
Remember to respect
our natural resources,
and whenever possible,
practice catch and
release fishing.

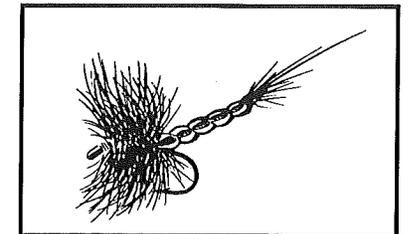
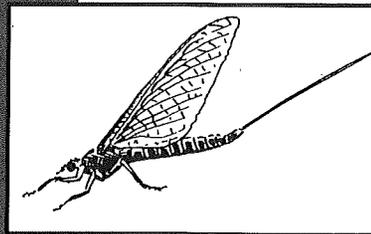
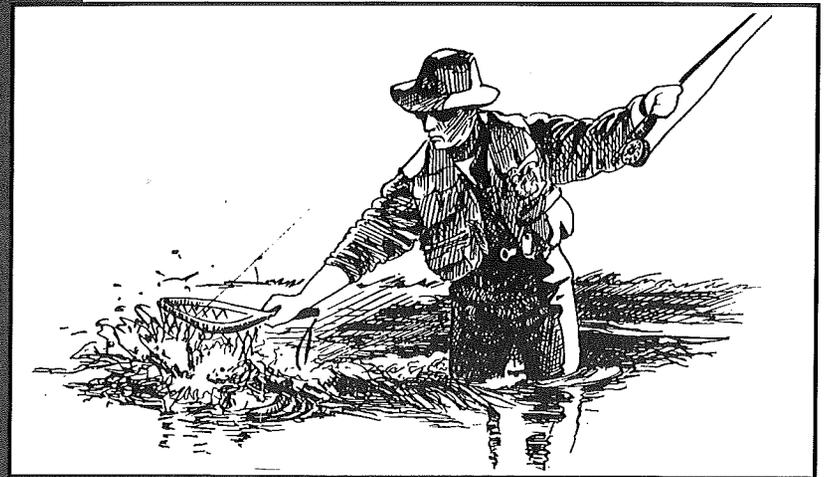


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So, you want to learn about Fly Fishing...



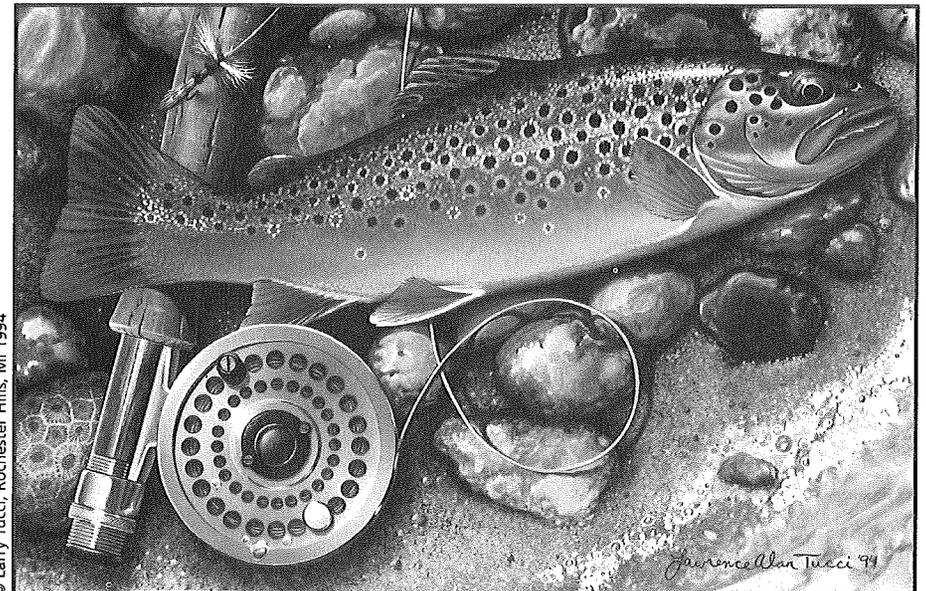
A Beginners Guide

Getting started fly fishing can be confusing, but it doesn't have to be if you follow a few of the helpful tips in this booklet.

What Do I Need?

Beginning fly anglers don't need to remortgage the house to get started. A fly rod, reel and line, polarized sunglasses, waders, hat, leaders, tippet, some snips and a few flies will get you into the stream ready to fish for trout. And, with all the competitive brands to choose from, you should be able to accumulate all of the above for about \$300. To fish for bluegills on the local lake you can do it without waders for even less. Or even better, attend the Trout Unlimited Fly Fishing School, and rods, reels and lines will be provided for the entire weekend.

