

101 Fly Fishing Tips for Beginners

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Introduction

Fly fishing is a very popular fishing sport that can be both relaxing and challenging at the same time.

The following tips and tricks are ideal of beginners. When you're just starting out learning to fly fish you'll want all the help and advice that you can get from the experts.

Tip #1: Practice your Casting

The experts say that the one thing that you need to do to develop a good casting technique is to practice as often as you can. This will lead to a proficiency in casting that make all the difference between being a successful fly fisher or a frustrated one.

Try practicing against a wall on the outside of your house. Just imagine that there is a clock hanging on the wall that is at the same level as your shoulder. Place markers, such as black electric tape, at the 11:00 and 1:00 clock positions. Practice casting against these markers for a few minutes each day to improve your accuracy and style.

Tip #2: Rods

There are several things that you need to think about when choosing the right type of rod for you. Every reel and rod has a certain function that you need to be aware of.

One of the first things that you need to consider is comfort. Is the rod that you're using comfortable for you to hold? If you're shorter than

about 5'5" you won't want to use a rod that is seven feet. Choose a rod length that is easy for you to hold and cast for a few hours at a time.

Most of the rods on the market today are designed to allow you to feel when a fish bites. The shaft of the rod is called a "blank" and when the rod is first manufactured the blank is made from fiberglass, graphite, or other materials. Each of these blanks has an action that is either: light, medium, medium/heavy, or heavy. The upper portion will also have an action that is either: extra light, light, or regular.

Both ends of the blank are assembled and the final result is a fishing rod, complete with a handle and guide. No matter what type of rod that you're using, the "action" of the rod will refer to the "blank". The action of the rod will have a great deal to do with the type of fishing that you're doing.

Tip #3: Holding your Rod Effectively

It's important that you learn to hold your rod effectively under any fishing conditions. You want to make sure that you maintain good control at all times without gripping too hard. You can adjust the power of your hold when you're in the middle of a cast. This will allow you to minimize the vibrations of each movement. With just a bit of practice you'll be able to increase the tightness at the same as you learn to relax your grip.

Tip #4: What do to with a Running Fish

Be prepared if a fish runs toward you. Stand on your toes and at the same time raise your rod up over your head as high as you can. Take the line and put it back over onto your second and third fingers of the hand that is holding the rod. Quickly strip the line to pull up on any slack.

If the fish starts to run away from you make sure that you keep the rod up high and slowly let out the line, letting it slide from your fingers. Be ready to palm the reel of the rod when the slack is entirely gone.

Tip #5: Best Bait Choices

Following is a list of some best bait choices as recommended by the experts:

- Grubs: Grubs are small lures that are usually used to catch larger fish. Grubs are great for use in highland reservoirs where there is little cover for the fish. The grub is much like a bare jig head that has a soft plastic body to attach to the hook. You'll want to use them most often in clear water conditions.
- Jigs are best used in water that is clear to murky and in water temperatures that are below 60 degrees. The jig is considered to be a "presentation" lure and the ideal way to use them is by making them look as alive as you can. The jig is essentially lead-weighted bait that has one hook. You'll want to add a trailer to the end of the hook for the best results.
- Plastic worms: If you want to catch that trophy fish you'll probably want to use a plastic worm. This is because the plastic worm is one of the most effective lures for catching any type of

big fish. Plastic worms have a thin and long profile with a lifelike action that attracts them instantly to bass. You'll have to learn how to use a plastic worm by touch, feel, and practice. The more that you practice that better results you'll achieve. The one thing that you need to keep in mind is that the fish needs to see the worm before it will hit it. Therefore a plastic worm is best used in clear water.

- Lure color: Choose lures that are all black or all white. A mix of black and red also works quite well. There will be the odd time when fluorescent colors, such as bright yellow or green, will work well but you'll need to experiment with this.

Tip #6: Keep your Dry Flies Floating Longer

One way that you can keep your dry flies floating higher and longer on top of the water is by waterproofing them. Take a can of Scotch-guard, the same stuff that you use to protect your furniture, and spray those flies that you plan on taking fishing with you in the next few days. Let them dry overnight before using them.

The Scotch-guard will put a waterproof protective coating around your flies and prevent them from becoming drenched with water. This will allow them to float higher and longer on the water.

Tip #7: Types of Reels

Reels – There are three main types of reels that you can choose from when it comes to fly fishing: (1) baitcasting reels, (2) spinning reels, and

(3) spincast reels. The reel that you choose will depend your own personal preferences.

