

Spey Casting

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Section 1 – Classroom

Section 2 – On the water

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Section 4 – Advanced topics and other subjects

Section 5 – Suggested reading and viewing

SECTION 1 — SPEY LESSON – Classroom Material

A Program for Two-Handed Fly Rods

WHAT IS A SPEY CAST?

A Spey cast is a dynamic roll cast with a change of direction, and it can be accomplished with single-hand and two-hand rods. Don't be intimidated by a Spey rod; it's just a fly rod that follows all the principles of casting you know from your single-hand experience.

WHY FISH WITH A SPEY ROD?

Compared to overhead casting, Spey casting offers the following benefits:

- Quick, efficient direction changes.
- Safety: The fly is always to the side and in front of the caster.
- Safety: A long rod can keep a fly farther from an angler than a shorter rod.
- Safety: The longer distance available to the proficient Spey caster can eliminate precarious wading.
- Less fatigue.
- Casting distance with ease.
- No conventional back cast, thus avoiding obstacles behind the caster; no tangles in brush, no hook breaks on rocks.
- Superior line mending and control on the swing.
- No false casts, plus reduced line stripping-in, equals more time fishing.
- Fewer wind knots.
- Fun: You achieve graceful, beautiful, poetic, satisfying casts.

What is the downside?

- Learning a new method.
- Expense of new equipment.
- Temptation to cast too far, bypassing good lies closer to the angler.
- Transporting long rods via car, plane, and boat and on foot through brush.
- More difficulty in landing a fish to hand, alone with a long rod.

WHICH CONDITIONS BEST LEND THEMSELVES TO SPEY RODS?

Typical conditions that benefit a Spey angler: obstructions behind the angler, currents that require mending and line control, fishing the swing, windy conditions, heavy sink tips, large flies, broad rivers, and a desire to search efficiently for fish. Fishing in the surf also takes advantage of the casting distances available when overhead casting with a two-hand rod.

SAFETY

“Safety first” should rule all your activities. Some thoughts to remember:

1. The wind determines the side of your body from which the fly is cast. Upstream winds demand a cast from your upstream side and vice versa. Fail to follow this rule and you will injure yourself. With no wind, either side may be used.
2. Wear glasses with side shields.
3. Put on sunblock and insect repellent before leaving camp. It is dangerous to swat away black flies while standing on a slippery boulder. Sun gloves offer protection that will not rinse off.
4. Wear a wide-brim hat. It blocks sun and rain. Spray hat with insect repellent.
5. Stay dry. Use breathable waders and clothing. It is more important to have good clothing than to have a super-duper rod and reel. In extreme cold-water conditions, neoprene waders with insulated boot feet may be necessary.
6. Wear no cotton. Synthetic wicking fabrics keep you warm and dry.
7. Wading boots are as important to your safety as good tires on your car. You will be walking and standing all day in tough conditions. Wading boots with interchangeable soles are now available. Studs and cleats are helpful in most conditions and essential in many—remember that your safety trumps the finish on the floor of a boat, which can be covered with a towel. This is not to suggest that one be intentionally insensitive to the condition of others’ equipment, but it is a reminder that your safety is the priority.
8. Bring a dry bag when spending a day on the river. Bring spare waders and a change of clothes. You may not need them, but someone else might. You do not want your day terminated because your partner has hypothermia.
9. Wear two belts when wading. If you have doubts about the need for two belts, see the Simms video on wading safety (free on request from Simms Fishing Products, <http://www.simmsfishing.com>).
10. Wading staffs add a third leg and an even larger margin of safety.
11. Behavior with a Spey rod:
 - While casting, keep your rod angled away from you and the fly on the downwind side of your body. Learn to cast over both shoulders to safely deal with winds blowing upstream and downstream.
 - Do not let others stand behind your D-loop formation area. The occasional torn anchor can injure an observer.
 - Tape your rod joints. This removes the temptation to chase after a departed rod section and eliminates most breakage at the ferrules.
 - Be cautious with and around rod tips. They can damage an eye.
 - Do not cast flies and lines at others. Resist the temptation to cast a fly into boats passing too close by.
 - Use caution around electrical wires, junction boxes, and transformers, remembering that you are carrying a long graphite electrical conductor.
 - Stop fishing and place your rod away from you when lightning threatens.

12. If something “doesn’t feel right,” don’t do it. If a guide urges a potentially unsafe activity, ask for an explanation. If you are not satisfied, just say no. A young, mobile, enthusiastic guide may not understand your limits.
13. Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.

TIPS ON GETTING STARTED

If there is a significant walk to the river, especially through brush, rig up your rod at the river. If your rod is assembled, walk through the brush with rod butt forward.

Assemble your rod, then tape the joints with electrical insulating tape. It is easier to tape ferrules before installing the reel. At the end of the fishing day or week, peel back the tape and roll it onto a rod section, ready for the next use.

EQUIPMENT ORIENTATION

Some general thoughts follow. (Unlike rocket science, all Spey recommendations are subject to a significant plus or minus factor.)

- Northern California, Oregon, Washington: A 13-foot, 7-weight rod with a Skagit or short-belly multi-tip line will do it all.
- British Columbia steelhead and salmon, Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, brown trout: as above, plus a 14-foot, 9-weight rod with a 650-grain Skagit line and multiple sink tips.
- Eastern Quebec for Atlantic salmon: 14-foot rods with floating lines. Bring a single-hand rod for the local style of dry fly fishing.
- Russia for Atlantic salmon on the Ponoï River: A long-casting setup is needed.
- Reels should be rated for WF12F single-hand lines plus 300 yards of 30-pound Dacron backing, which is to say a tarpon reel. With a bulky Spey line, such a reel will hold 200 yards of 30-pound Dacron backing. It is more common for a Spey reel to be too light than too heavy, and therefore not balance an outfit properly. This is particularly true of rods with up-locking reel seats.
- For lines without color changes, use a permanent marker to make distance and holding-point marks on your fly line. The distance marks allow you to repeat a cast or go directly to a distance without guessing. A holding-point mark saves time and eliminates guessing on the river, when it counts.

BALANCING YOUR ROD-REEL-LINE OUTFIT

- With the fly line belly outside the rod tip and resting on the ground or still water, a Spey rod should balance in the upper area of the top grip. This balance point eliminates wrist strain when holding the rod during the swing and reduces casting effort.
- The balance point is affected by reel and backing weight, as well as the position of the rod's reel lock. A rod with a down-locking reel seat will balance with a lighter reel than will a rod with an up-locking reel seat.

THREE BASIC PRINCIPLES

Big Belly, Small Stick, 180-degree (BB-SS-180)

- Big belly (D-loop): The bigger the D-loop, the more weight there is available to load (bend) the rod. Therefore less effort is required on the forward stroke.
- Small stick: The less line lying on the water when you start the forward cast, the less energy you will lose unsticking it, and the better the result.
- 180-degree principle: The belly (D-loop), anchor, and rod must be aligned 180 degrees from the target.

It is important to follow these principles because fly-fishing is an endurance game, and efficiency of motion is necessary to get through long days of casting. You have heard the expression "steelhead are the fish of a thousand casts." Don't beat yourself up.

DIAGRAMS OF THREE BASIC SPEY CASTING PRINCIPLES

Diagram 1: NOT GOOD – Small belly (D-loop), big stick

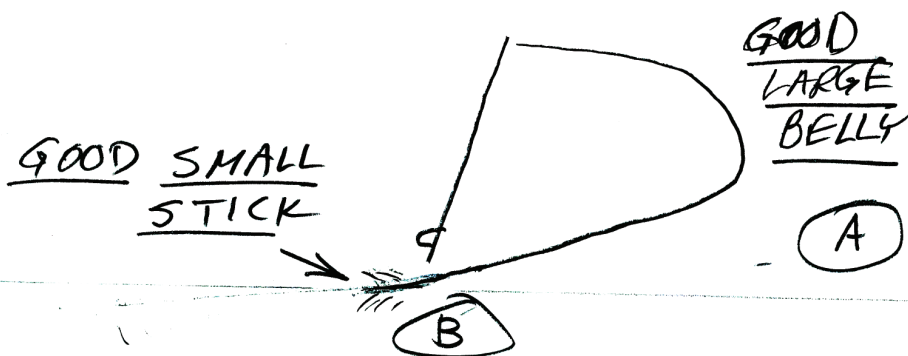
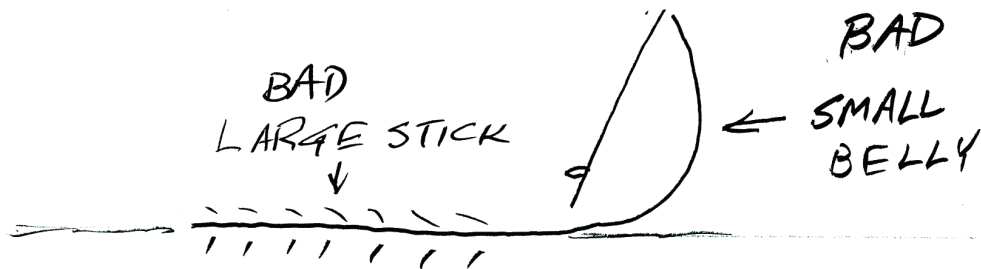
See diagrams on following pages.