Polarized sunglasses protect the eyes from errant casts, ultraviolet light, and will enable you to see down into the water to avoid wading into logs or deep water. The polarization will also enable you to see more potential fish-holding water and structure.



Waders need not be sophisticated. Dry inside is best. Felt soles are less likely to slip on algae covered rocks and logs. For fishing in Michigan waters, chest waders are recommended.

The Rod & Reel

For most, choosing the right rod, reel and line to get started fly fishing can be confusing. High tech materials, fast action, slow action, new action; line weights, rod lengths, grips, ferrule designs, finishes, ...where does one begin?

First, ask yourself a question. "What kind of fishing do I want to do?" Since fly fishing for different species of fish involves casting flies of various sizes and varying degrees of wind resistance, and since fly fishing uses the weight of the fly line to cast the fly, you must decide what kind of species you want to fish for and then determine the general sizes of flies used to catch that species. For example, most trout fishing involves using fly sizes that range from #20 to #6. (Yes, you may use larger or smaller flies from time to time, but the bulk of insect hatches and their corresponding artificial flies will fall within a range of fairly small #16 flies to relatively large and wind resistant #10 flies.) Thus the first choice you must make is the correct **line weight** to deliver the flies you will be fishing. The line weight that most comfortably delivers flies within that range is a 5 weight. That means that the fly line that will best deliver these flies has a designation of 5 weight. Also, it means that the rod that the line is most easily cast from is a 5 weight rod. For more information, see the section on *Lines* later in this pamphlet.

There is an exception to this method of determining rod line weight. Large species of fish such as tarpon may take flies that might require only a 5-weight line to properly turn them over. However, a 5-weight rod will lack the backbone to fight a 50- or 100- pound fish. In this case it would be more common to use an 11 weight for large tarpon.

Choosing a rod

Once you have determined the line weight that best suits your needs, set your task on choosing the right rod to match that line weight. To choose the right rod one must cast the rod. This is the

single most important rule of selecting a rod. It is extremely important to cast several rods of the same weight to select the right one for you. The latest technology means nothing if you don't feel comfortable casting the rod, or can't form good loops and deliver the line where you want to. Also, the price tag is not a good indicator of the action that you will prefer. Just because a rod is expensive or inexpensive does not mean that it suits you. There are several good rod makers who offer a wide variety of rods and rod actions in all price ranges. Experienced casters can cast a good loop on any rod. However, this does not mean that every action suits their casting preference. They will have a preference and so will you.

The difference in rods these days is great. While most are graphite in composition, you can get lost in the volumes of test technology and jargon. Very simply, there are rods that have very **fast actions** (i.e. stiff with little flex) and very **slow actions** (i.e. flexible), and every degree of flexibility in between. And yet, there is an action that you will find easier to form good loops with, ...no matter how experienced you are at casting.

Rod length can vary greatly as well but there are only a few things to consider when determining length. Some people believe that having a 6-foot rod to fish small streams is a big advantage. However, on tight streams that are overgrown with tag alders, a 6-foot rod is just as difficult to move around with as an 8-foot rod. And the 8-foot rod will allow better line control on more open streams than the 6-foot rod. So while length may seem like a crucial decision, any rod with the right line weight between 7½-feet and 9-feet long which suits your casting preferences is probably the rod for you.

What you need to do is visit your local fly shop and try several rods of the same weight that have different actions. If the fly shop won't let you cast the rods before buying one, find another fly shop. The rest is easy. It will be obvious to you once you cast the rods that one action or another will be easier to cast good loops with. One of the common mistakes that people make is to buy a rod based on the recommendation of a friend - who may have an entirely different taste in rod action than you will. Try them yourself and you will be happier with your decision.

There are a few things that may be generalized which may help you decide on the right rod. First, rods range in weight designation from 1 weight to 15 weight. Trout anglers generally choose 5- or 6- weight rods. Salmon are wrestled most easily with an 8 weight. And, big game anglers hunting big tarpon choose 11 or 12 weights. Other species will require some input from your local fly shop. Most trout rods are between 8 and 9 feet in length. And most have a moderate action that is neither very fast or very slow. Prices for trout rods range from a low of about \$75 to a high of about \$1,600. And yet the price for most trout rods range from \$100 to \$400. It's also a good idea to ask your local fly shop if any starter packages are available that will include a rod & reel, line, etc. Such packages can save you money and typically range in price from \$100 to \$200.

