.....drops. As the far end of the line starts to fall FOLLOW IT DOWN with your rod. Let your rod drop at the same rate as the line. In that way the whole of the line will land gently and at the same time. Even better let your whole body go down to the ground, until you end up on your haunches.

The important points here are to follow the line with your rod and to not change the action of your last false cast. Common problems here are found as the last cast is not stopped at the correct position and the line splashes into the water right at ones feet, or runs out of steam halfway through the cast and lands in an untidy heap in the middle of the water.

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CASTING PART 3

Now for the next big step. This is one part that your non-casting hand is going to enjoy. You're now going to take that fly-line that you've been holding tight between rod-grip and fingers and pass it over to your other hand. Keeping the line slightly away from your body, your non-casting hand must feel comfortable and in no way interfere with the casting hand. Hold the line tight and proceed with your false casting until you can cast properly without your non-casting hand waving around in a most undistinguished manner. This will take a bit of practice, but it can help if you jam something between your non-casting arm and waist. This will keep your arm from trying to follow the casting arm. Remember you want to keep the line from slipping through your hand, so hold it tight and give the rod something to work against.

Once you've managed to get the action right, casting arm casting and non-casting arm not casting, you're ready for the next stage. Unspool five to ten meters of line from the reel, onto the open ground in front of you. Make sure not to stand on the line and that there are no branches or weeds that might tangle your line at your feet.

On your next forward cast, you have to add a little maneuver. Once your wrist has reached the forward Ten O' Clock position and STOPPED, OPEN YOUR NON-CASTING HAND slightly, release a little line and close it tight again. At this point the line should pass over your shoulder in front of you and straighten out. With your hand open, a meter or two of line will be pulled off the ground, and the length of line in the air will increase. Before the line begins to drop to the ground, CLOSE YOUR HAND TIGHTLY and perform the back cast. Do not release line on the back-cast unless you are feeling very confident and/or brave. After all my years of casting, I still do not feel completely confident enough to let line out on a back cast and do not expect beginners to master it quickly. However, if it works for you go right ahead and use it. In this way you'll get the required amount of line out quicker and with fewer false casts, which is after all the aim of this whole spiel.

On your last cast you can leave your hand open until the line stops being pulled through, or when you judge that enough line has been let out. REMEMBER THAT YOUR LAST CAST IS NO DIFFERENT TO ALL THE OTHERS and should not be flicked forward harder or to a different angle from vertical. Once the line stops being pulled through, wait for the line to start dropping and then follow it down with your rod tip.

Please take note of the following 5 points.

1. REMEMBER THAT YOUR LAST CAST IS NO DIFFERENT TO ANY OF THE OTHER PRECEDING FALSE CASTS

2. REMEMBER THAT YOUR LAST CAST IS NO DIFFERENT TO ANY OF THE OTHER PRECEDING FALSE CASTS

3. Remember that your last cast is no different to any of the other preceding false casts

4. Remember that your last cast is no different to any of the other preceding false casts

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5. Remember that your last cast is no different to any of the other preceding false casts

And that is that. If you're not casting by now go back and start again at the beginning. If that still doesn't help try holding the book upside down or reading it backwards (maybe there was an error in the printing process).

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FLIES

"Fly fishermen spend hours tying little clumps of fur and feathers on hooks, trying to make a trout fly that looks [like] a real fly. But nobody has ever seen a natural insect trying to mate with a Fanwing Ginger Quill."

-Ed Zern

There are plenty kinds of flies. Plenty, plenty, plenty. Each and every person who has ever sat down to tie a fly has invented or thought about inventing a new design. Every fly fisher has pondered over his collection and thought that something was missing.

Flies come in every shape and size. Tiny microscopic "buzzers" and nymphs, to huge Deer Hair Frogs, and the infamous Half-a-chicken (which is a fair indication of materials used in its construction). Flies also come in every level of buoyancy and density. Some float like ducks and other sink like stones. Some can't decide and hang around partially submerged or just below the surface.

