

THE LOOP

*The Federation of Fly Fishers Journal for Certified Casting Instructors
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Teaching Your Six-Year-Old to Fly Cast

by Joan Salvato Wulff

Temperatures are up, days are lengthening, our creeks and rivers are healthily full of water. It's spring, and as we turn attention to our favorite sport, it behooves us (there's an old word) to set aside time for the introduction of a youngster to the family's fly fishing heritage.

When is a child old enough to learn to fly cast? If he or she is under six, only after they've been introduced to fishing with simpler tackle. When grandson Alex was three we gave him a closed-face spinning reel to use with worms and minnows. That summer he caught perch and sunfish and was himself hooked on the sport.

I gave Alex his first fly casting lesson at age five when life first became exciting for him; when he could take instruction. His interest was burgeoning in swinging a bat, throwing and catching balls, and taking the training wheels off the two-wheeler.

His second lesson was given one year later (I'm not always a good grandmother). He remembered. I had taught him the roll cast. In the second lesson I taught him to roll cast backhand (off his left shoulder, instead of his right) and he did it easily. Then I took him to a basic cast ---- taking line off the water and putting it back down. In spite of the dramatic difference in backcast motions (one leaving the line on the water, the other lifting it off and throwing it with force into the air behind him), he didn't confuse them; he was able to distinguish between the mechanics.

This is interesting. When I teach adult beginners, and there is no assimilation time allowed between the roll and basic casts, they often get confused on the backcast. Children apparently don't carry "baggage" or think beyond what they are being taught---they just follow directions (which had

better be good ones). It's wonderful.

With one exception, Alex was the youngest child I have taught successfully. Several years ago, a phone call from the local inn asked me to set aside lesson time for a father, and a son who was 6 1/2 years old. I agreed, anticipating difficulty with the boy, either through lack of concentration to correct what would be his natural, but all wrong cast, or in the restricted length of his periods of concentration.

I was wrong on both counts. My two sessions with Daniel turned out to be the highlight of my teaching season. Not only did he listen, but he could direct the use of his hand, forearm, and whole arm once he was shown their effect on his cast. It was uncanny; I found myself wondering if he wasn't a man in a child's body. In two 1-hour sessions, shared with his father, Daniel learned the roll cast, the basic cast, false casting, and shooting line----no mean feat even for an adult. When he showed weariness I taught him how to retrieve line, pretend to strike a fish on a dead-drifted fly, and how to play and land a fish (I was the fish). It was fun for both of us.

Daniel was not a man in a kid's body. He was a motivated child, the essential element in all successful teaching. If your youngster isn't interested, don't waste your time or his; and when he or she is interested, age won't make much difference.

Here are some guidelines:

Rod length and weight, and diameter and length of the grip, are number one in importance. Daniel used a 7 1/2 foot rod for a #5 line. Alex, who is not as sturdy as Daniel, was comfortable with a 7 foot glass rod with a #4 line. When Alex was doing well with it I asked him to try my 8 foot #6, 2 5/8 oz.

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graphite rod and he found it too unwieldy. For 8-10 year olds, an 8-8 1/2 foot rod for a #5 line should be appropriate. The tackle must include a leader (7 1/2 feet) and a yarn fly.

Have the child use *two hands* on the rod grip, one in the normal position, thumb on top and second at the very end of the grip, thumb in line with the other (See Figure 1).

