



Fly Fishing

Learn To Angle Like The Pros

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INTRODUCTION

It's a beautiful day in early spring. You are standing beside a beautiful river flowing through the mountains of Colorado. In your hands you hold your gear. You are brimming with excitement as you imagine what you will catch today. You are getting ready to fly fish and you can't wait to get started!

People have been fly fishing for years. In its beginnings, people would use flies to fish with for food, but then it turned into a sport and now anglers fly fish for both food and sport.

Fly fishing is a traditional angling method that uses artificial flies for lures that are made of materials like fur and feathers. The flies are fastened onto a hook and are meant to imitate a fish's natural food source. The rods are light, but the lines are heavy providing the weight and momentum for casting.

Fly fishermen use a series of casting moves meant to imitate the bug on water. The techniques are wide and varied. When casting much of the rod's movement comes from the angler's wrist.

Fly fishing as a sport is something many people find amazingly enjoyable. Most fly fishing is done in certain places like Colorado, Montana, and Wisconsin. The fish most often caught are trout and salmon, although anglers can catch a variety of fish with their flies.

In this book, we'll explore a variety of topics with regards to fly fishing. Some of the information will be geared towards beginning fishermen, but experienced fly fishers can benefit from this information as well. A refresher course is always good in any sport!

We'll look at the gear you'll need, ways to tie flies, and the best places to find an excellent fishing spot. You'll learn about places to buy your gear from and what to look for when you are buying that gear.

This author is an equal opportunity person and no disrespect is meant to women who like to fly fish when I use the term fisherman. Because most of the time we say the word "fisherman", don't fret gals, I'm talking about you too!

New and experienced anglers can both benefit from this great book. So, let's explore the joys of fly fishing!

TERMINOLOGY

Just as with any sport, there are some terms that are synonymous with the sport itself. While most people think of flies as pesky insects, fly fishermen know that flies are something else altogether. Flies to a fisherman are what is most important to make their hobby enjoyable and challenging.

To a beginner, fly fishing terminology might be confusing, so in this section, we'll present you with some new terms and what those terms mean so that when we use them later in this book, you'll know what we're talking about.

Back cast - The portion of any fly cast that extends beyond the person doing the casting.

Bass Bug - Name used to describe a large number of surface bass flies usually tied with hollow hair (such as deer hair).

Bass Bug Taper - A special weight forward floating fly line with a short front taper so that the generally wind-resistant bass bugs can turn over

Blood Knot - The most widely used knot for tying two pieces of monofilament with similar diameters together; the best knot for construction of a knotted tapered leader; also called the barrel knot.

Breaking Strength - Amount of effort required to break a single strand of unknotted monofilament or braided line, usually stated in pounds (example: 6 lb. test).

Caddis - One of the three most important aquatic insects imitated by fly fishermen; found world wide in all freshwater habitats; adult resembles a moth when in flight; at rest the wings are folded in a tent shape down the back; the most important aquatic state of the caddis is the pupa, which is its emerging stage

Casting Arc - The path that the fly rod follows during a complete cast, usually related to the face of a clock.

Clinch Knot - Universally used knot for attaching a hook, lure, swivel, or fly to the leader or line; a slight variation results in the improved clinch knot, which is an even stronger knot for the above uses.

Co-Polymers – These are mixtures of various nylons and plastics along with anti-UV chemicals that have resulted in the exceptionally high breaking strength of modern tippet material. This is certainly one of the biggest advancements in fly fishing in the last 50 years. It allows you to use very fine tippets with breaking strengths two to four times as strong as regular nylon monofilament. Co-polymers are not as abrasion resistant as regular nylon monofilament.

Damping - Reducing excess vibrations in the rod blank when unloading the rod during a cast. This causes fewer waves in your fly line resulting in more power & distance for less effort.

Dead Drift - A perfect float meaning the fly is traveling at the same pace as the current; used in both dry fly and nymph fishing

Double Taper (DT) - A standard fly line design in which both ends of the line are tapered, while the greater portion or "belly" of the line is level; excellent line for short to moderate length casts, and for roll casting; not as well suited for distance casts; commonly available in floating, or sinking styles.