Every fly fisher has his favorite fly. Designs come into fashion for a while and then disappear like the Dullstroom mist. Often a fellow fly fisher pulls out a fly with a PG age restriction. Flies that would give people like Dali and Picasso brilliant flashes of inspiration (or nightmares). These flies are usually described as "Fantastic", "The One", or even on one doubtful occasion "Trout magnet". They usually have strange names - usually dreamed up over a bottle of whiskey late one evening. "Duckworth's Dargle Delight", "Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear", "Red Arsed Bastard" and "Sawyer's Pheasant Tail Nymph" are real names. I kid you not.

Flies are essentially grouped into two types: Dry and Wet. Dry flies float (or try to), wet flies sink (or again, try to). Quite simple really. Wet flies are grouped further into "streamers", "nymphs" and the all encompassing "others". In order to keep a dry fly above water you will need floating fly line. Wet flies sink, and whatever line they're attached to will do the same (albeit at a different rate).

Dry flies are meant to float and to make sure that they do, you will need some fly floatant. Fly floatant is available in different forms including liquid in a bottle into which the fly is dunked and then shaken dry, and gel types. This latter type is available in little plastic bottles and a little is squeezed onto a finger. The heat of your finger will melt the gel which is then rubbed into the hackles of the fly. Which ever sort you choose, do not use too much and make sure that you dry the fly - particularly if using liquid floatant - with a few false casts.

Some people ask what fly I would use if I could only use one fly for the rest of my life. Silly question, but I've had it a thousand times. My response is firstly that I would like to have two flies, thank you very much, one of which is an Adams (Dry) and the other a Beady Wooly Worm (Wet). However if push comes to shove, and I was fishing for survival, the Beady Wooly Worm will do just fine. Probably, if I were really fishing for survival, a stick of dynamite would work every time, and this fly fishing malarkey could really go and jump.

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I have always suggested that whatever flies you choose, you should have at least two of each type in your fly box. Flies will get lost and damaged, and it can be frustrating when you've found a fly that works and your one and only version disappears into the murky depths of the trout waters. Also one variety of fly but in different sizes will be effective. Often trout will ignore flies of the right description, but of the wrong size.

My fly box always contains a variety of dries and wets. Here follows a list of general trout flies you should have in your box.

WET - NYMPHS

Emerging Nymph

Gold Rib Hare's Ear

Red eyed Damsel

Beady Wooly Worm

Wooly Worm

Black Beady Wooly Bugger

WET - OTHER

Hamill's Killer

Mrs. Simpson / Walkers Killer

Suspender Buzzer

DRY

Adams

Black Gnat

DDD

Dave's / Joe's Hopper

RAB

Coch-y-Bondhu / Peacock Spider

Your best bet is to stock up on flies wherever you might be fishing. Ask the shop owners and information desks for flies that might be having more success than others. Flies that work on one day might bring no luck on the next, but that's what it's all about.

Once you've got down to the water's edge, take some time to have a look around at the "indigenous fauna" as the experts would say. If you've got grasshoppers (Dave's Hopper) jumping into the water and swimming around, chances are that's what the trout are after. Same with little mayflies, midges and moths mimicked by the Adams, DDD or Black Gnat. Characteristically if the trout are feeding on these insect, you'll see and hear little splashes and ripples all over the place. This is called "rising" and when the fish are on the rise, very few flyfishers will take heed of anything else in their universe. This is the best time to fly fish, often yielding spectacular results as the trout leap from the water to take your dry fly.

If the ripples are there, but fish aren't splashing or breaking the water, they're probably just feeding under the surface of the water on insects best mimicked by the suspender buzzers or partially submerged Coch-y-Bondhu.

