

HOW TO MAKE A FLY ROD WORK FOR YOU!!

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Part 5:

#5 ESSENTIAL (STRAIGHT LINE PATH of ROD TIP) or (SLP)

As we have learned already the shape, size and direction of the loop is determined by the path the rod tip travels, and the fly will go in the direction that the rod tip stops.

I like to use the analogy of having a paint brush attached to the end of the rod tip, when teaching different rod tip paths. If a narrow loop is desired the rod tip must move in a straighter path, like painting along a ceiling/wall edge, corner to corner, of a conventional house, with the rod tip paint brush.

Given the same amount of line, outside the rod tip, with the same acceleration, if a wider loop is desired, the rod tip path needs to travel as if painting the ceiling of an Igloo, or waving the rod like a windshield wiper. Similar to a rainbow shape (convex).

If a tailing loop is occurring, think of it as painting along the ceiling/wall edge, then at some point the brush goes down the side wall, then back up to the ceiling edge. The brush just took a concave path, below a SLP.

How do we achieve a (SLP) to form a Narrow Loop? First understand that in reality you cannot have the rod tip travel in a perfectly straight line, if the path were perfectly straight, the fly line would collide with the rod tip. The goal is to get the rod tip to travel in as straight a line as possible for the desired size, of the particular narrow loop you wish to achieve. The closer to the straight line path, the tighter or narrower the loop will be.

Think of the straight line path as if pulling the rod tip along a taut rope, not allowing the rod tip to waver up-and-down or from side to side.

Narrow loops are not only more aerodynamic, they are the best loops for accuracy, speed, distance, casting a dry fly or flies that don't have a lot of weight. **See Fig. 1.**

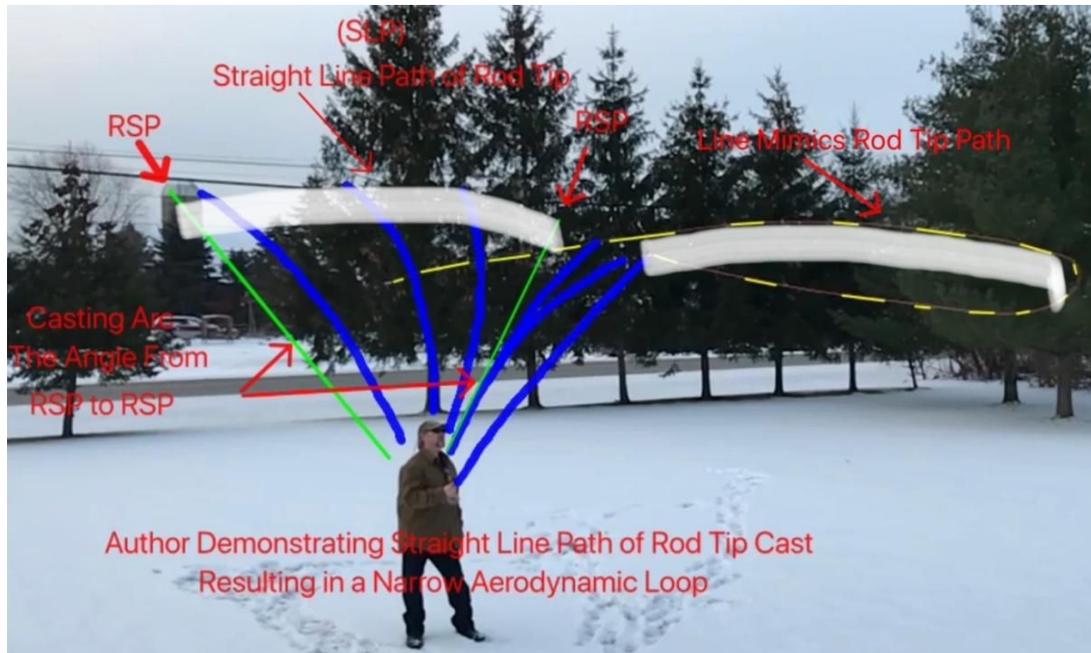


Fig. 1. Notice For this Narrow Loop, the rod tip did not travel in a perfectly straight line, if it did the fly line would collide with the rod tip.