Choosing a reel

Once you have chosen a rod, find a simple *single action* fly reel (i.e. one revolution of the handle turns the spool one time) to hold the line. The capacity of the reel should accommodate the line weight you intend to use on your rod. One need not spend a lot of money for a reel. For trout fishing in Michigan, a fly reel's primary job is merely to hold the remaining line (beyond the casting length) and the backing. While there are fine reels machined out of aluminum, choose one that suits your budget. Sophisticated drags and expensive materials are not needed to catch trout in Michigan.

To the arbor of the reel is added a braided dacron line called *backing*. Since the actual fly line is only 75 to 110 feet long, backing adds additional running distance for very large fish. Backing also takes up space on the spool to keep the fly line farther out on the spool so each revolution of the reel will take up more line.

Fly Lines, Leaders and Tippetts

Fly lines are composed of a core of multifilament braided nylon upon which a PVC coating is applied in varying and gradual thickness. It is the various thicknesses of the coating that give different line sizes their unique and specific weight. Thicker coatings give lines heavier line weight designation (1 through 15 weight). It is the gradual thickness or taper of the line that makes the weight

transfer of the cast smooth and delicate. The line weight should match the line weight rating for the rod which is usually labeled on the rod. The taper of the line which is most easily used for learning is called a *weight forward taper*.

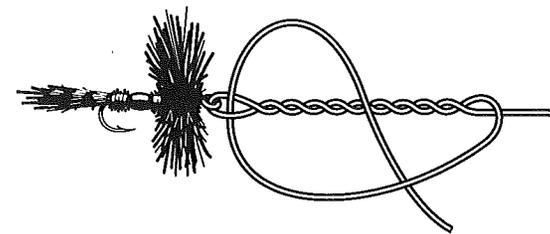
At the end of the fly line is attached a piece of nylon monofilament called a *leader*. Just as the fly line is tapered to make the transfer of energy gradual and smooth, the leader too is tapered to continue the taper from the end of the fly line to the leader and on to the fly.

The end of the leader is called the *tippet*. The tippet is the last 18 inches to 24 inches of the leader, and is the thinnest portion to which the fly is attached. The fine, thin tippet end should have a diameter which matches the fly size.

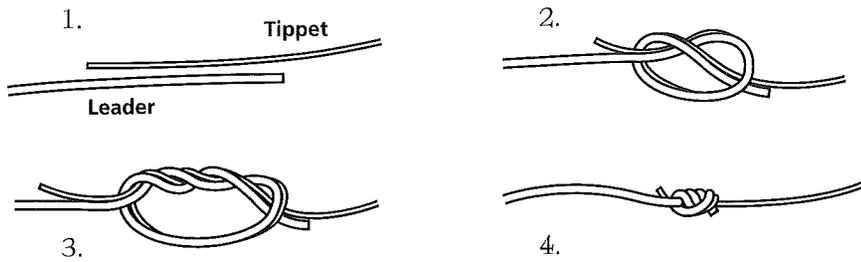
Tying the right knots

The following diagrams will help the beginning fly fisherman to tie good knots at each connection point along the fly line. Proper knots will hold up under heavy use, and ensure a smooth transition along the length of the line.