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Still waters mean that the trout are down deep. Usually on hot days the trout go to the deepest coolest part of the waters and that's where you will find them. If they are feeding at all, it will be on nymphs, tadpoles or other small fish, best mimicked by the Gold-Ribbed Hares Ear, Beady Woolly Worm or Woolly Buggers

Fly hooks usually come with barbs, so be careful with these sharp little things. To debarb your fly simply squeeze the barb down with a pair of forceps or pliers, taking care not to blunt or break the sharp hook.

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Retrieving

You're casting beautifully. Your line shoots out to exactly where you've aimed it. The fly lands on the water with nary a ripple...

Now what? Well, that all depends on what fly you have on the end of your line. Firstly KEEP YOUR ROD TIP DOWN (I leave the tip in the water - more about this later). Secondly you've got to try and understand what you're trying to mimic.

Still waters

Still waters of various sizes are likely to be the first place many new fly fishermen will try out their skills. If there is a manager at the fishery, after buying your ticket, the first thing to do is ask for advice. The manager should be able to tell you the best spots to try, what depth to fish at and the current popular patterns and sizes of fly to use.

The next thing to look for is if there is a good ripple on the water and a ripple line between the edge of the rough water and smooth water. If there is, fish over the line into the ripple. Look for reed beds, tree roots, an inlet and other places that may hold fish. Over-hanging trees will provide shade and cover for fish as well as being a possible source of terrestrial food such as caterpillars. Streams flowing into a stillwater will bring in fresh and well-oxygenated water as well as food and are always a good place to try.

Dry flies usually mimic insects which have landed on the water's surface and cannot free themselves. In most cases, their movements are so tiny that you would not be able to mimic them successfully. Simple wave action on the water's part will be enough to lend enough realism to the fly. Wave action however will also bring the fly closer to you and this results in slack forming in the line, which is not good. The slack in the line will keep you less and less in touch with your fly, and if a fish takes the fly you will miss out on a chance to "set the hook" (more on this later) so you could lose the fish. What you should do to prevent slack is slowly retrieve the line with one hand, simply pulling in the slack as the line moves closer to you.

This method is probably the best method for fishing with dry flies on still waters. However you should keep an eye out for what is happening around you. Always cast to rises quickly and efficiently, because that's where the hungry fish are. Every now and again give the fly a little jerk or tug, just to alert the fish to the presence of an insect which is still "alive and kicking".

Wet flies are easier to handle. Slack does not form so easily when the line sinks. If you're casting into deep water all you have to do is allow the line to sink to a depth where you think the fish might be, remember - the hotter, the deeper. This is all a matter of experimentation, try fishing at different levels by allowing a few seconds longer (or fewer) of sink for different casts until you get a bite. Then allow for the same duration of sink for the next cast (providing all the excitement hasn't made you forget!). Once you've reached the required depth, start your retrieve. Pull in about 20cm of line in a strong fluid motion. This will have the effect of bringing the fly closer to you and the surface. Allow a second or two for the fly to

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sink to the same level and retrieve again.

If you're casting into shallow waters wait until your fly hits the bottom and retrieve it slowly with small twitches and jerks, mimicking the motion of a nymph crawling over the floor.

Rivers

Rivers and other moving waters are slightly more complicated. Different speeds and directions of currents play havoc with your line causing the fly to act in all kinds of un-insect like behaviour. The details are far too numerous and complicated for the beginner to grasp without the benefits of "hands-on" experience. But if you're dying to get onto the river here are a couple of pointers that just might help you out. Always cast upstream with short casts no longer than five to eight meters. Face the oncoming water and let your fly drift back to you, keeping a watchful eye on either your fly or the fly line (or strike indicator). Any strange movements from either might indicate a "take" (more on this later). Once the fly is in line with you or past you, cast again. Forget about retrieving on fast moving waters and simply use your rod to keep up the slack, lifting or lowering the tip as you see fit. Fish usually face the oncoming water and grab food as it floats toward them. Casting and moving upstream lessens the chance of you being detected by sight or disturbance.