Diagram 2: GOOD – Big belly (D-loop), small stick

See diagrams on following pages.

Diagram 3: 180-degree principle: Belly (D-loop), anchor, and rod aligned 180 degrees from target

See diagrams on following pages.



THREE BASIC PRINCIPLES

A. LARGE BELLY

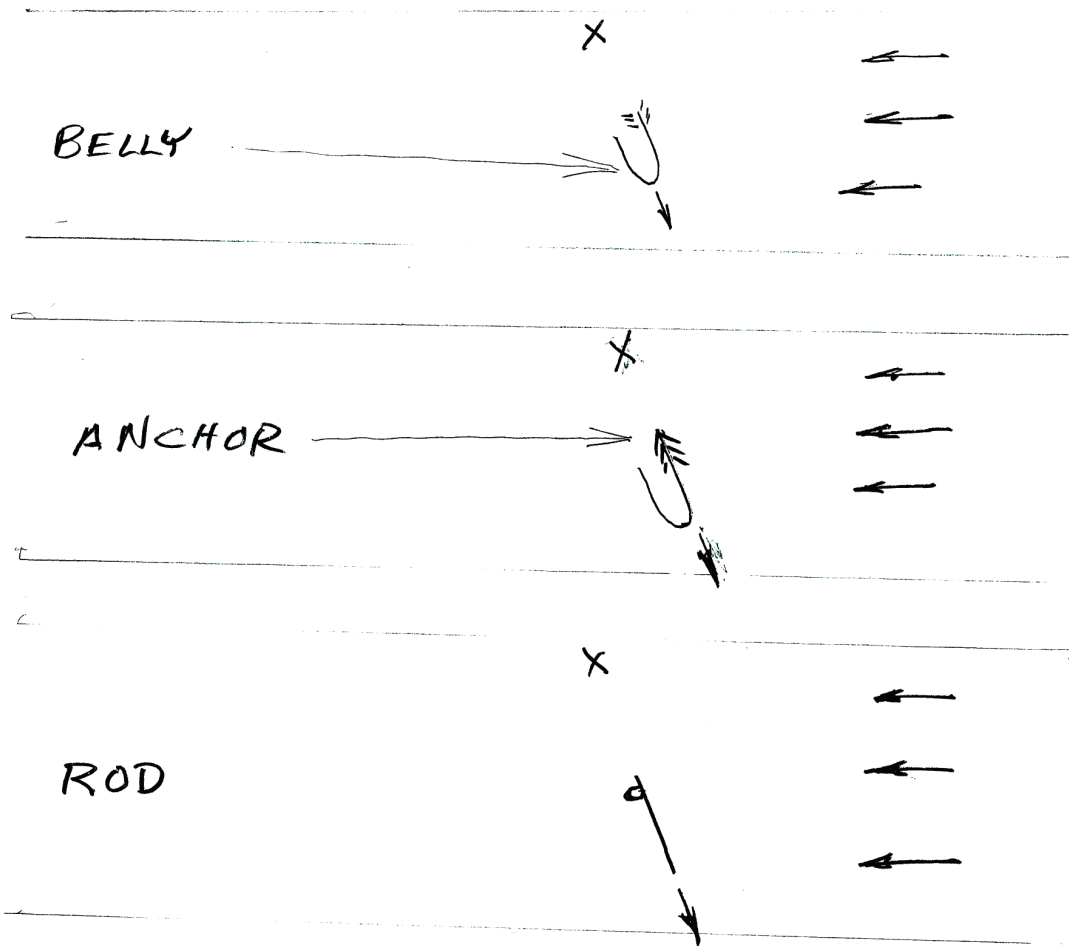
B. SMALL STICK

C. 180 DEGREE PRINCIPLE

SOURCE: SIMON GAWESWORTH'S CLASS NOTES
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180 DEGREE PRINCIPLE HAS 3 PARTS

BELLY } 180° FROM TARGET
ANCHOR }
ROD } X = TARGET



SOURCE: SIMON GAUESWORTH'S CLASS NOTES
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DEFINITIONS

- **Anchor.** The part of the fly line (plus leader) lying on the water after the back cast and before the forward stroke. Also known as “grip” or “stick.” There are two categories of anchor: “airborne—splash and go” and “waterborne.”
- **Airborne “splash and go” anchor.** One that briefly touches the water during formation of the D-loop. (Used with switch cast, single Spey, snake roll.)
- **BAP (Body, Arms, Power).** The sequence of force application on the forward stroke.
- **Belly (D-loop).** The loop of line formed during the back-cast portion of a Spey cast. The mass of the D-loop loads the rod during the forward stroke. Note the term “belly” used in this definition does not refer to fly-line taper.
- **Bloody L.** An anchor in the shape of an “L” rather than a straight line.
- **Casting arc.** The angular change of the rod butt during a casting stroke.
- **Casting stroke.** The travel of the rod butt from start to stop of a cast.
- **Creep.** Movement of the rod not under load. This commonly happens at the start of the forward stroke, reducing the length available for rod loading.
- **Dangle.** The point at which the fly has completed its swing. For purposes of teaching, the line washed tight directly downstream.
- **D-loop.** Same as belly.
- **Downwind shoulder/hand.** The shoulder/hand on the lee side of the angler.
- **Drop.** The orientation of the fly line as it falls to the water during a back cast. An inclined drop is desirable, much as an airplane lands nose high, tail low.
- **Key position.** The rod position at which the forward stroke begins (Falkus & Buhr). For an average cast without obstructions, this is about a 1 o’clock back, tilted in a slightly outward position.
- **Left bank.** When looking downstream, the left shore of the river.
- **Lift.** A vertical rod movement.
- **Orange line.** Imaginary line from caster to target.
- **Point P.** The spot on a fly line where it leaves the water.
- **Repositioning move.** The second rod movement step of a Spey cast, placing the fly in the correct position (upstream or downstream of the caster) for formation of a D-loop that allows a dynamic roll cast to the target.
- **Right bank.** When looking downstream, the right shore of the river.
- **Roll cast.** A cast made by the rod dragging the line back to form a shallow D-loop with the forward cast having an aerial forward loop. Effective for removing slack or raising a sunken line to the surface, prior to starting a cast. Add a dynamic D-loop plus a change of direction and you have a Spey cast.
- **Shotgun lift.** Shotguns are lifted slightly muzzle-high, with both hands raised more or less equally, as opposed to lifting the top hand by bending the arm at the elbow without raising the lower hand. Most Speycasts use a shotgun lift.
- **Upstream wind/downstream wind.** Wind traveling opposite the river’s current/ wind traveling with the river’s current.
- **Upwind shoulder/hand.** The shoulder/hand on the windward side of the angler.

- **Waterborne anchor.** One in which line and leader stay on the water during the entire D-loop stroke. (Used with double Spey, snap T, Perry poke.)

CASTS

Some casts are easily learned and get you fishing quickly. Others are a sign of proficiency. In the list below, “A” casts are those needed to get by; “B” casts are those marking skillful Spey anglers.

- A -- Overhead cast
- A -- Roll cast
- B -- Switch cast
- B -- Single Spey (positions fly upstream of caster)
- A -- Snap T (positions fly upstream of caster)
- A -- Double Spey (positions fly downstream of caster)
- B -- Snake roll (positions fly downstream of caster)
- A -- Perry poke (a recovery tool and teaching aid; see third bullet below)

- The single Spey and the snap T serve the same purpose: to cast in an upstream wind. Therefore only one need be learned to get by as a Spey fisher.
- The double Spey and the snake roll serve the same purpose: to cast in a downstream wind. Therefore only one need be learned to get by as a Spey fisher.
- The Perry poke is currently used mainly as an anchor-alignment technique, typically after an unsatisfactory repositioning move. It is usually followed by a switch cast to the target. A series of pokes can be used to change direction for one unable to execute standard Spey techniques. The poke is an effective recovery tool and a useful teaching aid.
- Of these casts, the roll cast, switch cast, and Perry poke do not create a significant change in direction, and therefore some may not classify them as true Spey casts.