Baitcasting reels: Baitcasting reels have better accuracy and control of the lure than other reels. They are better equipped to handle lines that are ten or more pounds in weight. The one thing to be aware of when using a baitcasting reel is that they often have the tendency to snarl or fight back when the spool starts to spin faster than the line that is being played out. This is particularly true if you are casting into the wind.

To prevent these backlashes, baitcasting reels have a magnetic braking feature but you'll want to count more on the control of the spool tension, which is a knob that is usually located right beside the handles. You'll need to set the spool tension knob for each lure by holding the rod straight and disengaging the spool. Loosen the tension just until the lure begins to drop down and then tighten the spool just a bit.

When you're casting the reel you'll disengage the spool and then hold it tight with your thumb. When you want the lure to move forward you'll simply loosen up on the pressure. After some practice you'll learn to control the speed of the spool so that you have better accuracy.

Spinning reels: Spinning reels are reels that have a spool that is stationary. The line is spun onto the spool as a device called a "bail" rotates around it. Spinning reels can be used for any size of line but more experienced fly fishers will use it for lightweight lures with a

weight less than ten pounds. Spinning reels tend to perform a little better than baitcasting reels when you're casting into the wind.

One disadvantage of using a spinning reel is that there is the inevitable twisting of the line which will create tangles and knots. When your line becomes twisted the best thing that you can do is replace the line with a new one. One way that you can prevent some of these tangles from occurring is by putting the spool into a glass of water for about 24 hours before you head out to go fishing, giving it a chance to soak.

To cast the spinning reel, hold the handle of the rod with one hand, making sure that the spinning reel is on the bottom side with your middle finger placed in front of the "foot" of the reel. Slowly open up the bail and pull the line behind the first knuckle of your index finger. Release the line by pulling your index finger into a straight position. You can control how far you cast the line by letting the line move along your index finger as close to the spool as possible as the line unwinds. When you want to stop the line you simply push your finger against the lip of the spool.

Spincast reels: Spincast reels are also known as "push button" reels. They are closed-face and are very easy to use. They are almost impossible to tangle and can be cast in smooth, long arcs without twisting. The main portion of the spool is encased in a covering and it remains in one place while a pick-up pin spins around the spool. When buying a spincast reel make sure that you don't buy the most inexpensive

one since you want to pay for good quality. Many beginner fly fishers do well with a spincast reel.

To cast the spincast reel all you need to do is depress the push button and hold it down. You'll release the button when you want your lure to move in a forward position. Most spincast reels are able to be used with any weight lure or line size.

Tip #8: Tying Effective Knots

Very few knots will ever be at 100% of the rated strength for a line. However, if you moisten your knots before you pull them tight they will be much more effective. Other things that you can do to tie a better knot include:

- Tighten them very slowly.
- Keep an eye out for any weak frays.
- Test every knot by making sure to pull it hard.

These techniques will reduce the chance of a knot failure occurring at that moment when you least want it.

Tip #9: Protecting your Fly Line

There are many things that can damage your fly line that includes: casting the line without a leader, stepping on the line, or pinching the line between the frame of the reel and the spool. Take steps to avoid these hazards. There are also many liquid items that can damage your

fly line. Make sure that you keep the line away from insect repellent, sun block, fuel, and some line cleaners.

Tip #10: Cleaning your Fly Line

Keeping your fly line is essential to the performance of your fly fishing. Dirt will get on your line from algae that are found in the waters where you fish. Over time the dirt will get on your line and this can cause your line to become stripped down. You'll know when your fly line is too dirty because it won't float as well nor will it slide smoothly through the rod guides.

Cleaning your fly line is easy: use a cleaning pad that you can buy at most angling stores. Or you can also wash the fly line with a few drops of a mild soap (avoid detergents). Just rub the line gently with a damp cloth.

Tip #11: Storing your Fly Line

Your reel is the safest place for you to have your line. The only thing that you need to make sure of is that your line isn't exposed to chemicals, high heats, direct sunlight, or solvents. There will be times when your line has been stored for a while and it will coil. If this occurs you need to stretch it slowly; it will soon start to give and you can use it safely once again.