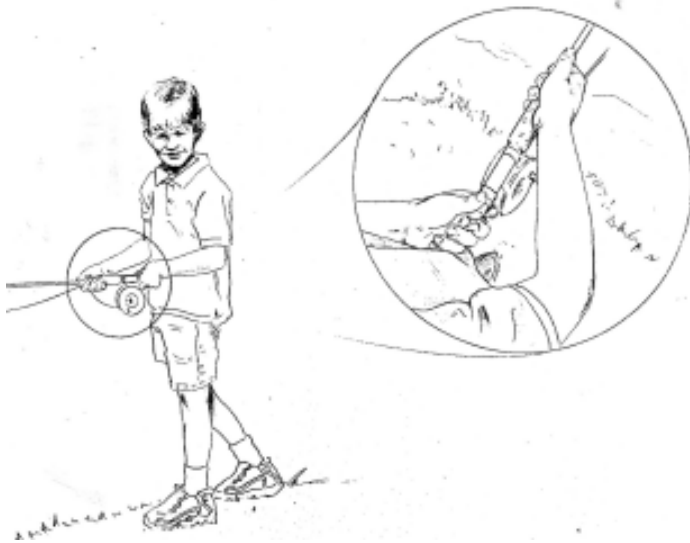


FIGURE 1: The Grip (for strength) - Primary hand with flexed thumb on top; secondary hand holds very bottom of grip, thumbs in line.

Most children under age 11 or 12 lack the strength to end the accelerating casting stroke with a forceful **stop**, especially on the backcast. The combined strength of two hands solves this problem and keeps the cast in line, vertically, as it should be.

Set out or identify a target of any kind so there is an obvious goal and instant reward for a good cast. Don't use terms like *loading move* and *power snap*. Use "slow-fast," "easy-hard," "lift-snap." Limit the session length to the time the child will concentrate and end it on a high note. Be honest. Offer praise when the cast is perfect and non-committal comment when it is not. Use "not so good," "good," and "perfect!"

, Teach the roll cast as a first technique, off both shoulders to handle wind and stream direction.

Step 1. Strip line from the reel and then release it while stroking the rod from side to side with a lowered rod tip. The fly line will slide through the guides

and pile up in the water.

Step 2. Leaving the line, leader, and fly lying on the water, lift and draw the rod backward slowly, tilting it outward until there is a belly of line behind the shoulder (See Figure 2).



FIGURE 2: Roll Cast Set-up Position - Line stays on water but is bellied behind the shoulder. Rod is tilted outward; primary hand puts thumb at forehead level.

Step 3. Hesitate, to let the line come to a dead stop, then make a forceful stroke forward, pushing the rod hand's thumb right toward the target, and pulling up on the end of the rod grip with the second hand (Figure 3).

Once the roll cast is done surely, relate it to fishing. Put the line under the middle finger of the rod hand and retrieve it, smoothly or with strips. Stroke it out again, "fish it," retrieve it. Have the child watch the water under which the fly swims.

Pretend there is a strike! Strike and playing instruction is extremely important. A child's natural instinct will be to just hold tight and not give an inch when he feels the fish. Instruction should include when to put pressure on the fish and when to let it run, when to pull in line by hand and when to reel it in.

Introduce a real fly with a hook; point out the dangers and the importance of good casts to offset

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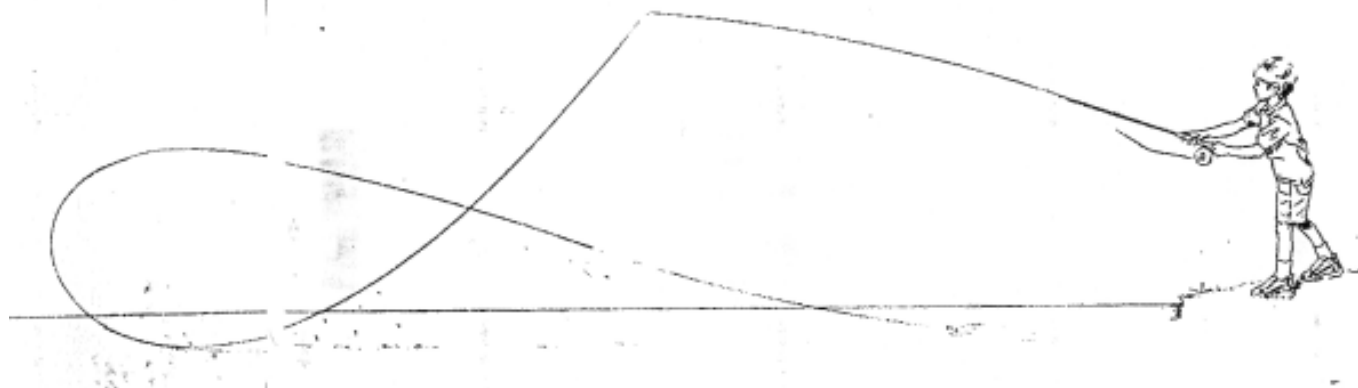