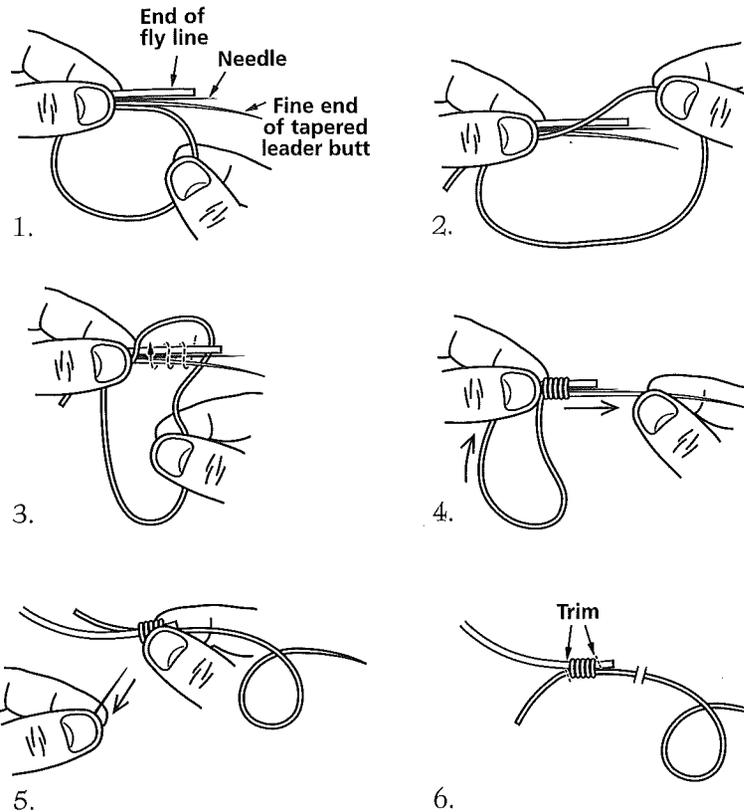
The *improved clinch knot* (A), is used to connect the fly to the tippet. The *surgeons* or *barrel knot* (B), is used to connect the tippet to the leader. And the *nail knot* (C), is used to tie the leader to the fly line. With all these knots, it's helpful to moisten the line with saliva as the knot is being tightened.



A. The improved clinch knot



B. The surgeons or barrel knot



C. The nail knot

To choose a selection of flies, check with local fly shops or shops near the water which you intend to fish to find out which flies might be successful and which tippet diameter will properly match the chosen flies. One of the most interesting aspects of fly fishing is learning about the life of aquatic insects and attempting to match them with artificial flies.

