

A group of seven men, dressed in fly fishing attire including waders and boots, stand on a rocky riverbank. They are all looking towards the right, where a river flows. The background is a dense forest with trees showing autumn foliage in shades of green and yellow. The men are standing in a line, with the instructor on the right gesturing with his hand while speaking.

# Roll With It!

Becoming a better caster will catch you more fish, maintains casting instructor Andy Smith. One of the most useful casts is the roll cast, as it lets you present your flies in the trickiest fishing situations.



AAPGA casting instructor Mick McDaid shows off the technicalities of the roll cast to an enthralled crowd.

The roll cast is the cast that few anglers ever feel they need to learn, let alone try to perfect, believing it's something that they would only need when fishing in difficult river situations.

The fact is, though, that with the exception of the overhead cast, every other cast we might use in a given situation ends in a roll cast. All the Speys – single, double, snake roll, jump roll, snap T, circle C – end in a roll cast as the forward and final part of the delivery! And it is the mastery of the basic roll cast that opens up all kinds of opportunities for the angler, even if it's just on a small stillwater.

### Why A Roll Cast?

**Every fly fisher should be able to roll cast, and here are six perfect reasons why!**

- For starters, it's the only way to safely cast out an untidy line at your feet as you begin to fish and need to get the loose line out straight. Use it to get your line out after changing the fly or landing a fish. Unless you have a straight line out over the water your overhead cast will not work correctly!
- It's a safety cast when fishing close to someone in a boat or in windy conditions.
- It's a cast in its own right as a way of fishing in difficult situations that do not allow for an overhead cast. Trees, bushes, dam walls and general obstructions can all be a hindrance.
- It's a way of raising a sunken line and/or sunken flies to the surface ahead of performing an overhead cast. I imagine many of the rods that get returned to the manufacturer as 'broken in action' are almost certainly damaged due to the angler snatching a deep-sunk fly or line up from the depths and into an overhead cast too quickly.
- Performing a roll cast allows the flies to be worked in much closer to the angler before casting out again. If a fish takes at the last minute, just launching the rod forward as if making the actual roll cast will effectively hook the fish.
- The roll cast forms the final forward part of all Spey casts.

### Big Loops!

We all know about the effectiveness of controlling the loop on the overhead cast. For example, throwing a tight loop will give more distance for the bank angler trying to achieve those extra yards, but throwing a wider, more open loop becomes more desirable for the boat angler with a team of flies, to help avoid any tangles. The roll cast also relies for its effectiveness on a controlled loop formation behind the rod.

A large, properly shaped loop behind the rod's final delivery position is the basis for an effective roll cast and ultimately the greatest distance.

Next time you are at a show, such as the CLA Game Fair, just take time to watch the Spey casting competitions and pay attention to the loops thrown behind the rod! They are massive and most effective for distance when created in a conical, 'half-rugby-ball' shape.



The roll cast will allow you to fish water that can't be covered with conventional casting. The result – big fish!



**01** Start the cast with the rod tip close to the water, with about 10 yards of line out in front.



### If You Can Roll Cast, You Can Spey Cast!

When we mention roll casting, most of us think of trout fishing and trout rods, and when we consider Spey casting we think salmon fishing, yet the two go happily together!

For example, the stillwater or reservoir fly fisher could be fishing from the bank, perhaps wading or maybe even in a boat, and makes an

“Having mastered the roll cast, Spey casting is just a lesson away!”

overhead cast straight out in front; however, over the next few minutes the wind drifts the line severely across to the right (or left) and the line ends up at right angles to the angler, running parallel with the bank.

A very simple double Spey cast, which a good instructor can teach anyone in a few minutes if they already know how to roll cast, will have the line safely straight out in front again, perfectly ready for another overhead cast.

I find that the anglers I have taught to Spey cast often say it has given them a much better understanding of how the rod and line combination actually works, and it has greatly improved their normal casting and trout fishing.

Ideally the best way to learn any casting technique is from an instructor who is suitably qualified in the discipline you need

Rod positions during **the lift, the sweep and the hit.**





02



Begin to lift the rod, but do so slowly as the lift does move the line and this will often induce a take from a following fish.

03



The rod and lift follows around to the side, thus moving the line away from your body and continuing the fly's movement in the water – it's not a race, slowly does it!

04



At this point the rod is positioned closer to the side of your face, with the rod handle in a position where the rod is slightly cocked back. Watch for a D-loop shape of line now hanging behind you and the rod – the cast is ready to go!

05



Now hit or tap the rod forward as if swatting a wasp, but remember to stop the rod abruptly straight ahead and not down to the water. At this point the line will project forward and if your rod tip stopped correctly, the line will go exactly where you want it!

to learn, as the safe and perfect delivery of any cast does have to be altered according to prevailing wind conditions. Good instruction will have all these issues properly covered.

Having mastered the roll cast, Spey casting is just a lesson away!


It's worth remembering that at any point in this cast a fish may take, and if that happens by the time your rod

and line are around at your side, then simply deliver the rod forward as if to make the roll cast and the fish will be hooked.

If your line is not out straight to begin the cast, due to some form of snagging or following a change of fly, then follow the procedure from stage 3.

Remember as well that the cast as illustrated and described should not be

performed with a wind direction passing the (right-handed) angler from right to left as the line and attached fly will catch across the body as the line flies forward.

Performing the cast in adverse wind directions is easily sorted out, but as advised in the article it really is worth an hour with a qualified instructor to have you mastering this incredibly useful cast. 

## Mastering The Roll Cast

**1** The lift. Start with the rod facing forward with the tip ring close to, or even touching the water. Lift the rod slowly, and then pause.

**2** Sweep the rod tip out in a wide arc until your thumb is level with your ear. The rod should now be pointing back with a D-shaped loop of line hanging/falling back behind the rod. Experiment with the pace of this sweeping action and watch the way this action alters the size of the loop formed.

**3** If working flies back then quite a slow sweep works best as fish can be following; however, sweep with more pace and a larger loop is formed, thus enabling more distance to be achieved.

**4** Hit the rod forward! Imagine you are about to swat a wasp on a window in front of you at eye level, not on a table top. Quickly and quite definitely hit/flick the rod forward to swat, but stop it abruptly just before it gets too far forward. Remember you are trying to kill the wasp but not smash the window. The line will go wherever the rod tip points, so if the rod tip stops when it is aiming down at the water, the line will crash to that position. Stop the rod tip as it goes forward higher and this action will flick the line off the water and roll it through the air to the target. This stop position will determine the height and effectiveness of the forward cast.