Try these Practice Drills:

Practice by using reference points, follow the top of a tree line or the horizontal gutters on a house, with the rod tip, which will aide in making a (SLP)..

One technique I really like is, on sunny days, position yourselves so that you can watch the shadow of your fly rod as you cast. Notice where the shadow of the rod tip stops, when you have made a nice narrow loop, place pop cans at each end where the rod tip shadow stopped. Now just watch your rod shadow, stopping the rod tip at each end of the casting stroke, on the pop cans.

Another good drill is to cast with 15' of line outside the rod tip, until you are consistently making good narrow loops, now add another foot of line, i.e. 16' until you make good narrow loops, then add another etc. Every practice casting session you do, repeat this exercise, but do not move on to the next added length of line until you are consistently casting good loops, at the shorter distances, you do not want to practice failure!! Eventually you will be able to cast good loops, at various distances without having to think about it, you will have built up hand, eye and feel coordination, by doing this drill. Often times, I practice with my eyes closed, which helps me better feel the cast.

Remember, the first time you threw a baseball you had to really concentrate, eventually, if you practiced enough, somehow you just threw it and it reached its destination.

The Line Drill:

This drill incorporates all the essentials, and can be used with the forward and back cast.

Start off by taking a tape measure and stretch it out to 70'. Place a cone (or some type of marker) at 28', 42' & 35' on the tape. Stand facing the tape, preferably with the wind at your back. Place the end of your rod about 1' over the opposite side of the tape you are standing on. Make sure the rod is at right angles to the tape and your casting arm and rod are even with the 35' marker. Pull out a total of 35' of line, outside the rod tip, including leader and fly yarn.

Hold the rod so the tip is approximately 1' above the grass, (higher if the grass is longer), holding the rod so the palm of your hand is facing up and the reel face is parallel to the ground. Bring your rod tip so it is just above the 28' marker and the line is extended out, no slack, with the fly at the end of the tape.

Now start the forward cast with a taut line (no slack), using appropriate acceleration, make a cast, pulling the line parallel with the tape, keeping the rod tip 1', tracking straight, above the ground (as if sliding the rod tip across a long 1' table top), making a crisp stop when the rod tip reaches the 42' marker. If done correctly the line will have landed parallel to the tape, straight out with no slack. You just created a narrow loop, as a result of straight line rod tip path. This will give you a casting arc of approximately 90 degree.

This drill brings all the Essentials into play. After each forward and back cast stop, analyze the loop formation, before starting the cast in the other direction.. If you do not have a narrow loop ask yourself why? For example: Line did not fully straighten, problem not enough acceleration. Or instead of the line landing parallel with the tape, the line landed a foot below, the casters side, of the tape, problem wide loop, the rod tip most likely past the 42' marker, stopping on the casters side of the tape.

There are many variations of this drill but time does not allow me cover them all. This is a very good drill to help hone your casting. **See Fig. 2.**