Fish in rivers try to stay out of the fast moving waters to conserve energy. Water moves slowly in eddies, behind or in front of boulders, close to the river walls and in deep water close to the river floor.

Look for river debris on the surface of the water. This debris (and fish food) tends to collect in areas where water moves slowly or not at all and chances are that a trout will be located very close to, if not in these locations.

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Catching

"The way I see it, there are five stages a fly fisherman goes through. As a beginner, he just wants to catch fish; then he wants to catch lots of fish. Soon he evolves and just wants to catch a big fish; then, he wants to catch lots of big fish. Finally, he wants to catch the uncatchable fish....."

-Anonymous

Remember to keep your rod down once you've cast. Always down. Keep an eye on your fly or fly line. Then if you see a splash, or rise in the vicinity of your fly, or while retrieving you feel a jerk or pull on your line, quickly but without too much effort raise your rod.

This is called "striking". When a fish takes your fly, it is called a "take". Do not hold the line too tightly, but allow it to be pulled out of your hand if need be. The act of raising your rod "sets" the hook into the fish's mouth. Always maintain slight to moderate tension between yourself and the fish. Slack line can result the fish shaking the fly from its mouth. Overly tight lines can snap. The worst thing you can do at this point is panic. Lets get that fish in as quickly and painlessly as possible.

If the fish sets off on a "run" allow it to do so. When it slows bring the line in, using your hand or reel, in so doing you tire the fish out and it's runs become shorter and weaker.

Soon you should have the fish under your control. Do not attempt to lift the fish from the water with the rod. Quickly slip a landing net (without lifting) or your hand (without squeezing) under the fish in the water and there you go, you've caught a fish.

What you do now is up to you. If you plan to release the fish read the next section well. Otherwise learn to dispatch the fish as quickly and humanely as possible. The only time that you really must handle a fish is when you intend to kill it. And do this before you take it out of your landing net as it is much easier to hold the fish when it is still in the net. Always use a proper priest to dispatch fish. Do not try to use a landing net handle or a piece of wood. Treat your fish with respect and dispatch it quickly and cleanly.

Gently lift the trout from the water, remove your fly and using a "priest" give a hard sharp blow to the top of the fish's neck just behind the gills. If you have done this correctly the fish will convulse once and die. If not, repeat the blow quickly and correctly. Clean the fish as soon as possible, and keep it in a cool place to prevent it from decaying and becoming smelly.

Occasionally you have no choice but to kill the fish. A fish hooked in the gills comes in bleeding profusely and will not live. A fish that refuses to swim away after being released has probably gone into shock and will not survive. A fish that has been "played" too long will have a huge lactic acid buildup in its system and

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will also not survive. Remove these fish from the waters and keep them for the dinner plate or trophy rack.

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Releasing

The key here is to be careful and quick.

Use "debarbed" flies. These hooks are easier to remove and do not damage the fish too much. If you have used a barbed fly, or you cannot remove the hook from the mouth of the fish, snip the tippet or leader off at the knot and release the fish. The hooks are small and will rust away in a few days.

Fish skin is very delicate and often covered in a protective slime. This slime acts as a barrier against disease and infection. Remove the skin or slime and the fish will have long painful death. Using nets with coarse thread can cause tearing of the fish skin. Lifting fish out of water with dry hands removes the slime layer.

I rarely use a net to handle a fish. If I do need to use the net, it is merely to keep the fish stationary in the water while I remove the hook. Never lift a fish out of the water with net. Fish should be grasped gently without any undue pressure. If a fish does struggle and try to escape, let it run and bring it back with the line. Hold the fish upside down in the water (calming it). Remove the fly by pushing it using your fingers, forceps or pliers in the opposite direction to the way it penetrated.