FIGURE 3: Forward Stroke - Rod hand's thumb pushes to the target while second hand pulls end of rod upward.

them and, when the child is casting safely, go to fishable water. Pick a time and place when chances of success are high. Introduce dry flies only when conditions are right and the fly can be seen easily (I hope it will be a Royal Wulff). Practice dry fly strikes. After the roll cast and the basic cast, teach false casting and then shooting line. Those four techniques make everyone operational as trout fishermen.

Obviously older children will progress faster than younger ones but I've focused on the 6-year-old

This article was originally published in Fly Rod & Reel, July/August 1999. The figures are drawn by David Shepherd.

because at that age it will become ingrained; they won't remember when they started fly fishing. They will always think they "just did it naturally."

My second grandchild, Andrew, will be four-and-a-half this spring and already wants to fly cast because Alex knows how. It'll be fun to see if he's ready.

*Joan Wulff pioneered a set of casting "mechanics" with vocabulary in her 1987 book, **Fly Casting Techniques**. She serves on the FFF Casting Board of Governors.*

(Lines for Two-Handers - Continued from page 4)

on those icy cold days when the rod guides tend to freeze up. Limited line stripping keeps the guides dry and ice-free. Minimizing line stripping reduces the time lost stripping in line and increases the time the fly is on the water. If you are fishing 10 runs per day, this minimizing line stripping may boost your coverage to 12 runs a day. This line's long body allows the caster extensive line controls at a distance with ease.

The reduced stripping and additional line controls come at a price. The long belly lines take an expertise to orchestrate through the cast. One needs to get accustomed to driving "V" back loops and minimizing the amount of line anchoring on the water surface. The second issue is the rear area needed to form those long "V" back loops. The fishing situation may not allow a long back loop, causing the caster to wade into the river, which very well may be counter to the philosophy of

of spey casting. Again, it is a matter of selecting the proper line for the fishing situation.

Keep your line selections simple. Allow your natural casting stroke length and preferred rod action to dictate the line choice.

Short stroke prefers a progressive action and a short/moderate length line. To the other end of the scope, a long stroke with a traditional rod action would be enhanced by a long belly line.

Lines, like the many flavors of ice cream are all good, we have favorites but we must try them all.

Al Buhr is the chairman of the Two-Handed Casting Instructor Committee and a member of the FFF Casting Board of Governors.

Lines for Two-Handed Rods

by Al Buhr

For decades, the line choice for two-handed rods was simple, a double taper or build your own. This all changed in 1994 when three line manufacturers began producing hybrid spey lines. The old standard line, the double taper, is still being marketed today, but it has become obsolete as the hybrid lines have taken a solid dominance in all styles of two-handed casting.

There are four basic groups of hybrid lines that are some form of weight forward/shooting head type of line. These groups are divided by their head length and have a relationship with the different casting styles, rod designs and fishing situations. Each type of head has its benefits and negatives. It is a personal preference of style, rod and/or fishing situation that ultimately makes the choice.

The four groups are: *Scandinavian lines* - 30' to 44' in length. *Moderate length lines* - 50' to 60'. *Mid-length lines* - 60' to 70'. *Long belly lines* - 70' to 90'.

Scandinavian lines – 44' and under:

The Scandinavian lines, as well as their intended rods, are designed to compliment each other. Couple this with the Scandinavian unique casting style “underhand casting” and you have a complete casting/fishing system. Goron Anderssen, lead designer for Loop Tackle, created the concept of Scandinavian lines, rods and the underhand cast. Goron derived this concept of fishing (line, rod and casts) to effectively fish clear waters, minimize spooking fish, and efficiently cast with minimal back loop area behind the caster.