Note: Instructor may demonstrate casts with yarn rod in a classroom environment.

Do you need to memorize which casts go with which river bank?

No. The wind, up or downstream, usually controls which hand goes on the top grip and which casts are available to an angler. If the wind is blowing upstream, place your upstream hand on the top grip. A downstream wind calls for the downstream hand on the top grip.

If there is no wind, either hand may be on the top grip. If the wind is blowing into your face or back, select a cast that keeps the line and fly away from you.

SECTION 2 – SPEY LESSON – On the Water

EIGHT CASTS IN A TWO-HAND ANGLER'S QUIVER

<u>Name of Cast</u>	<u>Fly Position After Repositioning Move and Prior to Forward Cast</u>	<u>Type of Anchor (Casting Group)</u>
Overhead Cast	No repositioning move	No anchor
Roll Cast	35' to 50' in front of caster No change of direction	Waterborne
Switch Cast	Near caster No change of direction	Airborne—Splash and go
Single Spey	Upstream of caster	Airborne—Splash and go
Snap T	Upstream of caster	Waterborne
Double Spey	Downstream of caster	Waterborne
Snake Roll	Downstream of caster	Airborne—Splash and go
Perry Poke (a move subsequent to a repositioning move; by itself not a Spey cast)	“Poke”: a second repositioning of fly line, leader, and fly	Waterborne

EVERY SPEY CAST HAS THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

1. **Start** position: Have rod tip at water with line washed tight downstream.
2. **Lift** the rod to free line from water.
3. **Reposition** the line to place the anchor in desired position.
4. **Sweep** to D-loop, with rod ending in “key” position (1 o'clock for average cast).
5. **Pause** while D-loop forms and anchor aligns 180 degrees from target.
(Exception: Continuous load technique has no pause.)
6. **Forward** cast.

Note: Switch cast, single Spey, and snake roll combine steps 3 and 4 in one fluid motion.

HANDY MNEMONIC FOR THE ELEMENTS OF EVERY SPEY CAST:

S – L – R – S – P – F, for “Start, lift, reposition, sweep to D-loop, pause, forward stroke.” You can remember S-L-R-S-P-F as “single-lens-reflex (camera), sun-protection-factor (sunblock).” The mnemonic describes two things that should accompany every angler.

TWO DIFFERENCES between overhead and Spey casts:

1. In a Spey back cast, the fly line travels *under* the rod tip, versus over for an overhead cast.
2. All Spey back casts end with the rod tip traveling in an *upward* direction, versus horizontally or downward in an overhead cast.

GRIP

Which hand is on which grip is determined by wind direction. The top hand is always on the caster’s downwind side (lee side). If there is no wind, either hand may be on the top grip. Spacing of your hands should be comfortably wide. In general, longer head lines are best handled with a wide grip and shorter head lines with a narrower grip.

STANCE

You need a physically efficient stance optimized for casting to the target. Foot position is determined by making a couple of switch casts toward the target. Without moving your feet, rotate your body (using knee and hip movement) to a position suited for beginning the cast. Proceed with cast.

The recommended stance is similar to that of a person throwing a ball; that is, left foot forward when casting (throwing) with the right hand on top, right foot forward when casting with the left hand on top. This is not an absolute, as many outstanding casters do the opposite.

DIRECTION OF REPOSITIONING ROD MOVEMENT

Single Spey

Either bank: Rod sweeps away from target.

Double Spey

Either bank: Rod moves overhead and away from caster, ending directly upstream.

Snap T

Right bank, left hand up: Rod moves counterclockwise (reverse letter D shape).

Left bank, right hand up: Rod moves clockwise (in a letter D shape).

Snake Roll

Right bank, right hand up: Rod moves counterclockwise (in a letter e shape).

Left bank, left hand up: Rod moves clockwise (in a reverse letter e shape).

INDIVIDUAL CASTS: PURPOSES AND TECHNIQUES

OVERHEAD CAST

The first step in mastering your Spey rod

Why and when to use it:

- Learn it to add to your two-hand arsenal, because you already know how to overhead cast with a single-hand rod.
- It will teach you that this long stick is, after all, just a rod.
- The overhead cast is a great cast for distance and useful for times when a caster's Spey technique temporarily falters.

Which hand goes on top?

The downwind hand goes on top if there is a wind; otherwise either hand may be on top.

Casting group:

The overhead cast is not a Spey cast and therefore does not fall into a Spey casting group.

Purposes of learning the overhead cast first:

- To build confidence, because the cast is easy to learn
- To learn lower hand power; lack of same is the primary error of new Spey casters
- To learn the "stop"
- To fast-track students to Spey casting by teaching loop formation, timing, tracking, power application, and key position without the influence of water
- To understand that mastering the overhead cast will mean you have learned most of the forward stroke, the last step of Spey casting

Overhead cast steps:

1. Place rod tip at water pointed downstream, line washed tight on the dangle.
2. Lift rod vertically with both hands, much like a shotgun (see page 8), to free most of the line from water.
3. As the rod reaches 11 o'clock, sharply power back cast with both hands and bring rod to a *complete stop* at about 1 o'clock.
4. Hold the rod steady at the 1 o'clock position as the back-cast loop unfurls. At this point, the caster's weight is biased toward the rear foot.
5. Without changing the angle of the rod, begin its forward acceleration by transferring your body weight toward the forward foot, followed by moving your arms forward (still without changing the rod angle), followed at the very end by rod rotation (power snap/accelerate to a stop) to drive the forward cast.
Remember BAP—body, arms, power.

OVERHEAD CAST (continued)

Short version of the overhead cast:

1. Shotgun lift to 11 o'clock, power snap back/*stop* at 1 o'clock.
2. Drift rod and body weight back, waiting for loop to unfurl.
3. BAP forward cast.

Common errors/problems in two-hand overhead casts:

Most errors in two-hand overhead casts are the same as those in single-hand casts:

- Open loop or non-loop (flop-flop, dome-shaped, or convex rod tip path).
- Tailing loop (concave rod tip path; see page 37: *Several Ways to Cast a Tailing Loop*).
- Soft stop.
- Poor tracking (failure to move rod tip in straight path).
- Poor timing (too fast or too slow).
- Improper trajectory (too high, too low).
- Failure to load (bend) rod.
- Stroke length errors (long lines require longer strokes than short lines)—but body and arm movement (before rod rotation) will add to stroke length.
- The most common beginner error: not using the lower hand, which must supply force equal to or greater than the upper hand.

INDIVIDUAL CASTS: PURPOSES AND TECHNIQUES

ROLL CAST

Why and when to use it:

- Use the deadline roll cast when you are casting a short line, there are obstacles immediately behind you, or you need a small change of direction.
- Use it when you need to lift a sinking line and fly to the surface in preparation for a cast or you need to straighten a slack line.

Which hand goes on top?

The downwind hand goes on top if there is a wind; otherwise either hand may be on top.

Casting group:

Waterborne anchor

Purposes of learning the deadline roll cast:

- To learn how to cast parallel to an anchored line in the water
- To memorize the BAP power application sequence
- To understand that forward delivery of the roll cast from the key position is the same technique used in Spey casts
- To learn two and a half of the three principles of Spey casting, because the deadline roll cast teaches the 180-degree principle, the big D-loop versus small D-loop advantage, and the disadvantage of “large stick”
- To understand that mastering the roll cast is to learn most of the last step of all Spey casts: the forward stroke with a D-loop anchored on water

Roll cast steps:

1. Place rod tip at water pointed downstream, line washed tight on the dangle.
2. Draw the rod tip slowly and horizontally to the side and back, then up to the 1 o'clock position. Pause while the line sags to a stop. At this point your weight is biased toward the rear foot. The purpose of bringing the rod back horizontally is to keep the line away from your body.
3. Pause while a D-loop of line falls behind you.
4. Forward cast: Without changing the angle of the rod butt, begin its smooth acceleration by transferring body weight forward, followed by arms extension, then at the last by rod rotation (accelerate to stop, power snap). Remember the BAP forward stroke sequence: body, arms, power.