Tip #12: Types of Fly Lines

Most of the lines that you'll use for fly fishing will be made of nylon monofilament. However, other lines are becoming just as popular such

as lines that are (1) braided, (2) co-filament, or (3) fused. No matter what type of line you buy make sure that it's a "premium" line. Premium lines are more durable and even than cheaper lines. You'll want to match the fishing line that you buy to the following criteria and conditions:

- **Strength:** Strength is measured in the pounds of force that is needed to break the line. You'll find that most lines will break at higher weights than they are sold at.
- **Resistance to Abrasion:** When you're fishing in areas where there are a lot of brush or rocks you'll want to use a line that won't break easily when it is constantly rubbed.
- **Line Diameter:** The diameter of the line will affect the way the line is cast as well as how deep your lure will run. Diameter also has an affect on the visibility and stretching of the line. The thinner a line is the harder it will be for the bass to see it. Thinner lines will also give some bait, such as grubs, a more realistic flowing action. The one good thing about lines with a thicker diameter is that they are better able to withstand abrasion.
- **Stretch Lines:** Stretch lines won't break as easily when they are being pulled by a fish. They are beneficial in letting you detect strikes as well as help you in setting hooks.
- **Line Stiffness:** The stiffness of the line is related to its stretch. The stiffer the line is the harder it will be to cast. The advantage to having a stiff line is that is more sensitive than flexible lines.
- **Line visibility:** In clear water it's important that your line is as invisible to the fish as possible. However, you'll want to have a

line that is highly visible when your fishing lures are on a subtle strike, such as worms, grubs, and jigs. This is so that you can easily detect any movement on the line that may indicate a fish is biting.

Tip #13: Pinching your Hooks

Take some time to pinch the barbs on the ends of your hooks. This will prevent fewer scratches. And keep in mind that a hook that is barbless is easier to remove than one that is barbed.

Tip #14: Lures – by the Experts

Following is a list of lures that are often recommended by the expert fly fishers that you one day want to match in skill:

- Spinnerbaits: Spinnerbaits are one of the most versatile of all fly fishing baits. This is because they can be used almost any time of the year in any type of weather or water condition. You'll also be able to use spinnerbaits in any type of cover.
- Crankbaits: Many professional fly fishers use crankbaits because they behave much as "bird dogs" when it comes to hunting for fish. This type of lure is great in deeper waters since it can dive deep. You'll want to use a rod that is between 6.5 and 7 feet if you want to use crankbait.
- Tube jigs: Tube jigs are great when you're fishing in clear water where the fish are inactive. These jigs have been designed to be used as drop bait. The tube jig is used most often in water that is ten feet or deeper.

- Vibrating lures: Vibrating lures are made of metal or plastic. They produce a tight vibration when they are pulled back in. This type of bait will sink fast and are best used in deeper waters.
- Jigging spoons: Jigging lures are called “structure lures” and are used most often by experienced fly fishers. These lures work very well in deep water when you are fishing for suspended bass. The jigging spoon is ideal when you’re dealing with fish that are inactive due to water temperatures that are too hot or too cold.

Tip #15: Using Dry Flies in the Afternoon

If you’re fly fishing in the afternoon you’ll want to use dry flies. The main reason for this is that the sun will be warming the water and the air. And this means that you’ll see hatches of little black flies. This is a great time to do some dry fly fishing since you can present a fly that is similar to an adult insect.

Tip #16: Keeping Track of Patterns

Keeping track of patterns: One thing that you can do if you find that your favorite fishing area is giving you trouble is to keep a log each time that you fish. Make note of the problems that you’re having as well as:

- weather conditions
- water temperature
- current
- the size of the fish that you do catch
- the time of day that you fish

After a period of time you may notice a pattern occurring, such as the lack of bites on days when the water temperature is too hot or too cold. This will be your indicating factor of what changes you have to make to break your unlucky streak, such as changing the time of day that you fish or changing the side of the lake that you fish from.

Tip #17: Basic Tools for Tying Flies

There are some basic tools that you'll need for tying flies. This includes:

- A bobbin to hold the thread while you're tying.
- A vice to hold the hook while you're tying.
- Hackle pliers to keep a firm hold on delicate and small feathers.
- Needle point scissors for cutting and trimming materials.
- A bodkin and half-hitch tool for help tying the half-hitch knot.
- A vise material clip for holding all the materials firmly in one place.
- Head cement that is used for both gluing and to add a finish.

Tip #18: Tying your Fly to the Tippet

You may find that there are times when you have difficulty tying the fly to the tippet. This can happen whether you're in the water or up on the bank. A good trick to help you is to hold the fly up against a background that is single colored, such as the sky. The background will be able to help you see the fly easier and tie it to the tippet.