If you have to lift the fish out of the water make sure that it is adequately supported. Small fish can generally just lie on their side on the palm or your hand. Large fish can be supported in the upright position with one hand under the "chest" area and the other hand supporting the tail area. Do not support the fish in the delicate "stomach" area.

Keep the fish out of the water for as little time as possible and then return it to the water. The fish must swim out of your grasp. If it does not attempt to escape gently move it backwards and forwards, letting water pass through its gills and it will revive and swim off. If it doesn't try after a minute or so remove it from the water and kill it.

Treat any fish that escapes before you've had a good look at it, as a successful catch and release. As they say, some fish are just too beautiful to be caught only once.

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ADVANCED CASTING

Whoah!! We're going onto some seriously complicated stuff now. Skip this bit if you want and come back when you've a bit more experience. Otherwise, be warned.....

The Double Haul increases line speed and overall fly casting efficiency by using the power of both the casting and non casting arms. With the increase of speed, comes an increase in distance and you don't have to make as many false casts to get there.

Actually its not so bad. As with all other fly fishing legends and myths, all it takes is a little hand-eye and hand-hand co-ordination and you're looking just like a pro. Actually I was hauling long before I knew it, and was quite astounded to learn that the hallowed art was in fact well trodden ground.

Basically all you do when you're making a cast, whether forward or backward, is to give the fly line a tug. So here we go again. Back to the old practice grounds.

Lift the line from the ground (aerialise the line) into a back cast. Get the Rod tip up at Two O' Clock behind you. Wait for the line to straighten and prepare for the forward cast. Non casting-hand keeping still and holding onto the line tightly. Cast forward and as you feel the resistance in the rod, give a short sharp downwards pull (about 30cm) on the line with your non-casting hand. This will shoot the fly line out in front of you with more power and distance. As your tug is completed open your line hand slightly, allowing line to be pulled out, and close tightly to prepare for the back cast.

So that was a single haul. Now for the difficult bit. Give the same tug on the back cast. And there you go. Double hauling like a champion. Well actually it takes quite a lot of practice to get the timing right but eventually almost anybody can do it.

If you can't manage, for now stick to single hauling and try it again at a later stage. You do have to be pretty confident in yourself as a fly fisher if you want to attempt the "famous" Double Haul.

If alcohol's a crutch, then double hauling must be the wheelchair...

One thing to watch out for is hauling when it's not needed. Flyfishers tend to rely too much on the haul once mastered, which can affect his presentation. And after all, presentation is the key, is it not?

ROLL CASTING

Lets say you've found an excellent little fishing spot that someone has inconsiderately gone and put a wall of trees or cliff face against. In other words you've got no space for the back cast! Well never fear. We fly fishers are a resourceful lot and have just the solution for this little problem. We call it the roll cast. If you want an excellent demonstration, get yourself a copy of the "A river runs through it" video and sit back. Otherwise read these words carefully.

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This cast must be practiced on water. It relies on the surface tension between the water and line, and it just doesn't work on grass.

In essence, the roll cast is nothing more than one forward cast, executed perfectly. You cannot roll cast for a large distance, so make sure that you get as close as possible to the target before starting. Spool off as much line as you need into the water in front of you. The closer your arm is to the surface of the water the better, so either wade into the water or go into a crouch.

Raise your rod-tip to the 2 O' Clock position behind you and allow the back-end of line to be raised off the water's surface. Let the line develop a little slack and then perform the forward cast exactly as normal coming to a complete halt. What should happen is that a loop will form and roll along the length of your line. If you stop the forward cast close to the vertical, the entire line will lift off the water and straighten, allowing you to drop the line exactly where you want it to be.

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ETTIQUETTE

Etiquette, or good manners, may seem to be an old fashioned and alien concept to some. Bad or thoughtless behaviour is not only upsetting to those on the receiving end but can also be dangerous. There are a number of points that should be borne in mind.