Note: The most effective roll cast occurs when the forward stroke is completed as near as possible to the line lying in the water in front of the caster. Always roll cast to the clear side (some say the inside) of the fly line in front—never over the fly line. *The roll cast is the easiest way to practice the forward stroke.*

ROLL CAST (continued)

Short version of the roll cast:

1. Draw rod slowly to side and back, then slowly up to 1 o'clock (key position).
2. Hold rod still and wait for D-loop to form behind rod.
3. While Point P is still in front of you, start forward cast slowly and smoothly.
4. Smoothly using BAP, make a forward cast parallel to fly line in the water.

Common errors/problems in roll casts:

- Too much stick and lack of energy in the forward cast, caused by coming back too fast and throwing some line (in particular point P) behind you; often happens if back cast lifts line off water.
- Line tangles in rod tip, caused by dragging the line back with a vertical rather than a horizontal rod.
- No load on rod during forward cast, caused by not waiting for D-loop to form behind rod.
- Fly line has poor speed, fails to unroll in the air, and unrolls in a large loop; caused by hinging the rod at the butt rather than driving the rod with both hands using BAP.
- Forward D-loop unrolls high above water, often with a tailing loop, caused by starting forward stroke with a sudden burst of force and not smoothly using BAP.

INDIVIDUAL CASTS: PURPOSES AND TECHNIQUES

SWITCH CAST

Also known as a forward Spey cast

Why and when to use it:

- The switch cast is the foundation of Spey casting. It contains all the elements of Spey casts except a change of direction. Those shared elements are:
 - **Start position:** Rod tip at water with line washed tight downstream
 - **Lifting rod** vertically to free line from water
 - **Repositioning fly line** to place anchor in desired position
 - **Sweeping to D-loop**, with rod ending in 1 o'clock position
 - **Pausing** while D-loop forms and anchor aligns 180 degrees from target (Exception: Continuous load technique has no pause.)
 - **Forward stroke**
- It is useful for practicing Spey casting elements plus rhythm, timing, tracking, power application—all with the influence of water.
- On the first day of fishing, before actually pursuing fish, it is helpful to spend several minutes practicing the switch cast to “restart” your internal casting computer.
- It is useful for casting with no change of direction, to straighten the line prior to a Spey cast, or to “redo” a Spey cast for extra distance.
- The Federation of Fly Fishers (FFF) Two-Handed Casting Instructor (THCI) committee defines the switch cast as a cast with no change of direction, formed by lifting and sweeping the line back above the surface and repositioning to an energized D-loop, followed by an aerial forward loop. This is an essential cast for learning lift movements, anchor points, and energized D-loop formations.

Which hand goes on top?

The downwind hand goes on top if there is a wind; otherwise either hand may be on top. Backhand casters are those who choose to Spey cast with the dominant hand over their nondominant shoulder when winds so dictate. (It is ironic that putting the wrong hand on the correct [downwind] side makes it a downwind hand.)

Casting group:

Splash and go

Switch cast steps:

1. **Start rod tip** at water, pointed downstream, line washed tight on the dangle.
2. **Lift the rod** slowly to about 10 o'clock, raising much of the fly line from the water.
3. **Reposition the line**, sweeping the rod to the side, tip traveling flat (no lift or dip) and straight back, forming a D-loop. (This move should have enough speed to get all the line and leader airborne.)

SWITCH CAST (continued)

4. **Pause** and raise the rod to the 1 o'clock key position while the D-loop forms and the anchor (a couple of feet of the tip of fly line] splashes on the water.
5. Place the anchor about one rod length to the side and slightly in front of caster. Concentrate (hard!) on the junction of the fly line and leader (nail knot) and watch it all the way to its splashdown on the water. Keep watching it.
6. **Forward cast** at the moment the fly line touches the water—splash and go. Remember BAP.

Tips:

Tip 1: Watch the anchor portion of the fly line through the entire D-loop and anchor formation. It provides important diagnostic information.

Tip 2: As single-hand casters, we are conditioned to watch the forward cast. Resist this impulse. Just as a good golfer keeps his eye on the ball through the swing, a good Spey caster keeps his eye on the anchor. See Tom Keelin's website at <http://flyfishingresearch.net/tigersgolfswing.html> for a video of Tiger Woods's eye on the ball during his swing.

Tip 3: Think of a Frisbee toss analogy for D-loop formation. A back cast intended to form a small D-loop can be compared in effort to a five-foot Frisbee toss, while forming a large D-loop requires the effort of a long Frisbee toss.

Tip 4: If you are new to the two-hand rod, you will probably find that your forward-cast stop point is too low, because it is based on muscle memory from single-hand fly fishing. *Aim for the treetops* with your forward stroke, using a very high stop. In a short time, this will become natural. *This applies to all Spey casts.*

Short version of the switch cast:

1. Tight line, rod at water, lift vertically to 10 o'clock.
2. Sweep to side and straight back, *flat*, forming D-loop, then up to 1 o'clock opposite target.
3. Watch line tip anchor, then immediately start forward cast.
4. Drive forward cast parallel to fly line in the water. BAP.

Common errors/problems in switch casts:

- Dip during backstroke causes a crumpled anchor at the location of the dip.
- Timing, too fast or too slow; remember to use waltz timing (*Lift 2-3, Sweep 2-3, Cast 2-3*).
- Inability to control back cast; anchor placement is caused by slack fly line on the water at the beginning of the lift.
- Landing the anchor point downstream of the correct position, caused by:
 - Not enough power on back cast.

SWITCH CAST (continued)

- Rod too low during back cast.
- Crumpled anchor, caused by a rod dip during the backstroke.
- Too much line stick (slurping sound), caused by:
 - Trunking, pushing the lower grip upward, which causes excessive stick.
 - Too long a pause.
 - Level drop often caused by a back cast similar to an overhead cast, rather than by a level sweep to the side ending with a rise to the key position.
- Too little stick, caused by:
 - Starting the forward stroke prior to the splash, preventing adequate anchor formation.
 - Excess speed during back cast.
 - Not enough line outside the rod tip.

INDIVIDUAL CASTS: PURPOSES AND TECHNIQUES

SINGLE SPEY CAST

Why and when to use it:

- As with all Spey casts, its purpose is to change the location of the fly line from the dangle to a fishing position.
- Use it in an upstream wind or in no wind.
- The FFF THCI committee defines the single Spey as a change-of-direction cast that repositions the fly and D-loop to the upstream side of the caster in a continuous motion, one that is safe to use with an upstream wind.

Which hand goes on top:

The upstream hand goes on top.

Casting group:

Splash and go

Single Spey cast steps (for angle changes up to 45 degrees):

1. Create an imaginary “orange line” from your feet to the target.
2. Position the feet and body comfortably, addressing target as if in a switch cast position. With the rod tip near the water and the fly line washed tight on the dangle, point the rod at the target.
3. Make a switch cast.

Tips:

Tip 1: Executing a single Spey with an initial rod point at the target is effective for angle changes up to 45 degrees. For angle changes greater than 45 degrees, the initial rod point should be halfway between the dangle and the orange line, and a dip should be introduced into the back cast. The dip dictates the location of the anchor.

Tip 2: The greater the angle change you want to make with a single Spey, the higher the lift at the beginning and the deeper the dip need to be.

Tip 3: A caster can move more line when starting the lift at the dangle.

Short version of the single Spey cast:

1. Tight line, rod low and pointed at target.
2. Make a switch cast.

Common errors/problems in single Spey casts:

- Drift lift: angling the initial lift sideways rather than lifting vertically. This causes:
 - a. Fly line caught around body as back cast starts.
 - b. A bloody L.

- c. Too much line stick.
- Too slow a backstroke results in:
 - a. Anchor landing too far downstream.
 - b. A bloody L.
- No load (bend) in the rod during the forward cast results from:
 - a. Violation of 180-degree principle; remember to accept what the anchor and D-loop allow you and stroke the forward cast parallel with the anchor.
 - b. Not enough energy in the back cast and D-loop, which fails to load the rod.
 - c. Excess overhang (too much running line outside the tip top guide).
- Too much line stick may be caused by:
 - a. Trunking.
 - b. Timing error—waiting too long after the splash to execute the forward cast.
 - c. Too much fly line outside rod tip (for the ability of the caster).
- Too little line stick may be caused by:
 - a. Excess velocity on back cast.
 - b. Too little line outside rod tip.
 - c. Starting forward cast too early.
- Aussie style, a casting error (with long lines and angle changes greater than 45 degrees) in which the initial movement after the lift is horizontal rather than dipping instantly. It results in:
 - a. Anchor too far upstream.
 - b. A bloody L.
- No dip or too shallow a dip (with a greater angle change than 45 degrees) may result in the fly landing too far upstream and not parallel to the orange line.
- Attempting an angle change greater than 45 degrees with the “no-dip” method can cause the fly line to anchor downstream of the orange line and too close to your body. Pointing at the target rather than the dangle at the beginning of the lift (for angle changes greater than 45 degrees) reduces the back cast room available to lift and move the line and causes the line to go under your shoulder.

INDIVIDUAL CASTS: PURPOSES AND TECHNIQUES

SNAP T CAST

Also called C Spey or circle Spey cast

Why and when to use it:

- As with all Spey casts, the purpose of the snap T cast is to change the location of the fly line, from the dangle to a fishing position.
- Use it in an upstream wind or in no wind.

Which hand goes on top:

The upstream hand goes on top.

Casting group:

Waterborne

Purposes of learning the snap T cast:

There are two categories of snap T: the vertical snap and the circle snap. The vertical snap positions the fly nearer the caster, while the circle snap places the fly more toward center river.

- Choose the circle snap if there are obstructions behind you. (The circle snap will be taught here.)
- Choose the vertical snap for maximum distance, since a closer anchor placement provides a larger D-loop.

Snap T cast steps (using the circle snap):

1. Create an imaginary orange line from your feet to the target.
2. Position the feet and body comfortably, addressing the target as if in a switch cast position.
3. Rotate body and rod toward fly line, washed tight on the dangle.
4. **Start:** Place rod tip near the water pointing directly downstream with the fly line washed tight. Move the rod tip four feet toward center river.
5. Imagine a brick wall in front of you, angling about 45 degrees upstream. For river left, you will use the wall to draw a D shape with your rod tip and reposition the fly upstream of you and toward mid-river. For river right, you will draw a reverse D shape.
6. **Lift:** Make a slow vertical lift of the rod to 11 o'clock. **Reposition/Snap:** Then form the curve of the D, accelerating on the lower part of the stroke. Finish with the rod tip on the bank side of the original dangle line (to prevent the fly from striking the rod). This places the fly, ideally, above the orange line. Often called Stage 1.
7. Wait with your rod tip at the bottom end of the D until the fly lands on the water.
8. **Sweep** the rod flat or slightly inclined upstream, chasing the fly line tip. There must be enough speed to create a "white mouse" of spray as the rod travels upstream and around your body. When the rod passes your upstream shoulder,

SNAP T CAST (continued)

drive a D-loop back and opposite the target, then lift the rod to 1 o'clock. Transfer weight to your rear foot. Often called Stage 2.

9. **Pause** while the D-loop pulls tight and the anchor aligns with the target. Of all Spey casts, the snap T has the longest pause between the end of the backstroke and the start of the forward cast.
10. **Forward stroke** parallel to the anchor. Remember BAP. Often called Stage 3.

Short version of the snap T:

1. Tight line, rod point four feet toward center river. Imagine a brick wall one rod length away, angling 45 degrees upstream.
2. Snap—draw the D along the brick wall, accelerating on the lower curve.
3. Sweep the rod flat upstream and back, rising to 1 o'clock opposite the target.
4. Pause (patiently!) for the D-loop to form.
5. Drive the forward cast parallel to the line lying on water. Remember BAP.

Common errors/problems in snap T casts:

- Tangle on the tip, a fault in which the fly line tangles on the rod during the snap. It is caused by not finishing the “snap” on the bank side of the starting point, leaving the rod in the path of the oncoming line.
- Dipping the rod tip during the sweep, known as “the dreaded dip.” This anchors the line at the point of the dip, destroying the cast.
- The tip of the fly line stays stuck in the water downstream of you after the snap. This may be caused by:
 - a. Feeble snap—not drawing the D large enough or energetically enough during the snap movement.
 - b. Drift lift (initial lift angled sideways rather than vertically).
- Throwing the fly and fly line tip too far upstream. This may be caused by:
 - a. Drawing the D too far upstream.
 - b. Moving the rod too fast on the upper part of the D move. The fly will land far (20 feet or more) upstream, setting up a bloody L on the forward cast.
- The bloody L. This may be caused by:
 - a. Drift lift.
 - b. Moving the rod too slowly during the sweep.
 - c. Dipping during the sweep.
- Lifting the fly out of the water during the sweep. This may be caused by:
 - a. Sweeping the rod too quickly or too steeply during the chase.
- Having no load on the forward cast. This may be caused by:
 - a. Failure to make the forward stroke parallel to the anchor, in violation of the 180 degree principle.
 - b. Not pausing long enough at the end of the sweep.

INDIVIDUAL CASTS: PURPOSES AND TECHNIQUES

DOUBLE SPEY CAST

Why and when to use it:

- As with all Spey casts, its purpose is to change location of the fly line, from the dangle to a fishing position.
- Use it in a downstream wind or in no wind.

Which hand goes on top?

The downstream hand goes on top.

Casting group

Waterborne anchor

Double Spey cast steps:

1. Create an imaginary “orange line” from your feet to the target.
2. Position feet and body comfortably, addressing target as if making a switch cast.
3. **Start** with rod pointed directly downstream with the line washed tight.
4. **Lift** rod to 10 o'clock, still pointing directly downstream, stop, and wait for the raised fly line to sag to a stop.
5. **Reposition:** Swing the rod tip over and away from your body, finishing with the rod pointing upstream, low to the water. You will notice your arms are crossed and (ideally) a smooth loop of line will be lying on the water. The purpose of this repositioning move is to place the end of the fly line a rod length downstream of you. Often called Stage 1.
6. **Sweep** the rod level or slightly rising downstream and around your body, casting a D-loop of line opposite the target, ending in the key (1 o'clock) position. The sweep creates a “white mouse” of spray from the fly line. Often called Stage 2.
Note: Never dip the rod during the sweep. Doing so is called the “dreaded dip” for good reason—it is a cast destroyer!
7. **Pause** while the active D-loop pulls itself and the anchor into alignment 180 degrees from the target.
8. **Forward cast**, stroking directly parallel to the anchor and D-loop alignment. Remember BAP: body, arms, power. Also called Stage 3.

Note: The sweep and reposition of the double Spey are similar to those of the snap T. Learn the double Spey and you know two-thirds of the snap T.

Tips:

Tip 1: Alternate Double Spey Cast Method #1 – Drag rather than jump the line in the reposition step. This is useful with short heads.

DOUBLE SPEY CAST (continued)

Tip 2: Alternate Double Spey Cast Method #2 – In Stage 1, rather than jump the fly in the standard fashion, gently cast the fly line under the rod tip directly upstream (in front of your body), with enough velocity to land an anchor one rod length downstream of you. Then sweep into a D-loop opposite the target, pause, and forward cast.

Short version of the double Spey cast:

1. Start with 50' of fly line (from the reel) washed tight; lift rod to 10 o'clock, stop.
2. Swing rod tip overhead and away, ending low and pointing upstream, anchor one rod length downstream of you.
3. Sweep rod level downstream and around to key position opposite target.
4. Pause (!) while D-loop forms.
5. Forward cast parallel to anchor. Remember BAP.

Common errors/problems in double Spey casts:

- Fly line travels too far upstream during the repositioning move. Caused by starting the repositioning move with the rod tip too low. The large amount of stick will suddenly release the fly line with a loaded (bent) rod and the fly line will rocket far upstream.
- Fly line does not travel far enough upstream during the reposition.
- Fly line lands too far in front of caster. Caused by holding the rod too far away from your body during the reposition. It is also possible to have the line land too close to the caster when rod tip is too vertical during the repositioning move.
- Bloody L. Caused by dipping during the sweep, usually because of starting high. Start low and swing flat or slightly inclined.
- Fly line wraps around your body during the repositioning move. Caused by a very high rod tip at the start of the move.
- Failure of fly and leader to pirouette into alignment opposite the target during the formation of the D-loop. Caused by misjudging the speed and height of the rod tip during the sweep. Too fast or too high puts the fly in the bushes behind. Too slow or too low with a dip causes a bloody L.
- No load on rod during forward cast. Caused by violating the 180-degree rule, as when hooking rod behind the caster.

INDIVIDUAL CASTS: PURPOSES AND TECHNIQUES

SNAKE ROLL CAST

Why and when to use it:

- As with all Spey casts, its purpose is to change location of the fly line from the dangle to a fishing position.
- Use it in a downstream wind or in no wind.

Which hand goes on top:

The downstream hand goes on top.

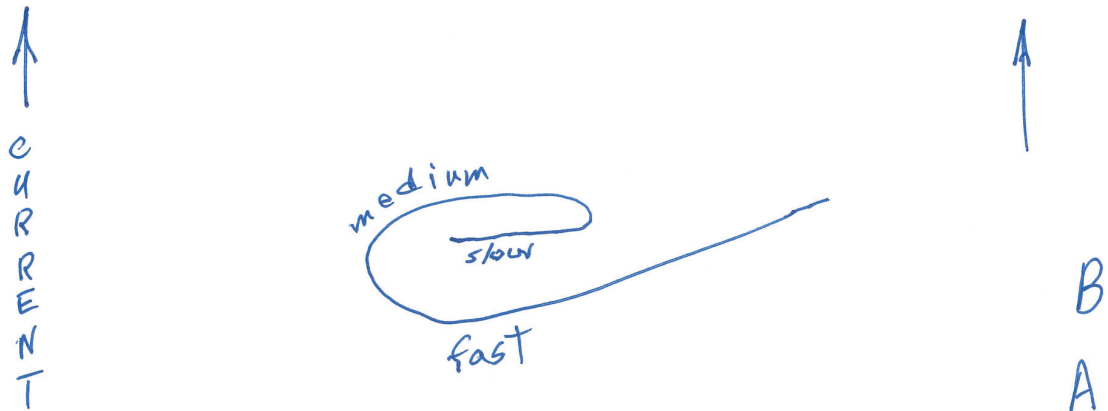
Casting group

Splash and go

Snake roll cast steps:

1. Create an imaginary "orange line" from your feet to the target.
2. Position feet and body comfortably, addressing target as if making a switch cast.
3. **Start:** Point rod downstream with line washed tight. Imagine a brick wall a rod length in front of you, aligned with the target. Plan to draw your **e** by moving the rod tip along that wall. Most of this cast comes from arm movement at the shoulder. See the next page for a more accurate illustration of the **e** shape.
4. **Lift** the rod slowly until it is level with your head, then smoothly execute the following in a continuous motion:
5. **Reposition and Sweep**
 - a. Draw the rod tip back (away from center river), keeping the rod tip traveling flat along the wall for the first part of the **e**.
 - b. Raise the rod toward the top of the **e** with a slight acceleration, keeping the top arm straight.
 - c. Continue the **e** shape, now moving the rod tip toward center river, continuing a slight acceleration.
 - d. Continue to accelerate the rod tip as it moves along the downward curve of the **e**. Do not drop the tip too low in this stage or you will get too much stick! Use shoulder height as a minimum height.
 - e. This is the fastest part of the cast: The rod accelerates back, rising slightly, throwing a D-loop of line opposite the target. End with rod raised to 1 o'clock opposite the target.
6. **Pause** while the fly line tip and leader settle into an anchor.
7. **Forward cast** parallel to the anchor. Splash and go using BAP.

SNAKE ROLL - ROD TIP PATH



In executing a snake roll, imagine a brick wall aligned with the target. To place your anchor in line with the target draw your "e" on that wall with the rod tip.

Source: Simon Gawesworth's class notes and book Spey Casting. Used by permission. R. Pauli 2009

SNAKE ROLL CAST (continued)

Short version of the snake roll cast:

1. Start with 50 feet of fly line (from the reel) washed tight downstream with rod tip at hat height. Imagine a brick wall along the target line.
2. Draw an **e** or *reverse e* and raise the rod to 1 o'clock opposite the target.
3. Keep the rod away from you and along the brick wall.
4. Wait (pause) for fly line tip to anchor.
5. Forward cast parallel to the anchor. BAP.

Tips:

Tip 1: It often helps to think about “painting” the anchor onto the water.

Tip 2: Accelerating early or late during the **e** formation allows the angler to locate the anchor toward mid-river or toward the bank, respectively.

Tip 3: Larger, higher **e** formations bring the anchor closer to the angler and allow greater angle changes.

Common errors/problems in snake roll casts:

- Line tip stays in water during the **e**-shape formation. Cause is too slow a stroke or too small an **e** (weak **e**).
- The fly line hits the rod in mid-**e**. Cause is lack of speed on the underside of the **e**.
- Anchor not in alignment with target. Cause is failure to draw **e** on the “wall,” which is aimed at the target.
- The anchor bounces out of the water on the backstroke (or does not touch the water). Generally caused by too much speed during the last part of the **e** formation as the rod is rising.
- Hooking the rod behind your body as you finish the backstroke, often followed by hitting yourself with the fly line during the forward stroke. Cause is the rod tip coming away from the brick wall during the final part of the **e** formation and the lift to 1 o'clock.
- “Pregnant egg,” which is an overly long downward leg of the **e**, which piles an anchor in the wrong place, toward center river.
- Timing. The snake roll is not a continuous cast. There is a pause at the end of the back cast, while waiting for the leader to “bite” the water.

INDIVIDUAL CASTS: PURPOSES AND TECHNIQUES

Perry Poke

A move subsequent to a repositioning move

Why and when to use it:

- The Perry poke is often used as a recovery cast. An angler not satisfied with the results of a repositioning move may elect to “dump short” the forward cast along the target line, leaving a slack line in front. The dump is normally followed by a switch cast. Dumping short is called a “poke.”
- It can be an intended method of casting. Some anglers “poke” almost every cast when using sink tips, depending on a sustained waterborne anchor to load the rod during D-loop formation and forward cast.

History:

Speycasting: A New Technique, by Hugh Falkus (Excellent Press, London, 1994), contains the first published mention of the “poke” in reference to Spey casting. Falkus used the poke in performing the “contrived D-loop cast” and describes it on pages 157 ff.

See page 168: In the first sentence, Falkus states, “Here the rod has been poked out over the water....” His description and photograph show dumping a slack line toward mid-river. Falkus used the contrived D-loop when streamside shrubbery prevented normal back casts.

THE USUAL SUSPECTS

Common Errors in Most Spey Casts

- Small D-loop
- Large stick, indicated by a slurping noise on the forward cast
- Violation of the 180-degree principle
- Starting the initial lift with rod tip not at the water
- Starting the initial lift with slack in fly line
- Drift lift
- Creep
- Crossing the line (roll casting over the top of a line lying in the water)
- Bloody L
- Too little stick, indicated by a snapping noise on the forward cast (torn out anchor)
- Too much power, indicated by a snapping noise on the forward cast (torn out anchor)
- Poor timing (rushing or waiting too long)
- Insufficient effort on the repositioning move to lift entire line and leader out of the water; frequently a problem for new Spey casters learning the switch cast
- Hooking (bringing the D-loop behind your body)
- Rolling the shoulder (rather than BAP directly toward the target)

Helpful Tips for Practice Without Water

On grass, use a grass leader, developed by Al Buhr for Jim Green in 1997. Make a leader with a series of blood knots tied a few inches apart with tag ends left about 3/8" long (trim to suit length and character of grass as well as stiffness of leader material).

Practice cast with leader staked to the ground or tied to an equipment bag. See Derek Brown's video *Spey Masterclass* (1995) for a demonstration of this method.

Four Classifications of Spey Lines

Shooting Heads: 30 to 50 feet, Scandinavian style, with shorter, lighter rods and reels; smaller flies; limited casting room; distance with long leaders/gentle presentation. An efficient method if you do not mind lots of stripping/shooting.

Skagit lines can be included in this group. Short, heavy floating heads that turn over or cast heavy flies and sink tips. Good for tight situations and getting the fly down quickly, Skagit lines offer a reduced learning curve for beginners.

Short Belly: 50 to 60 feet. Versatile head length, useful in tighter casting situations. Suitable for short casts to 100 feet with minimal stripping/shooting. Easy to manage and cast in a variety of situations, including floating or sinking tips. A popular head length (56 to 60 feet) is good for the Two-Handed Casting Instructor exam.

Mid Belly: 60 to 70 feet. A compromise between short and long belly lines. A bit less stripping/shooting and some advantage in line control. May not be as forgiving or easy to cast as short belly lines.

Long Belly: 70-plus feet. Long casts with a minimum of stripping/shooting. Long, repetitive distance with faster turnaround time. Less ice buildup in freezing conditions. Easier to mend at a greater distance. Long belly lines are matched with long rods. These lines are best for situations with adequate back-cast room and wide, consistent current pools or runs. More difficult line for beginners.

Choosing a Spey Line

Choose a line with head length and weight that matches your casting style, rod action and length, and fly design. The line should fish close (the first cast in many runs is the leader only) as well as long (your expected fishing distance) in calm or windy conditions and diverse current flows. Think about your required presentation, including depth of fly under tension.

Spey line standards are set by the American Fly Fishing Trade Association (AFFTA). See http://www.affta.com/media/downloads/industry-standards/spey_line_weights.pdf.

SECTION 3 — SPEY: THE SHORT VERSION

Clip for pocket cards

Short version of OVERHEAD CAST

1. Shotgun lift to 11 o'clock, power snap back/*stop* at 1 o'clock.
2. Drift rod and body weight back, waiting for loop to unfurl.
3. BAP forward cast. *Stop high.*

Short version of ROLL CAST

1. Draw rod slowly to side and back, then slowly up to key position (1 o'clock).
2. Hold rod still and wait for belly to form behind rod.
3. While Point P is still in front of you, start forward cast slowly and smoothly.
4. Smoothly using BAP, make forward cast parallel to fly line in the water.

Short version of SWITCH CAST

1. Tight line, rod at water, lift vertically to 10 o'clock.
2. Sweep to side and straight back, *flat*, forming D-loop, then up to 1 o'clock opposite target.
3. Watch line tip anchor, then immediately start forward cast.
4. Drive forward cast parallel to fly line in the water. BAP.

Short version of SINGLE SPEY

1. Tight line, rod low, pointed at target.
2. Make a switch cast.

Section 3: Pocket Cards (continued)

Short version of SNAP T

1. Tight line, rod point 4' toward center river. Imagine a brick wall one rod length away, angling 45 degrees upstream.
2. Snap: Draw the D or *reverse D* along the brick wall, accelerating on the lower curve.
3. Sweep the rod flat upstream and back, rising to 1 o'clock opposite target.
4. Pause (patiently) for D-loop to form.
5. Forward cast parallel to line lying on water. BAP.

Short version of DOUBLE SPEY

1. Start with 50' of line (from reel) washed tight, rod at 10 o'clock, stop.
2. Swing rod tip overhead and away, ending low, pointing upstream, anchor one rod length downstream.
3. Sweep rod level or slightly inclined downstream and around to key position opposite target.
4. Pause (!) while D-loop forms.
5. Forward cast parallel to anchor. BAP.

Short version of SNAKE ROLL

1. Start with 50' of fly line (from reel) washed tight downstream, with rod tip hat-high. Imagine a brick wall along target line.
2. Draw an **e** or *reverse e* and lift the rod to 1 o'clock opposite the target.
3. Keep the rod away from you and along the brick wall.
4. Wait for fly line tip to anchor.
5. Forward cast parallel to the anchor. BAP.

Section 3: Pocket Cards (continued)

HANDY MNEMONIC FOR THE ELEMENTS OF EVERY SPEY CAST

(Single Lens Reflex, Sun Protection Factor)

- S** -- Start
- L** -- Lift
- R** -- Reposition
- S** -- Sweep to D-loop; lift to 1 o'clock
- P** -- Pause
- F** -- Forward cast

The Usual Suspects: Common Errors in Most Spey Casts

- Inadequate lower hand power during the forward cast
- Small D-loop
- Large stick—slurping noise on forward cast (trunking or level drop)
- Violation of 180-degree principle
- Starting the initial lift with rod tip *not* at the water
- Starting the initial lift with slack in fly line
- Drift lift
- Creep
- Crossing the line (roll casting over the top of line lying in the water)
- Bloody L
- Overpowering the rod—snapping noise on forward cast (from torn out anchor)
- Too little stick—snapping noise on forward cast (torn out anchor)
- Poor timing (rushing or waiting too long)
- Rolling the shoulder
- Insufficient effort on the repositioning move to lift entire line and leader out of water
- Hooking (bringing the D-loop behind your body)

SECTION 4 – ADVANCED TOPICS

A DETAILED LOOK AT THE APPLICATION OF POWER: BAP (Body, Arms, Power)

Total power application includes three separate phases, seamlessly strung together.

1. Phase 1: **Body** transfers weight in direction of the cast, without changing the rod angle.
2. Phase 2: After the body begins its weight transfer, the **arms** move in the direction of the cast, without changing the rod angle.
3. Phase 3: **Power** is a rotation of the rod using arms, hands, and top-hand wrist, followed by an abrupt STOP.

Lead with the rod butt. Note that during the BA (body, arms) portion of the stroke, the angle of the rod does not change. The rod angle only changes during the final application of power.

COMPONENTS OF PHASE 3

There are two (or three) coordinated hand/wrist/arm movements in Phase 3, the final power application. This is after your body has transferred its weight forward and the arms have extended forward.

<u>Element of Phase 3</u>	<u>Use with Short- and Mid-Belly Lines</u>	<u>Use with Long-Belly Lines</u>
Lower hand pull	Yes	Yes
Top hand wrist-snap and some arm movement	Yes	Yes
Top arm snapping straight	No	Yes

SEVERAL WAYS TO CAST TAILING LOOPS—AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

While it is generally known that tailing loops are caused by concave rod tip paths, the casting faults that create such paths are often not well understood. Use this mnemonic and you'll know some faults to avoid.

- C -- Creep
- R -- Rotation (stopping rod rotation partway through stroke)
- E -- Erratic power application
- E -- Early finish of haul (for single-hand casting)
- P -- Pushing the rod with no rotation at end (also known as thrusting)
- S -- Short stroke (remember that longer lines require longer strokes)

ADVANTAGES OF AIRBORNE (SPLASH AND GO) ANCHOR CASTS

- Sinking tips are not sinking when they are airborne.
- Water is lightly disturbed, as only the leader and a bit of fly line touch it.
- There is no “white mouse” of spray, as with a waterborne anchor.

ADVANTAGES OF WATERBORNE ANCHOR CASTS

- There is a pause in the middle of these casts, making them easier to learn.
- With heavy tips and large flies, the tip/fly will not kick (bounce) off the water, as is possible with an airborne anchor.
- It is easier to cast heavy tips and flies, especially with Skagit lines.

ADVANCED SPEY CASTS

“Flat is good,” per Simon Gawesworth. Up-and-down motions do little to load a rod, unlike lateral movement. An advanced Spey cast has comparatively little lift and a flat backstroke (no dip).

The goal is to increase rod load with an aggressive V-loop back cast that loads the rod, thus requiring less effort on the forward cast.

ADVANCED THOUGHTS ON TARGET PLACEMENT

There is more than one target during a Spey cast; in fact, there are often three. They are determined by the original orange target line, the landing point of the fly line tip (the nail knot) after the repositioning move, and the final anchor location after the completion of the D-loop stroke. The three will seldom be identical. The final anchor position and D-loop formation determine the path the forward stroke must take.

One might ask, “Why not forward cast directly along the orange target line?” The answer is that a Spey caster accepts what the anchor alignment and D-loop formation allow. *Following the 180-degree principle trumps the original target line.* This is directly analogous to wading in a boulder-filled river: An angler’s foot placement is wherever the river bottom allows, which is often not ideal.

Because execution of a Spey cast will seldom be perfect, the anchor/D-loop/rod alignment will likely be a bit off the original target. Watching the anchor form allows a caster to execute forward casts exactly in alignment with the anchor and D-loop. In Simon Gawesworth’s words, “Drive the forward cast out as near to the line lying on the water in front of you as you can get it.”

THOUGHTS ON LEARNING THE SINGLE SPEY WITHOUT A DIP

Teachers conventionally introduce dip, but it is better to learn the single Spey in exactly the same way that you learn the switch cast—a flat back cast with no dip. Why introduce dip when it is a frequently committed error during the snap T and double Spey?