Tip #19: Using a Sub-Surface Fly

There is a trick to using a sub-surface fly so that it catches more fish: deodorize the fly before you use it by rubbing it with mud or underwater plants. This will mask the chemical and human smells that are attached to it and that may distract the fish from striking.

Tip #20: Rods and Guides

Another aspect of your rod that you should get to know is the guide, or the eyes. The guide is what transmits the signals of the line to the rod so that it's easy for you to feel the fish on the other end. There are several different types of guides available today.

Some guides have rings that are made of ceramic placed inside the outer metal frame. Still other guides have inner rings that are made from silicone carbide, aluminum oxide, chrome plating, or gold aluminum oxide. The rings of the rod are what aid in the reduction of friction that can cause your line to fray.

The length of the rod handle is important as well as what the rod is made of, such as foam or cork. You'll want to choose a rod handle that is still easy for you to hold if your hands become wet.

You won't want to use a light action rod to catch fish since you'll need a strong blank to be able to pull the fish out of its cover. A medium or medium/heavy rod will give you the strength that you need to pull out the fish while at the same time giving you the flexibility to use topwater

baits. You might want to use a trigger handle if you're using a long-handled rod so that you have the manageability that you need.

Before you head out fishing make sure that you check the guides on your rod. You want to make certain that none of the guides are bent. Bent guides prevent the line from moving through them correctly. Clean out the inside of the circle of the guides before you start fishing to ensure that your line doesn't fray and break when you're reeling in the fish.

One last thing that you should focus on when you're buying a new rod is how the guides are attached to the rod. The wrapping must be sufficient so that the guides don't become loose and need to be replaced.

Tip #21: More Tips from the Experts

The more tips and tricks that you have the better luck you'll bring to your fly fishing. As a beginner you'll want to try a variety of techniques until you find what works best for you and the water that you're fishing in.

- Thick weeds: When you're fishing in thick weeds the best lure that you can use is a spinnerbait or a crankbait that is shallow running. Make sure that you cast parallel to the edge of the weed flow if you can. Remember look in the inside edges of weedbeds.
- Timber pileups: When you're fishing in deep timber your main focus will be to not get your line tangled up. Use a plastic worm or a jigging spoon for the best results.

- Fishing from fallen trees: If you want to fish from a fallen tree make sure that you pull back your bait so that it runs in parallel to the tree limbs. This is because the water is very shallow and you don't want to disturb the area any more than you have to.
- Working the area: Make sure that you work the area that you're fishing as thoroughly as possible. Try a few different lures if the first one doesn't bring you success. You might want to think about returning again at a different time of day.
- Keep a close eye on your lines: Make sure that you keep a constant eye on your lines particularly when you're retrieving them. Remember that when the weather is cold the bass can strike and completely miss the lures.
- Avoid excess noise: The more noise that you make the less the bass will bite.
- Night fishing: Night fishing is a great option in the summer months when the water temperature during the day is just too hot for bass to swim high in the water.
- Creeks and coves: During the fall months make sure that you check out creeks and coves since this is where baitfish tend to hover...and this means the bass won't be far behind.
- Using surface plugs: When you're using surface plugs try to pay as much attention as you can to the angle of your rod. You should be holding the rod low when you have the lure close to you and higher when the lure is further away.

Tip #22: Leaders

When it comes to leaders you have two choices: you can buy them or you can tie your own. If you're going to tie your own you'll want to get an instruction book that shows you how to do this. If you're going to buy them you'll want to look for a leader that is suitable to the area where you are going to be fishing. For example, if you're going to fishing for bream (salt water fly fishing) you'll want to use a light leader that weighs about 2lbs.

Tip #23: Knotless Tapered Leads

For freshwater fishing it's best to use a knotless tapered lead instead of a knotted tapered lead. This is because you will experience less tangles when you're casting and the leader won't get caught on debris that can be found in the water or on any free standing structures.

Tip #24: Learn to Read the Water

Fish will behave differently depending on certain water conditions that change depending on what season it is. This includes the temperature of the water, what the weather is like, and the volume of the water. If you want to become a successful fly fisher you'll have to learn how to read the waters where you're fishing.

Some of the things that you'll discover as you learn to read the water are (1) during non-feeding periods, fish can still be encouraged to strike if they are in a deep pocket of water, and (2) when fish are feeding they are usually found in the shoreline of runs of pools and in moderate water pockets.

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