The Scandinavian line, with its short body length, utilizes a long 18' to 22' leader. The use of this long leader provides a very quiet splash down when forming the anchor and a clean exit upon forming the forward cast, a vital part of the system. The short unique tapered lines enhance the ability to cast under trees and/or tight against the bank.

Within the Scandinavian style of lines is a small group of custom hand-made lines that are becoming known here in the Western U.S. and Canada as Skagit lines. These lines fit into the Scandinavian group, yet may be cast in a more traditional style and fishing techniques. Crafty line manufacturers are looking at this exclusive line as they diversify their product line. These lines have been around for some time, mainly as an interchangeable sink-tip line. The short floating belly generally has a large diameter to roll out heavy sink-tips without hinging. The short length aids in driving the heavy tips and large flies. Also these short stout lines are easy for the caster to manage in those awkward tight positions against the bank and/or under the trees.

Moderate length lines - 50' to 60':

The moderate length lines are the most dominant in the hybrid spey line market and are certainly the most adaptable and versatile lines. They are compact enough to be cast in tight confining situations, yet quite able to fly out well past 100'. A 14' rod with a 54' head and a 12' leader will fish at 80' without stripping in any line. The line's moderate length of 50 odd feet is very manageable to maneuver through the gyrations of a cast even in those awkward moments against the bank.

By tying in a loop on the end of the line, a poly-core sink tip may be added without changing the line's cast ability, underscoring this line's adaptability. The moderate lines will cast well with nearly any rod action and adapt to many casting styles and strokes. These lines come in a variety of tapers, head lengths and grain weights from all the line manufacturers.

Mid length lines - 60' to 70':

The mid length lines are a blend between the moderate lines and the long belly lines. These lines retain some of the versatility and ease of casting of the compact moderate lines. Also, they gain some line control and they reduce stripping of running line, similar to the long belly lines.

Long belly lines - 80' to 90':

The long belly lines minimize the need for stripping line prior to making the cast. This can be the solution

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Leon Chandler

1922-2004

J. Leon Chandler, from Homer, NY, died on March 18th, 2004 in Kirkland, Washington. He was 81. Leon Chandler was born in Missouri on May 14, 1922 and migrated, at the age of 19, to Cortland, NY. He went to work for the Cortland Line Company a few days after Pearl Harbor.

After serving in the US Army attached to General Douglas MacArthur and the U.S. Army Signal Corps in New Guinea and the Philippines, he returned to Cortland in 1945. Leon worked his way up to Executive Vice President in charge of sales at the Cortland Line Company. He spent 51 years there.

Working at the Cortland Line Company was Leon's first exposure to fly fishing. During this time participation in sports shows around the country became an important aspect of effectively marketing fishing tackle----- and Leon had to be there. From there, Leon became involved in making 16 mm fly fishing films that were widely shown by rod and gun clubs around the country.

Fly fishing became his passion and love of the sport took him around the world. He was a driving force in bringing fly fishing to countries where it scarcely existed. Under the sponsorship of the U.S. State and Commerce Departments, he demonstrated American fishing tackle and techniques at Trade Fair exhibits in Finland, behind the Iron Curtain in Poland, Hungary, Germany and the former U.S.S.R. He is credited with bringing fly fishing to Japan in the early 70's. Before his first visit, there were only about 300 fly fishermen in Japan. Today there are nearly a half million.

He spent 22 years on the National Trout Unlimited Board of Directors and served as National President for two years. In 1988 he was inducted into the Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame as a legendary angler.

After retiring from the Cortland Line Company in 1992, he traveled around the US in his motor home doing the two things he loved best-----fishing and meeting people. During the trout season, he could frequently be found on his favorite Catskill Mountain streams or roaming around Montana, Idaho or Wyoming, enjoying the sport that played such a dominant role in his life for so many years.

Given the unofficial title of The American Ambassador of Fly Fishing, Leon Chandler was highly regarded around the world for his mild, soft spoken manner and his knowledge of the sport. His life was aptly summed up by long time friend and fishing partner Lefty Kreh when he said, "I never heard anyone say anything bad about Leon Chandler."

His wife, Margaret, preceded him in death in 1987. He is survived by his two sons, Kim Chandler of Kirkland, WA, and Jeff Chandler of Parker, CO, and two grandsons, Benjamin Chandler and Stephen Chandler.

Remembrances may be made to the Leon Chandler Chapter of Trout Unlimited c/o Niles Brown, 137 Crooked Lake Rd., Tully, NY 13159. A memorial celebration was held at SUNY Cortland on April 27, 2004 at 7PM.

Leon Chandler was an Emeritus Member of the FFF Casting Instructor Certification Program Board of Governors.



Jim Green 1920-2004

From the Lewiston Tribune, Lewiston, ID

Milton Jimmy Green passed away March 13, 2004 after suffering heart failure. He was 84 years old. He leaves behind his wife Carol. They have a beautiful home overlooking the Grande Ronde River near Asotin, Washington.

While a student in Oakland, California, Jim became interested in casting and making rods. He watched casting tournaments in the mid-1930s and learned to cast. He then joined the Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club in San Francisco. He took part in national tournaments and in 1937 went to Europe to compete internationally. In Paris, Jim won the all-around casting championship using bait and fly equipment.

Jim served in the U.S. Army during World War II in the European Theater. He took part in the D-Day landing at Normandy. After his discharge from the military he resumed his career in the fly fishing industry. He worked for the Sunset Line Company and spent time at the Winston Rod Company. He later worked for the Sevenstrand Company.

Jimmy Green burst on the casting scene in the 1947 National Association of Angling and Casting Clubs National Championships by setting a new world record in the salmon fly distance event (two handed rod, similar to a spey rod) with an average of 198 $\frac{2}{3}$ feet and a long cast of 206 feet. He also won the wet fly accuracy title with a perfect score of 100. Jim had won the Distance Trout Fly title in the 1946 tournament.

Jim's experience casting led to work designing rods. In the 1960s, he revolutionized rod design and construction. Jimmy developed the non-metal tip-over ferrule used on 99% of the glass and graphite rods today, the monofilament running line used with shooting heads, and helped to develop the modern fly line when he was with the Sunset Line and Twine Co. He actively contributed to the sport of fly fishing throughout his life. He is one of few rod designers who have made rods out of all the materials used in the past 100 years including, bamboo, fiberglass, graphite and boron.

Jim was a teacher and well known throughout the fishing community, with many friends all over the world.

His lifelong career in the tackle industry didn't end with retirement as he still kept active rolling experimental graphite fly rods from scratch in his basement and fishing them and casting them in tournaments. He also consulted for the Sage Rod Company.

In 1971 Jim Green wrote a casting book (*Fly Casting - From the Beginning*) for Fenwick people that has been a staple ever since.

Jimmy used to come to our (Marty Seldon) club meetings and suggested we practice casting with out toes and nose against a wall using only the butt of the rod. His smooth, short, seemingly effortless casts were a marvel that went forever. In those days we all had to raise two hands when they asked us to put up a finger for every Fenwick we owned.

Trey Combs speaks of Jimmy reverently as one of his heroes and credits him with the Green Butted Skunk fly. Ernie Schwiebert talks about Jimmy as one of the world's finest casters and how in 1973 at the FFF Conclave in Sun Valley, Andre Puyans introduced them and got Ernie to cast Jimmy's new high-modulus carbon-fiber rods that amazed him.

Jimmy Green was an Emeritus Member of the FFF Casting Instructor Certification Program Board of Governors and a fine gentleman.



From the Editors: Denise and Liz

Your editors hope you are enjoying the impressive articles we continue to receive for *The Loop*. Thanks to all of our contributors.

Joan Wulff has given us some great tips for teaching children to flycast. We hope that each of you has had the opportunity to teach some youngsters to flycast. If not, consider making that a priority this spring and summer.