When walking around a stillwater, lake or along a river bank, keep back from the water so that your presence or shadow does not fall on the water and frighten fish. This is particularly important on the banks of a clear river. Frightening fish in this manner may ruin the fishing for another angler or yourself. If there are other people fishing, particularly when casting, do give them a wide berth and even a word of warning that you are passing behind them.

On a river, never start fishing in front of (upstream) another fisherman and never walk downstream close to the water. There is nothing more annoying than working your way quietly upstream to perhaps a favourite spot and seeing somebody peering into the water just where you want to fish! If there is someone fishing where you had hoped to fish, approach them quietly and ask what their plan is. You may find that they are about to pack up or move elsewhere, leaving you to carry on. If they are not going to be moving, start well downstream or consider moving to another part of the river. Some fishermen will be happy for you to start "round the bend", giving themselves a stretch of water to fish that has not been disturbed. If you explain that it is your first time on the river, or a new member of the club, you may be given some good advice.

It does not take much thought or time to show consideration to your fellow angler. When, by sheer thoughtlessness, somebody spoils a piece of water for you, you will know what it is like to upset others.

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Hints

"Two casts from the bank, and I've got something:
a seventy foot pine tree"

-Nick Lyons

Sooner or later every fisherman gets his fly caught in the bankside vegetation, snagged in the river bed or up a tree. The first thing to do is not to start yanking the line with your rod as hard as you can. You could end up with the fly in your eye or a broken rod. Take things gently.

A fly that has got caught in bankside vegetation can often be carefully twitched or pulled free to drop on to the water and into the mouth of a waiting trout.

If your fly is caught in the bottom or underwater, retrieve the slack line, point your rod down the line and pull gently but firmly. If the fly does not come free, try pulling from a different angle. It is a rare occurrence that the fly will not come free with gentle but firm pressure. You will rarely need to break your tippet and lose the fly. Another technique that can work is a vigorous upstream roll cast that will pull your fly in the opposite direction.

With a fly caught in a tree, the first thing to do is to try gentle pressure by again pointing your rod along the line. Don't use your rod to attempt to lever the fly free. If pressure does not work, pull in the slack line as you walk towards the tree or bush. Now push your rod all the way up the line and over the leader so that the fly is wedged in the top ring; you may need to pull the branch down to do this. Keep pushing, holding the line tight, using the top ring as a disgorging. This method will work and free your fly nine times out of 10, from even quite high branches, as long as you can get your rod tip up to the fly.

Casting into the Wind:

When casting into the wind, cast with more force, closer to the ground or water and employ short, quick hauls. Keep your loops as tight as possible to avoid excessive wind resistance.

Scaring Fish:

Stay low, move slowly and quietly. Wear dull clothing that does not contrast with the background. Present your fly delicately without splashing. Wait a while before casting again if you feel that you have spooked the fish. Catching a fish usually alerts others in the area so move off once you have made your catch.

Losing Fish:

Check and test your knots. Check for wind knots. Strike firmly but with less force. Stay Calm.

Hooks Snapping:

Keep flies dry. Rusting will weaken the hook. Check hooks after making a catch or hooking rocks or logs.

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Line memory:

Keep your line clean and store in cool place between fishing trips. Clean with damp, soapy rag.

Fly Selection:

A pattern that mimics a particular insect too closely might be ignored by fish. A few errors in design will alert the fish to danger. A fly that is very different might arouse the fish's curiosity and will attract its attention. Fish often "taste" their prey before swallowing and it's during this "tasting" that an alert fly fisher will make a successful strike.

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Conclusion

Finally, I hope that this booklet has given you an insight into the fabled "art" that fly fishing is supposed to be. I can only hope that once you get the basics right, all the rest follows in time.....allowing you to give yourself one more reason to get out the hurly-burly of modern living and into the cool and calm serenity of the natural environment.

As an unknown fly fisher once said:

'The best way to learn to be a fly fisher is to go down to the waters edge and ask the trout for a few lessons".

Tight lines and screaming reels.