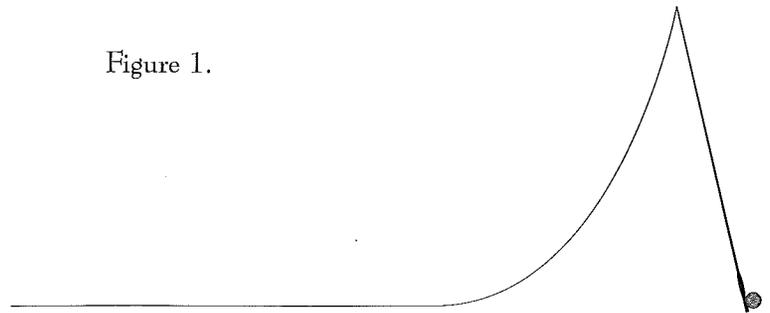
Basic Casting

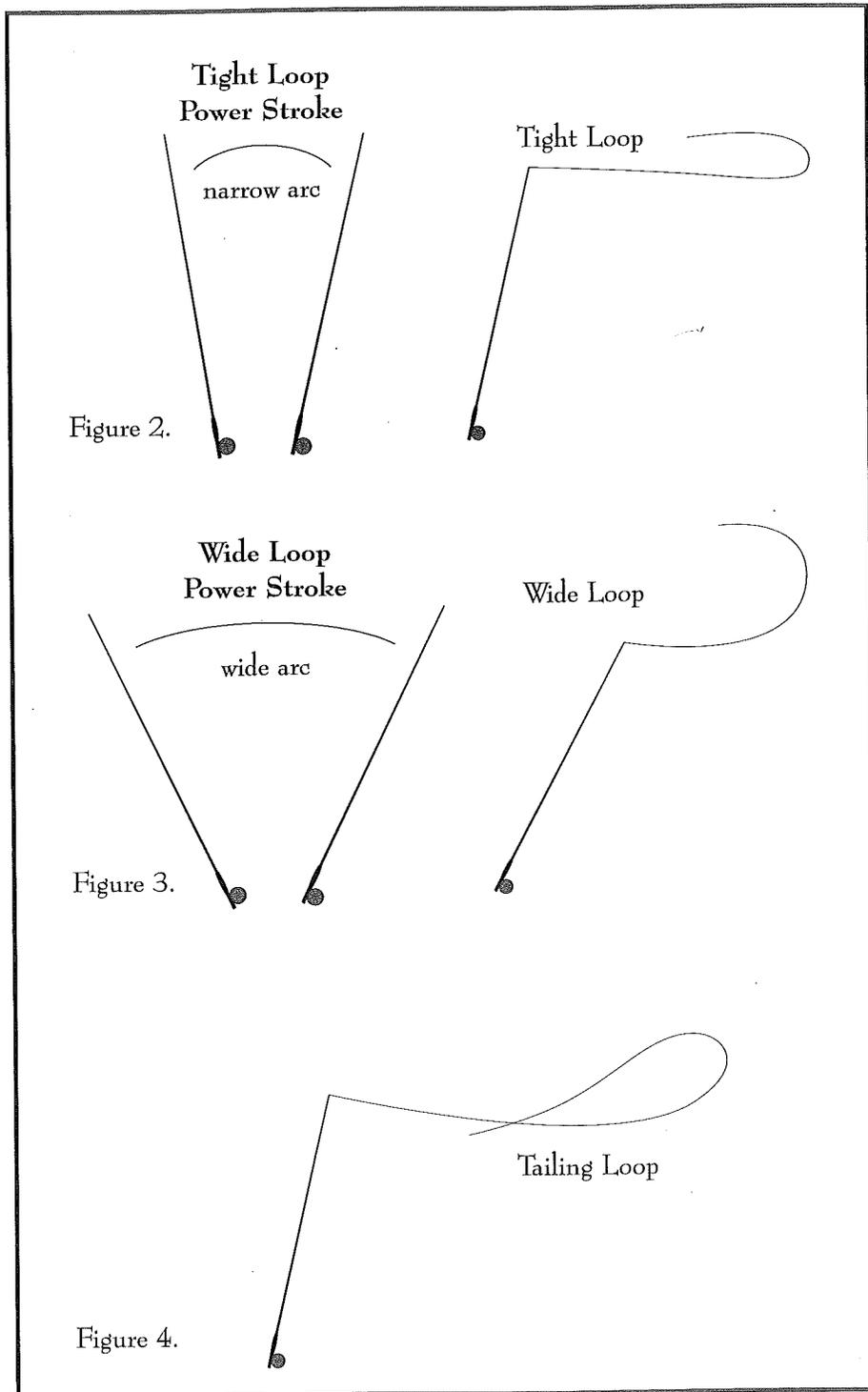
Fly casting is a method of casting nearly weightless lures, utilizing a weighted line. This is the one and only feature that makes fly fishing unique. It is not the fishing of flies that constitutes fly fishing. Indeed, it is the weight of the line - not the weight of the lure as in all other forms of fishing - which carries the lure to its target.

To begin, hold the rod in the hand that you most comfortably throw a baseball. For most, the strongest and most easily controlled grip is with the thumb on top. A firm grip is best so that the rod doesn't bounce and the grip won't rub your hand and cause blisters. Next, take a stance which is 45° from the direction of the cast. This will allow you to watch your back cast. Remember, the back cast is the same as the forward cast and thus must be watched when practicing.

You should begin the basic stroke with the rod angled back and the line laying out on the lawn in a straight line behind you, (Figure 1). With the rod angled back at about a one o'clock position, move the rod in a straight line approximately 12 inches to 18 inches. As you move the rod forward in a straight line, move your wrist forward to about eleven o'clock. When you reach the

Figure 1.





eleven o'clock position, stop the rod in a fairly abrupt manner allowing the line to travel past the tip of the rod. This will form a loop. Wide arcs of the rod will form wide loops. Short arcs of the rod will form tight loops. Applying too much energy or stopping the rod too abruptly will form tailing loops, (Figures 2 thru 4).

The most crucial part of the casting stroke is called the power stroke. It's the part of the stroke where the energy is imparted and the rod is stopped. It should be very smooth. Don't shock the rod. Shocking the rod causes tailing loops and knots in the line. For the power stroke to be smooth, the rod must be accelerated gradually through the entire stroke, then stopped abruptly to form the loop.

Delivery

To deliver the line to the water, the rod must be stopped high (eleven o'clock on the forward cast or one o'clock on the back cast) to form a loop. Once the line has had a chance to lay out completely in front, lower the rod to the water to deliver the fly. This must be done in two separate and distinct steps. Stop the rod. Wait, and then drop the rod to the water as the line falls to the water.

The line cannot be effectively delivered by forcing it to the water with a wide, strong, power stroke. No matter how hard one casts the line, wide arcs of the rod will cause wide loops that will not lay out in front of you. Only tight loops will carry the line through the air and lay it out straight. To create the tight loop, you must first stop the rod in a narrow arc and then drop the rod to the water.

Getting Started

We hope these simple tips will help you learn to control your line and deliver the fly to your target. Clearly, the most difficult part of fly fishing for beginners is the cast. Learning to cast is most easily accomplished with personal instruction, and there is no better way to receive that personal instruction than to attend the Trout Unlimited Fly Fishing School offered by the Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited.