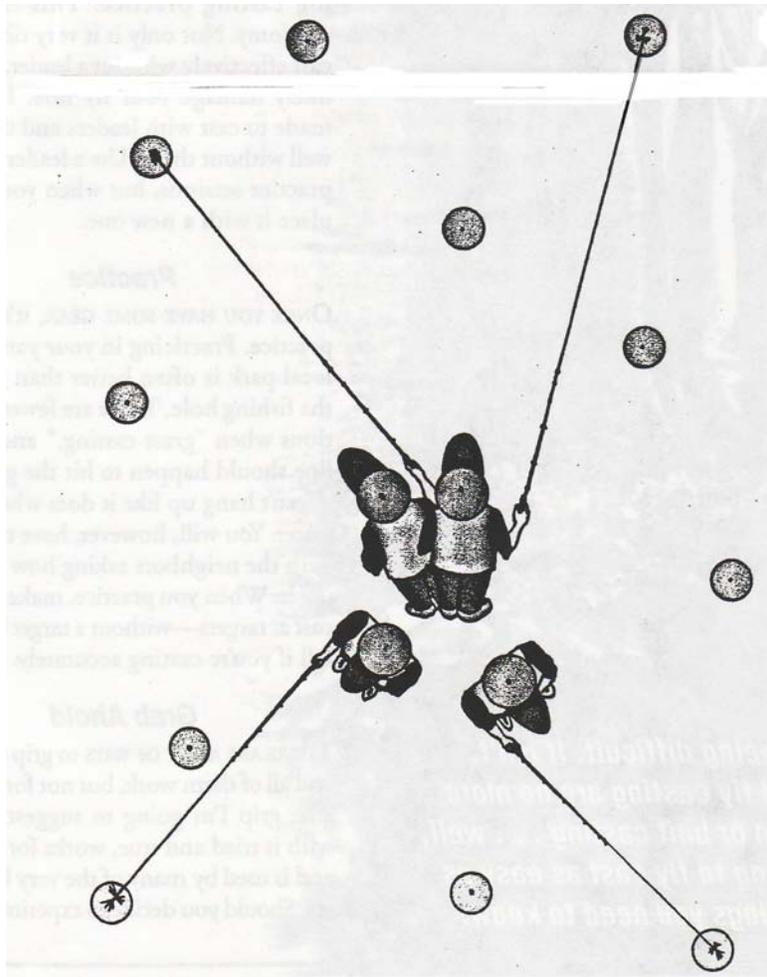


# Accuracy Made Easy (...sort of)

by Bruce W. Richards

Unlike golf and some other sports, being an accurate caster is not always critical. When searching the water in big rivers, lakes or the ocean often just making repeated long casts is what it takes to be successful, exactly where the fly lands isn't that important. On the other hand, being able to land your fly in a tea cup is critical to success in other situations.

The key to casting accurately is in your ability to control the fly line. Line control comes from having good, tight loops which you can throw consistently, not just now and then. I hate to say it, but consistent tight loops come from practice. It has always amazed me how anglers can spend a lot of time and money preparing for a big fly fishing trip, but often with none of it spent on a casting lesson or practice. Being able to cast accurately is **MUCH** more important than being able to cast far in almost every type of fly fishing.



There isn't time in this article to cover the casting stroke that makes good consistent loops. Many anglers cast good loops but are still not as accurate as they should be because they either don't practice at all or practice ineffectively. Here are some practice tips.

1. Practice with the gear you intend to fish with. This means rod, reel, line, leader and fly (cut off at the bend). Different rods require different casting strokes, don't practice with one rod then switch to another to fish and expect to be able to adjust immediately. How a line/leader/fly combination turns over and delivers can have a dramatic affect on casting accuracy, make sure you are practicing with what you will fish.
2. Practice to a target. I like to use paper plates staked to the ground with nails. Set out several targets at various distances in a circle around where you will stand. Cast at one target, then turn your body a little or a lot and quickly cast to the next target you see. This will give you practice at various distances and with differing wind and light conditions. It also lets you know where your fly will land if you are casting and changing direction at the same time, the line will land in a curve. This drill is particularly important for cruising fish like tarpon.
3. Practice often, not necessarily for a long time. I leave a rod rigged in the garage so I can get out to practice fast without having to rig up.
4. Whenever possible, practice cast behind a fish you want to catch before making your delivery cast. Most fish can't see backwards, you can practice deliveries 3 ft. behind a fish until you are confident you know exactly the right distance and know exactly how your fly will deliver. When ready all you have to do is change the angle of your last cast to deliver in front of the fish. Usually your first cast over the fish will be right on target, making it much less likely it will be spooked. This technique works very well with surface feeding trout.