There is an exception, of course: single Spey casts with angle changes greater than 45 degrees. The greater the change of direction during a single Spey, the greater the lift and deeper the dip must be. But for beginning Spey casters, it is better to perfect a flat back cast before thinking ahead to exceptions to the rule. Doing so will remove fear of “the most difficult Spey cast” (as many instructors call the single Spey) and encourage newer anglers to enjoy the ultimate pleasure in all fishing—single Speying one’s way down a steelhead or Atlantic salmon river.

SUBTYPES OF SPEY CASTING

SKAGIT CASTING

Skagit casting is a substyle of Spey casting, using short, heavy Spey lines with heavy sink tips and/or large flies. Skagit casters use casts with waterborne anchors: the snap T, double Spey, and Perry poke.

When tips are in the lighter range of heavy, such as 9 feet of T-14 (126 grains), a sustained anchor may be used, meaning the tip is allowed to settle for some seconds (one, two, or sometimes more) prior to sweeping into a D-loop. The settling time allows the tip to sink and provide tension against the rod during the forward stroke. Tips in the heavy range (200 grains to 500 grains) do not need a settling time (sustained anchor) to load the rod during the forward stroke.

Skagit casting is best accomplished using a fly line with a total (Skagit head plus tip) length of 3 to 3.5 times the rod length. The purpose is to maintain a consistent stroke regardless of the sink tip length used to fish a particular pool. Short pieces of Skagit head extension called “cheaters” are used to adjust overall fly line length to fit within the 3.0 to 3.5 rule.

For a full analysis of Skagit casting, see the two-part article in *The Bulletin of the Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club*, June/July 2006:

<http://ggacc.org/docs/Sites/1/Bulletin-2006-06.pdf>

<http://ggacc.org/docs/Sites/1/Bulletin-2006-07.pdf>

EDGIT CASTING

The term “Edgit” is a cutting-edge Spey-geek term; it is a contraction of Ed and Skagit. It was first used on the Internet board Speypages.com (by “Kush”) to describe the particular variety of Skagit casting used by Ed Ward, a well-known Pacific Northwest steelhead guide, who employs a Perry poke for most casts. See *Rio’s Modern Spey Casting* three-DVD set, disc 2, Chapter 13, titled “Perry Poke.” Rio describes it as “a unique component cast of the Skagit style.”

Ward emphasizes the sustained anchor, meaning the (sink tip) anchor is allowed to sink beneath the surface to add resistance during D-loop formation and the forward stroke. In the video, Ward describes his Perry poke as an upstream wind cast and demonstrates it with the following steps:

1. Repositioning move to bring the anchor point upstream of the orange line. Ward uses a rod motion not unlike a low-powered single Spey repositioning move.

2. Dump (poke) the line “in a squiggly mess” roughly along the target line. The squiggly mess creates more tension than does a neatly laid line during the loading of the rod during the back cast.
3. Sweep the rod tip outside the squiggly mess and back into a D-loop opposite the target.
4. Without pause, go directly into the forward cast. This is a continuous load cast with no pause after the D-loop formation. “Sweep, turnover, forward cast,” in Ward’s words.

UNDERHAND CAST (Scandinavian Cast)

When and why to use it:

- As with all Spey casts, its purpose is to change location of the fly line, from the dangle to a fishing position. The underhand cast takes little effort.
- Use it in tight quarters and in situations where stripping in large amounts of line is not a disadvantage.

Which hand goes on top?

The upstream hand goes on top.

Casting group:

Splash and go anchor

Underhand cast steps:

1. Comfortably face the target, then rotate body and rod mostly downstream.
2. Lift the rod to between 10 and 11 o’clock. The lift is not a shotgun lift as in traditional Spey casting, because the line is so short that there is not much lifting to do. It is a bending of the upper arm’s elbow, the same way a single-hand caster raises a rod tip (crescent lift, in Al Buhr’s terminology).
3. Draw the rod back toward the near bank while turning your body to face the target. The movement is like steering the rod with the lower hand rather than pulling it around with the top.
4. Gently back cast.
5. Wait for the leader to anchor fully on the water, then begin the forward cast— splash and go.
6. The forward cast consists of pulling the “underhand” to your waist, while the upper arm moves downward much like a single-hand tournament accuracy fly cast. Stop the rod tip high, at about 11 o’clock. Remember that a short line requires only a short stroke.

Notes:

- The lower hand exerts 80 percent of forward cast power; the upper only 20 percent.

- The top hand moves little, much like a tournament single-hand target caster's vertical stroke.
- The lines used are shooting heads 24' to 46' long.
- Leaders are 15' to 20' long and provide the entire anchor grip.
- Fast-action rods are used because short stroke casts require a fast rod.

Common errors/problems in underhand casts:

- Top hand delivers full stroke, as with longer lines.
- Lower hand abruptly lurches into power stroke, causing tailing loop.

FISHING NOW vs. PROFICIENCY

It is vital to know your own goals. Some want to go fishing now. Others want to enjoy a lifetime of ever-increasing Spey casting proficiency and fishing success. The goals are not mutually exclusive, but they must be prioritized to achieve short-term success and maintain motivation.

CAMERAS

Two important features of a fishing camera are that it be waterproof (essential) and that it have an optical viewfinder (important, as screens are minimally useful in sunlight). Pixel count is unimportant for snapshots.

SECTION 5 – SUGGESTED READING AND VIEWING

SUGGESTED READING

Spey Casting, Simon Gawesworth (Stackpole Books, 2004).

Two-Handed Fly Casting, Spey Casting Techniques, Al Buhr (Frank Amato Publications, Inc., 2006).

Speycasting: A New Technique, Hugh Falkus (London: Excellent Press, 1994).

The Orvis Guide to Better Fly Casting, Al Kyte (Lyons Press, 2008).

SUGGESTED VIEWING

Rio's Modern Spey Casting (Idaho Falls: Rio Products, 2005). With Simon Gawesworth, George Cook, Mike McCune, Scott O'Donnell, Dana Sturn, Ed Ward. Three-DVD set.

The Art of Spey Casting, Jeffrey Pill (Helena, Montana: Miracle Productions). Filmed at the initial Spey-O-Rama at San Francisco's Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club). With 20 of the world's most renowned Spey casters.

Spey Masterclass with Derek Brown. (Ontario, Canada: The Usual Press, 1995). VHS format.

Spey Fishing Steelhead with John Hazel. (Portland, Oregon: Cascade Mediaworks LLC, 2005).

Spey to Z (A Scientific Anglers Production). With Greg Pearson, Topher Browne, and Way Yin, M.D.

DVDs by any of the following are excellent:

- John and Amy Hazel
- Dec Hogan
- Jeff Putnam

INTERNET RESOURCES

Fly Fishing Research. <http://flyfishingresearch.net>
Fly Fishing Research is the best source of science-based information on fly fishing, particularly on angling with a Spey rod.

Speypages.com. <http://www.speypages.com/speyclave/>
A discussion board for Spey junkies.

Understanding Spey Line Design 2009.
<http://www.rioproducts.com/photos/file/Understanding%20Spey%20lines%202009.pdf>
A Rio Products website.

SUGGESTED AIDS AND SUPPLIES

Video: *Rio's Modern Spey Casting*
Video: *Wading Safety* (Simms Fishing Products VHS tape)
Floyd Dean "clicker rod"
Whiteboard or chalkboard
Glossary and handouts
Yarn rod
Fit-over glasses
Spare ball cap
Sunblock
Clipboard
Pens and paper
Grass leader

TO CONTACT THE AUTHOR

If you have questions or comments for the author of this booklet, send your e-mail message to bob.pauli@mac.com.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to Simon Gawesworth for starting me on my Spey angling journey and for suggesting several improvements to this booklet. Simon's teaching and landmark book *Spey Casting* form the core of my Spey casting knowledge.

For buttressing the foundation of this document with her tournament and instructional fly casting experience and for probing the purpose of some explanations, I thank Tripp Diedrichs. Thanks to Christopher King for noticing inconsistencies and recommending appropriate corrections and to Kirk Eberhard for the section on classification and choice of Spey lines. I appreciate Ray Christensen, Fred Evans, Judith Kramer, Soon Lee, and Taft Ring for reviewing this work.

I am grateful to Mike McCune for a deep indoctrination into the joys of Skagit casting. Of the many fine Spey casters at San Francisco's Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club, I thank especially Frank Chen and Bert Rances for always being available to work out casting faults. Scotland's James Chalmers, captain of Team Carron, is always gracious in dispensing help to students of Spey.

For making readers of this booklet believe I can spell, punctuate, and format, I sincerely thank Mary VanClay.