

You Can Do It !

Fly Fishing for Dummies and Intellectuals !

My first fish on a fly rod was a 20-inch pike with a distinctive scar on the top of his head. The second fish I caught on a fly rod – one day later – was the same scarred pike. He was a slow learner. So I thought it best to release him so he could reproduce more of his kind.

Fly fishing, for many, conjures up thoughts of pipe-smoking gentlemen in tweed jackets daintily casting for selective trout that mysteriously sip miniscule bugs off the surface of some babbling brook; smacking of *Pride and Prejudice* – perhaps minus the face-slapping.



But realistically fly fishing is pretty basic and quite easily done with the most basic of gear. No, don't liquidate your bass boat, you can afford a fly rod and a pair of wading boots.

In my experience, the biggest hurdle to overcome in picking up a fly rod and learning how to use it – is a massive dose of over-think. Most died-in-the-wool bait casters and spin fishers, approach fly casting with about the same kind of hesitation that goes with conducting your first open heart surgery – that is without med school. Quite often, the folks who latch on to fly casting the quickest are true angling novices: people that have never really angled in any way shape or form. I've taught children and women that fall into this category and they were flicking tight loops of fly line through the air in no time; while their male counterparts were still trying to approach the sport like they were attempting to rifle off a 50-yard pass – or cast a foot-long musky plug.

I guess what I'm saying here is that fly casting is not about strength – it's about timing. Much like a golf swing. My golf is dismal. While on the other hand, I'm quite pleased with my fly casting. The difference is that I use a lot of timing and coordination when I cast – with a controlled application of power. When I golf, I basically try to hit the ball so hard that the skin will peel off in flight. It just doesn't work that way.

Primarily, the difference between fly fishing and spin fishing, is that in fly fishing the line propels the lure; while in spin fishing, the weight of the lure pulls the line off the reel. Fly line acts like a whip. It is tapered from thick at the handle to whispy thin at the tip.



The motion of working a fly line requires that you propel the rod in one direction and then abruptly stop the rod. This causes the line to continue on the same plane as your rod tip.

You'll need to master two basic casts: the roll cast, and the overhead cast. The roll cast is a simple forward snap of the rod used for short casts in tight spaces – like in creek fishing. The overhead cast is the forward and backward movement of the rod that snakes the fly line gracefully through the air and finally lands the fly on the water. This is the cast that most people equate with fly fishing.

There is no way to teach anyone how to fly cast by reading an article. You need to get a rod in your hand and have some hands-on instruction.

Learning to fly cast from a boat, dock or other structure is difficult and can easily persuade you to stick with spin fishing. But if you can get into a nice piece of flat water somewhere with no trees or other obstructions in the way, you can make some encouraging progress. A sandy beach is a perfect location for a fly casting lesson. Although you can do some practicing on the front lawn, water gives the fly line the perfect amount of resistance to assist in picking up the line and flicking it out. Besides, it saves on the weird looks from all the neighbors.



At Wilderness North, we can provide free fly fishing lessons and even put a loaner rod in your hand to help indoctrinate you into yet another way to catch fish. We warn you that fly fishing can easily become addicting, and we accept no responsibility whatsoever should this become your next vice.

Tight Lines,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Earl Smith".

Scott Earl Smith