

*John Borger*

# *Nature of Fly Casting*

*a modular approach*



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*illustrations by the author*

who use this grip, including good friends of mine. They cast beautifully, but they also *practice*, and they have superb control over their wrists. But, from the number of problems I have seen with non-world-class casters, and my own personal experience, I do not use this grip on single-handed rods.

### The Finger-On-Top Grip

Let your casting arm hang relaxed by your side and then rotate it until the top of your forefinger is pointing forward. As with the Thumb-On-Top Grip, you will notice that the muscles of your forearm must twist in order to do this.

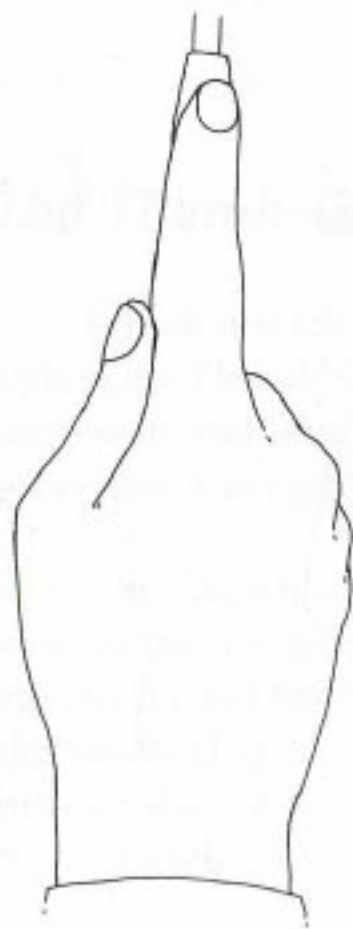


Figure 3-5. The Finger-On-Top Grip.

Rotating your hand inward and placing your forefinger directly on top of the rod handle is called the "Finger-On-Top Grip" (Figure 3-5). Rotational problems do not tend to be as pronounced with this grip, but in my experience many casters will not find this grip to be as strong or comfortable as the Thumb-On-Top Grip. That is not saying that it cannot be made to work very well, though. Watch the truly masterful Günter Feuerstein use it when casting in an elliptical style and you will see that this grip can function to amazing levels—especially when utilizing smaller/lighter equipment.

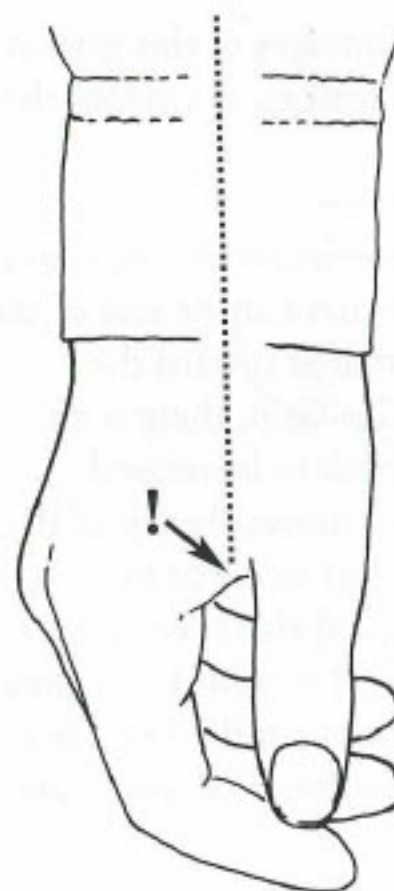


Figure 3-6. The space between the forefinger and thumb.

### The Three-Point Grip

Allow your casting arm to hang by your side, completely relaxed. Now look at your hand. Which part of your hand is pointing straight forward along the *center line* of your arm? Your forefinger? Your thumb? No, it is actually the space *between* your forefinger and thumb (Figure 3-6).

So, hold the rod in your *line* hand. Approach the cork handle from a 45-degree angle from the rear with your rod hand (Figure 3-7). Touch the rod handle *first* with the heel of your hand. If it helps, orient your wrist so that your hand comes in

As you have likely guessed, the Finger-On-Top Grip is not my favorite. Many casters do like it though, especially with lighter-weight rods. If you use it and like it, then fine, but what if there were a way to hold the fly rod so that the muscles of your forearm did not have to rotate, yet you still had control and strength? There is—it is called the "Three-Point Grip," and it is the grip that I learned as a child and the grip that I use for the broad majority of my casting and fishing.

was enough to drop him to his knees. I thought he was just praying to catch a fish until he started shouting about “having been shot.”

Painful anecdotes aside, becoming truly competent with angled casting requires two things: practice and pragmatism. That means you need to spend some real time pantomiming and then employing a rod and line. That also means that you actually have to *use* the skills on the water, just like ITA mending. Once you get comfortable with angles, you will not go angling without them.

***Elliptical Cast Module (CM)***  
***Vertical Wrist-Flip (SM)***  
***Pre-Tipping Module (SM)***

The backcast and the forward cast are the same cast, just made in opposite directions. It does not matter if the backcast and forward cast are made with the rod held in *different* Rod Planes. This means that you can learn to make a backcast at one angle, and a forward cast at another. The only problem is connecting the two. That is a problem to which you already have an answer. Just make an ITA mend to do the connecting. For example, make a pantomimed Side-Arm Backcast Module in the horizontal plane. Then during the Pause Module reach your arm up to the vertical (really just an ITA Reach Up). Finally, pantomime an Overhead Forward Cast Module. With that straightforward compounding of modules you have the basic Elliptical Cast (Figure 8-12).

The Elliptical Cast is absolutely one of those “must-have” casting techniques. You “must have” it for making special drag-free presentations. You “must have” it for making big distance

under certain conditions. You “must have” it for casting split shot safely and sanely. You “must have” it for awesome Steeple Casts. You “must have” it for...I think you can see what I am getting at. In fact, the Elliptical Cast is so useful that many people, including casters like Günter Feuerstein and Lefty Kreh, use it as their foundation and teaching basis. *Learn this cast!*

The Elliptical Cast has two primary permutations. The first is a Side-Arm Backcast Module followed by an Overhead Forward Cast Module. This is a typical Elliptical Cast. The Side-Arm Backcast can be at any angle, it does not have to be fully horizontal. In addition, the Side-Arm Backcast can follow the idea of Lefty Kreh’s Fifth Principle of Fly Casting—a Side-Arm Backcast that travels at an upward angle (see Figures 8-5 and 8-15).

The second primary Elliptical Cast permutation is a Cross-Body Backcast (at any angle), followed by a more vertically-oriented Across-The-Head Forward Cast. If you did the little exercise at the start of this section, you already have the basis for the first permutation. The second permutation is just as easy: Make a pantomimed Cross-Body Backcast, then during the Pause Module, reach your arm up to the Across-The-Head Forward Cast position, and then pantomime a forward cast (Figure 8-13). Of course, you need not adhere strictly to the two primary elliptical permutations. For example, you can make an Elliptical Cast by combining a Side-Arm Backcast Module with a Side-Arm Forward Cast Module as long as the Rod Planes of the backcast and forward cast are different (Figure 8-14).

In addition, the Elliptical Cast can be made throughout the Casting Circle. Here is a variation for you to modularly write/visualize for yourself: a Side-Arm Backcast starting from the Full Left position. During the Pause Module, reach up and around into the Across-The-Head Forward Cast position,

## Angle of the Haul

The angle at which the line is pulled across the stripping guide is important to the overall effectiveness of the haul. An obtuse angle (in the 45 to 90-degree range) creates excessive line/guide friction, resulting in reduced hauling performance. An acute angle (in the 0 to 30-degree range) makes for little line/guide friction, resulting in efficient hauling performance. You can be sure that you are getting good angulation of your hauls if you make them so that they travel approximately parallel to your casting arm (Figure 13-12).

When making Cross-Body or Across-The-Head Casts, you may find that in order to keep your hauls effective you have to move your line hand out in front of your body, especially during the backcast (Figure 13-13). Superb, versatile haulers like Günter Feuerstein and Jupp Verstraten stress such dynamic angulation in their demonstrations.

## Check Haul Module (SM)

This technique involves using a small haul *after* the forward cast has been made (after Phase Three), but while the fly and line are still airborne. The idea is to yank the moving, aerialized line to a stop (much like Frank Sawyer's original version of the Tuck Cast) (Figure 13-14). The Check Haul is typically combined with a Front Shoot. This skill is often called a "Check Cast" or "Triple Haul," but as far as casts go, you have not actually cast anything. You are certainly "checking" (stopping) the motion of the line, and the rod may flex and unflex a bit as you do so, but that does not really constitute a separate, dedicated cast. "Check Haul" is a good middle-ground term, although I personally prefer "Momentum-Mangling, Fly-Flipping, Super-Special Haul."



Figure 13-12. Just make your hauls so they travel approximately parallel to your casting arm.

The Check Haul is nothing but a small Single Haul made *after* Energy Transfer (Phase Three), but *before* the line straightens and falls to the water. In this sense, it is really just a type of mend. That is, it changes line position *after* the cast. Since you are not casting, you do not need to be concerned with putting your hand back up.

If you practice Check Hauling, you can drop flies down within a few *inches* of your target without having to aim the cast perfectly. The higher the line is above the surface (with an Overhead Cast) when you Check Haul, the less accurate you will be.