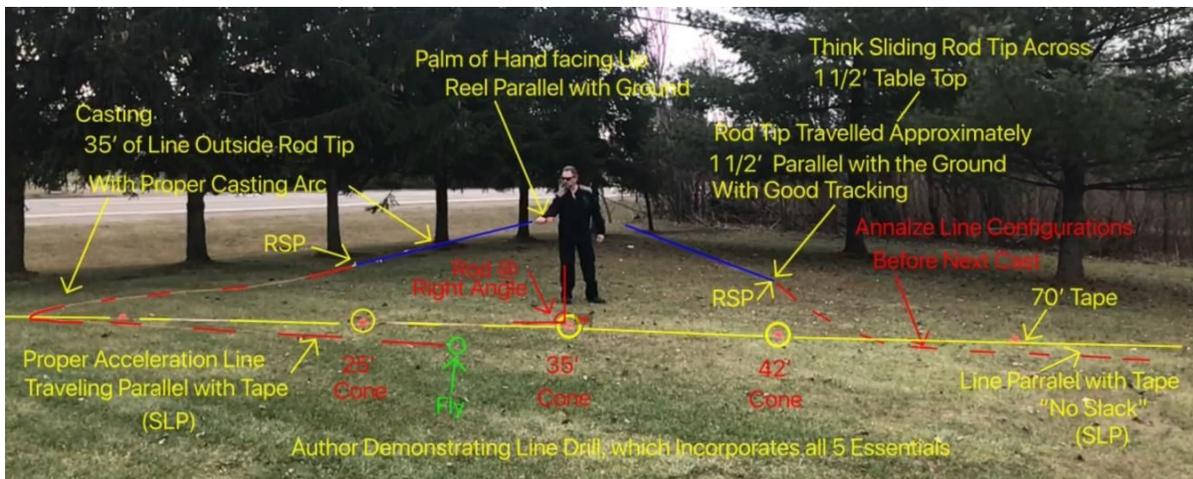


Fig. 2. This is a great drill, it brings all the Essentials into play. Notice the narrow loop formation travelling parallel with the tape, on the left side of the photo. Don't forget to analyze each cast!!

All Essentials work together to achieve the tracking path the rod tip travels, change anyone of them and you change the path of the rod tip.

For example, if you make a cast and the rod tip travels in a (SLP) you will have thrown a narrow loop. Now if on your next cast you try to duplicate that same narrow loop, all things being equal, but this time you change any essential you will not get that same narrow loop, you just cast. If on the next cast you widen your casting arc, the result will be a more open loop.

Or maybe on the next cast you accelerate abruptly, shorten the casting arc, or don't pause long enough, which will introduce slack, you will end up with a concave path of the rod tip, causing the tip to dip below (SLP), resulting in a tailing loop.

Again, Tailing Loops are never good, and are caused from an abrupt application of power, introduced somewhere during the casting stroke, and there are several faults for abrupt application of power. The most common fault is Creep, which was already discussed and the fix explained in part 2.

The second most common fault is improper acceleration of power. At some point during the casting stroke, too much power is applied, causing the rod to load more which causes the rod tip to dip below the straight line path. Fix: Maintain a smooth constant acceleration of the line during the casting stroke, to a crisp stop.

Another fault is too short a casting arc, for the amount of line, (weight/mass), being thrown. Typically, with this fault the casting stroke starts out correctly but before reaching the proper end stop of the forward cast, the rod is stopped too soon. There is too much rod load at this point and the premature stop straightens the rod, causing a spike in the rod tip, leaving the (SLP). Fix: Open the casting arc, or lengthen the casting stroke.

As I stated at the beginning of this article, "In my opinion any cast is good, as long as you are controlling the outcome of the loop formation with the fly rod". Once you are able to accomplish the 5 Essentials, it will be time to learn more advanced casts, proper mending techniques, and how to shoot line. With these skills you will be able to make good presentations, to the fish, when fly fishing.

Presentation is the most important part of fly fishing. If the fly is not presented into the fishes feeding lane and often needing to present a drag free float, you probably won't catch it. Even if you are using the best fly in the world!!

I practice fly casting almost every day, usually just for 15 minutes or so. I'm not saying you have to practice every day but the more you practice, before your fishing trip, the more precise you will present the fly to the fish, which will equal more success.

P.S. Don't forget to practice on windy days, so when the wind kicks up during your fishing trip you will be ready!!

As a Fly Casting Instructor it is very enjoyable and rewarding for me when I see the improvements made with a Fly Casting Student.

I hope this was helpful, and good luck on your fly casting journey!!

"MAKE A FLY ROD WORK FOR YOU"

Enjoy and tight lines,

Bill

About the Author: Bill is the owner/operator of Mangans Cast a Fly, a (FFI) Certified Fly Casting Instructor and Michigan DNR Certified Fly Fishing Guide. Please check out his website: www.manganscastafly.com