Federation of Fly Fishers
Master Casting Instructor
Test Preparation Guide

If you regard the test seriously and prepare yourself, you will significantly improve your probability of success. If you take it lightly, you may be disappointed. In short, know your stuff and be able to teach it.

Carefully study the representative oral questions in Appendixes A-E. In addition, there is an extensive list of study materials such as books, videos and articles in Appendix F.

Below are actions you should take to prepare:

General

- Develop a broad knowledge of the totality of fly fishing, including coldwater, warmwater and saltwater.
- Fish for as many different popular species as possible in fresh, salt, warm and cold water. Understand the fish, tackle and techniques, including two-handed rods and spey casting.
- Read, watch videos and talk with flyfishers who have fished for species unfamiliar to you.
- Where a gap in experience exists, learn specialty casts and knots and read extensively to understand as much as possible about that type of fishing.
- Be concise in answering questions.
- Be prepared to defend or expand on answers to questions in orals.
- Continue to learn.

Oral Test

- Study the Representative Questions in Appendixes A-E.
- Study how to teach.
- Teach frequently - develop your own teaching methodology as you go.
- Refine your teaching methodology in the form of written lesson plans.
- Be able to analyze casting strokes and errors for all types of casts.
- Be able to concisely explain and demonstrate the cause and cure of all casting flaws, using as few words as possible.
- Have an intimate knowledge of the current popular casting styles.
- Be able to distinguish between substance and style and show an ability to analyze different styles of casting.
- Observe, listen carefully and take notes when other instructors teach, particularly members of the Board of Governors.
- Be well versed in the various "teaching cues" of our best-known casting teachers and authors.
- Know other instructors' teaching paradigms.
- Have a wide variety of instructional techniques, tips and tricks at your disposal.
- Read at least the current literature on casting and teaching.
- Have a working knowledge of the casting/teaching techniques of published casting experts (i.e.: Borger, Kreh, Krieger, and Wulff).

Casting Performance Test and Instructing Ability

- Choose your equipment carefully - paying particular attention to the distance cast and the long roll cast. Ensure that your leader will straighten.
- Make sure your line has a head length long enough for the long roll cast.
- Practice with the same equipment you will use on the test.
- In the test, use a brightly colored line, e.g. orange - the examiners will appreciate that and so will your students.
- Practice casting in short sessions, frequently. At a minimum, cast weekly throughout the year.
- Make consistent tight loops during the performance test; be able to perform all casts easily on your first attempt.
- Ensure that front loops and back loops are the same size. A narrow loop is considered to be around 2 feet in height.
- Practice casting using measured distances - not estimates - and use a measuring tape and markers.
  For accuracy practice, use targets that are approximately 30 inches in diameter.
- Be able to detail casting mechanics backwards and forwards.
- Become an expert in concisely explaining the basics, including loop formation and common errors, stroke mechanics, double haul, roll casting, and casting in the wind.
- Do a "pre-test" with a Master or Board of Governors member.
- Know more than one way to perform casts, particularly curve casts.
- Be familiar with two-handed casting and its three most common casts: overhead casts, single spey and double spey.
- Practice casting incorrectly to better understand how and why students make casting errors.
- Know "why" certain casting actions produce certain results.
- Know the fishing applications and line handling techniques of the casts you are demonstrating.
- Rehearse the "explain and demonstrate" tasks until they become automatic - and be brief.
- If examiners ask you to do something differently than the way you learned it, don't argue - just do it.
- Cast slowly - as good instructors do.
- Make your casting look very easy and concise.

Be Concise

Examiners are looking for answers that are brief and on-target. You should be an excellent communicator, with the ability to concisely explain concepts and answer students' questions. Do not feel compelled to recite your entire knowledge bank on the topic of the question. It is better to say less than more, using as few words as possible to respond. Sometimes only one word is needed to answer a question. Long explanations can indicate you do not know the answer to the question and are "shotgunning" your response in hopes of hitting the right answers in the barrage - not good. Long explanations can also indicate you might use long explanations to students - really not good. You might tell the examiners up front that you will be brief in your responses and that if they need more explanation to please ask. You will only impress the examiners if you are both correct and concise.

Be Relaxed and Confident

Your attitude about the test can help you. While examiners recognize the pressure of the situation and are sympathetic, they are free to ask any question and to expect a valid answer. You may feel intimidated. But you should not be intimidated nor convey any sense of being intimidated. Nobody has ever died or even been hospitalized while taking the Master's exam. Look at the test as a "checkpoint" in your never-ending learning curve of teaching, casting, and fly fishing. If you pass, great! If you are unsuccessful the first time, you will undoubtedly have learned something useful. With this attitude you will be more relaxed, confident, and able to think more clearly. The test will not take on a "pass or die" context and you will perform much better. You fail only when you quit trying to learn.

Be Poised

Hone your speaking and presentation skills. Even if you can handle the casting to perfection and know the answers to every question, you must still come across with confidence and composure. You can't let yourself be rattled by the odd question, and you have to be able to deal with the situation when you don't know the answer. For some, this means rehearsing. For others, it may even require training in public speaking.
Plan To Test When You Are Best Prepared

From the dates available to test, plan a date that maximizes your chances of success by giving you adequate time for study and practice. Will your schedule be best for serious study in January or July? Will your casting skills be razor-sharp in February or August? Make a plan and stick to it.

Read and Study

By now, it should be clear that casting skill is only one part of being a good fly-casting instructor. You need the ability to communicate concepts, analyze problems and convey solutions as well. The Board of Governors also believes that an instructor should be well read in the literature of fly fishing. Not that you have to quote Walton, chapter and verse. But there is an abundance of technical information, history and culture of which you should be aware. You should also be aware of the conflicting opinions and perspectives of various experts that your students may encounter.

Need Assistance

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