

HOW TO MAKE A FLY ROD WORK FOR YOU!!

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Now Part 4:

#4 ESSENTIAL of FLY CASTING (PAUSE)

Pause is all about the timing of the cast. At the end of a casting stroke you must make a crisp stop, after the stop you must pause, waiting on both the forward and back cast, before initiating the opposite direction cast. You have to pause so that the fly line can straighten out, then simultaneously upon straightening, start your opposite casting stroke.

Now, in a perfect world the pause should be long enough so that the loop straightens out, upon straightening start to cast in the opposite direction. When the line straightens, at the end of the cast, it will be taut (no slack) and the rod starts to (load) bend against the weight & Inertia of the Fly Line. This is the proper time to initiate your opposite casting stroke.

Most problems with pause occur on the back cast. It is usually easier to learn proper pause on the forward cast, because you can easily watch the line loop forming and unfolding. When casting a short amount of line outside the rod tip, the pause is shorter because it takes less time for the line to unfold and straighten than it does when casting a longer amount of line.

In simplest terms:

SHORT LINE / SHORTER PAUSE -- LONG LINE / LONGER PAUSE

When working on pause/timing try these two techniques:

One technique, is to simply turn your head and watch your back cast, just don't get in the bad habit of always watching your back cast, you will miss the fish rising in front of you!! When observing your back cast, do not wait long enough to see the line perfectly straight, before making the forward cast. Our hands/bodies do not react as fast as our brains. If we wait until our brain tells us the line is straight, by the time we react, it is too late, the line will be dropping towards the ground introducing slack.

Instead watch the end of the line unfolding, anticipate the line straightening when you see approximately 3 to 5 feet of the loop (candy cane) left to unfold, then tell yourself, go the other way. By the time your body reacts to your brains visual cue, the line should be close to straight. With practice, you will eventually learn how much unfolded loop is needed for you to accomplish the proper pause.

Another technique I like to use, when teaching the pause are some simple sayings: Cast with approximately 15 feet of fly line outside the rod tip. On the Crisp Stop of the cast, whether on the forward or back cast say "Hi Mom", immediately after finishing the word "Mom" start your opposite cast. The line should be fairly close to straight when working with this amount of line and pause. Now cast with 20 feet or a little more of line. With this amount of line, on the crisp stop say "Hi Mother", again your line should be close to straight when you start your opposite cast. Now with 30 feet of line try saying "Hi Mother how are you?". You can come up with your own word cues or number count, you get the idea. Also it helps if you say the cues out loud, although it may seem a little odd to someone watching, except of course your Mom!!

With the addition of the Essentials we have already learned remember:

**SHORT LINE / SHORT CASTING (ARC) STROKE / SHORT PAUSE
LONG LINE / LONG CASTING (ARC) STROKE / LONG PAUSE**

Many casters learn the pause by waiting to feel a tug from the fly line when their rods start to load then start to initiate the opposite casting stroke. I also feel a tug, especially with longer line or an over sized line, but I feel the tug simultaneously as I'm starting my casting stroke, I don't rely on the tug. I believe that if you wait to feel the tug, then start to initiate your casting stroke, you paused just a touch too long. That being said it would be better to pause a little longer than shorter.

There are numerous problems associated with an improper Pause:

Too long a pause and the fly line will start falling from gravity, to the ground, introducing slack into your system. If the pause is too long the fly will catch the grass, weeds or rocks. Especially bad if you are fishing, the fly will tick or slap on the water, "spooking fish".

Too short a pause and you can end up Buggy Whipping the line, which usually occurs on the back cast. Buggy Whipping is that distinct cracking sound usually heard on the back cast, and almost every caster has heard it.

On the stop of the back cast, the caster does not pause long enough for the line to unroll. Instead the forward cast is prematurely started, pulling against the still unrolling fly line loop, leader and fly, accelerating too fast as the remaining loop unrolls to fast. This action also shortens the casting stroke and arc needed for proper loop formation of the forward cast. Not only will you hear the cracking sound, if the forward casting stroke is not lengthened, the loop will tail.

If you hear the cracking sound you probably just snapped your fly off. It's the same principle as a Bull Whip breaking the sound barrier. More than once Buggy Whipping was the culprit for having to replace a Client's Fly. **See Fig. 1**

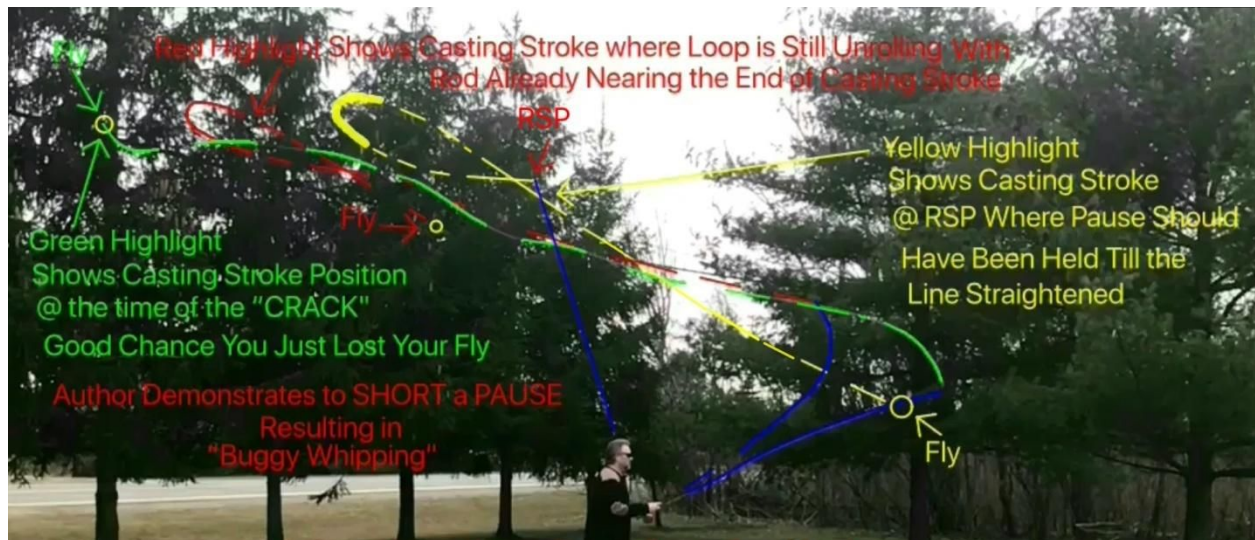


Fig. 1. To SHORT of PAUSE can cause "Buggy Whipping". If you hear the "cracking Sound" you probably just lost your fly!!

Now with way to short of a pause the line will end up just falling in a pile around your head, because through the entire opposite casting stroke you will only be pulling against slack, with a straight unloaded rod, never loading the rod at anytime.

See you with the final Essential!!!

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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:
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