The 2-Handed Casting Instructor Certification Objectives and Study preparation guide are available on the web site now.

We hope you are making plans to attend the Conclave in West Yellowstone, August 16th through the 21st. Remember that Master Instructors are invited to observe the Board of Governors meeting on Tuesday, August 17th. Definitely a meeting to attend!

Thanks to Jason Borger for contributing a new look to *The Loop* logo. Let us know what you think.

To get your copy of *The Loop* electronically, please send your current e-mail address to Julie Nelson. Julie will notify you when *The Loop* is available for downloading. Back issues of the *Loop* are now available on the web site.

Update on the Two-Handed Certification Instructor Program (THCI)

The THCI program began in February of this year after several years of development. In the last two months we have grown to 3 examiners and 4 certified instructors. During these certifications, we have reviewed the test and the testing process to streamline and improve it.

As our ability to give tests expands, so does our ability to serve. We ask for patience during these growing pains. In a step to better serve those who are interested in the program and are waiting to be tested, an *alternate list* has been started. This list will serve several purposes:

- 1) Registers the candidate for the test.
- 2) Provides a list from which cancellations may be filled.
- 3) The THCI program requires a testing site which many event/sport shows cannot provide. Therefore, the program may offer testing that is not tied to an event, but rather to locations that the *alternate list* will indicate. This will give more control to the waiting candidates and the examiners.

For those interested in the program, contact Julie Nelson at the FFF Headquarters .

In this issue, we remember two of the great pioneers in fly fishing. Please read about the contributions that Jim Green and Leon Chandler made to our sport.

I have had the good fortune to meet both of these pioneers on many occasions. I knew some of their achievements, but writing the articles about these two men opened my eyes as to the extent of their contributions (Denise).

How many of you recognize the names and if you do, how many know of their place in the history of fly fishing? Our sport of fly fishing wouldn't be the same today without them. It seems that we take for granted the wonderful rods and lines available today and few remember the old lines and clunky rods of the past. Both of these men contributed a great deal to flycasting and to our Casting Certification Program. How do you say thanks if not by remembering them and their contributions.

Cheers, Denise and Liz

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You can have a link from your FFF website listing to your own e-mail address. Contact Julie Nelson.

We welcome your submissions via e-mail or disk. Please attach a short (1-3 sentences) instructor biographical statement, including your location and Certification level. Please indicate whether or not you are willing to allow your submission's possible re-publication on the Program's web site. Any illustrations should be in TIFF format. *The Loop* reserves the right to decline any submission for any reason, and to edit any submission. All submissions should be sent to the National Office:

FFF Casting Instructor Certification Program

P.O. Box 1595

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E-mail: castingcert@fedflyfishers.org

Web: www.fedflyfishers.org/castingcert.shtml

COMING EVENTS for 2004

Pre-registration is REQUIRED

- Contact Julie Nelson at 406-585-7592
- *Schedule subject to change*

Great Lakes Council of FFF Fly Fishing School and Conclave, June 18-20, 2004; Instructor Certification June 19. Preregistration deadline is June 12.

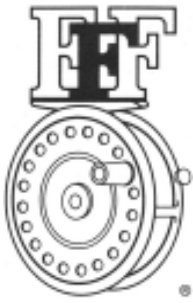
Freeport, Maine—L.L. Bean 2-Day Test Preparation Workshop and Teaching Workshop with Macauley Lord. To register please call (888-552-3261). Dates for 2004: May 29-30; September 4-5; October 9-10.

West Yellowstone, MT --- August 16 - 21, 2004, 39th Annual FFF Show and Conclave, Instructor & Master, THCI

Contact Julie Nelson at (406) 585-7592 for pre-registration (A \$50 test fee for Certified Instructor or \$100 test fee for Masters is required to pre-register)

Congratulations to New Master Instructors!

Jay Cronk, Carbondale, CO
Sheila Hassan, Medway, MA
Jeff Wagner, North Platte, NE
Dan Wright, Highlands Ranch, Co
Gary Wood, Glenpool, OK



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