Drag - (1) Term used to describe an unnatural motion of the fly caused by the effect of the current on line and leader. Drag is usually detrimental, though at times useful such as when imitating the actions of the adult caddis. (2) Resistance applied to the reel spool to prevent it from turning faster than the line leaving the spool which is used in playing larger fish.

Dry Fly - Any fly fished upon the surface of the water; usually constructed of non-water-absorbent materials; most commonly used to imitate the adult stage of aquatic insects.

Dry Fly Floatant – This is a chemical preparation that is applied to a dry fly before use to waterproof it; may be a paste, liquid, or aerosol.

False Cast - Standard fly fishing cast; used to lengthen and shorten line, to change direction, and to dry off the fly; frequently overused. In false casting, the line is kept moving backwards and forwards without being allowed to touch the surface of the water or the ground

Floating Fly Line - a fly line where the entire line floats; best all round fly line

Fly Casting - standard method of presenting a fly to a target using a fly rod and fly line; involves many different casts

Fly Line - key ingredient to fly fishing; made of a tapered plastic coating over a braided Dacron or nylon core; available in several tapers and in floating, sinking, and sink-tip styles

Fly Reel - fishing reel used in fly fishing to hold the fly line. There are three basic types: single action, multiplier, and automatic. 1.) Single action is the most common and the most popular. Single action means that one turn of the handle equals one turn of the spool. 2.) Multiplier reels use a gear system to increase this ratio (usually, 2-to-1). With a 2-to-1 ratio, each turn of the handle equals 2 revolutions of the spool. 3.) Automatic fly reels are the least practical for most people; they operate by a manually wound spring which is activated by a lever; automatic reels are heavy and tend to malfunction.

Fly Rod - a type of fishing rod especially designed to cast a fly line. Fly rods differ from other types of rods in that the reel attaches at the butt of the rod with the rod handle always above the reel; fly rods usually have more line guides than other types of rods of the same length. Fly rod lengths vary, with common lengths being between 7 and 9 feet. Materials used in fly rod construction are bamboo, fiberglass, and graphite.

Forceps - hand operated medical instrument widely used in fly-fishing to remove flies from the jaws of a hooked fish. Have pliers-like jaws with locking clips so that once they are clamped to the hook, they stay there until you release them.

Forward Cast - the front portion of the false cast or pick-up and lay - down, and a mirror image of the back cast.

Freestone - this is a type of river or stream with a significant gradient resulting in medium to fast-moving water. Although the upper reaches of a freestone stream may be spring-fed, the vast majority of its flow comes from run-off or tributaries. The fast moving water inhibits the growth of weeds or other rooted vegetation resulting in a "Free Stone" bottom. Freestone streams are less fertile than spring creeks resulting in a smaller and less diverse aquatic insect population.

Fewer bugs in faster water usually results in fewer but more opportunistic trout.

Gel-spun polyethylene – This is a synthetic fiber that is extremely thin, supple, slippery, very abrasion resistant, and strong. It is stronger than steel for its size. It is often used as a braided fly line backing where large amounts of backing are needed and space on the reel is limited.

Graphite - the most popular rod-building material in use today; offers the best weight, strength, and flex ratio of any rod building material currently available.

Hackle - a feather, usually from the neck area of a chicken; can be any color (dyed or natural); hackle quality, such as the stiffness of the individual fibers and amount of web, determines the type of fly tied with the hackle; many hackles are grown specifically for fly tying.

Headwaters - upstream section of the river before the main tributaries join it. This section is typically much smaller in width and flow than the main section of the river.

Hollow Hair - hair from some animals is mostly hollow, thus holding air and making these hairs float. Hollow hair is ideal for tying dry flies and bass bugs. Antelope, deer, and elk all have hollow hair.

Hook – a hook is the object upon which the fly is tied; can be any size from tiny to huge; made from steel wire, and either bronzed, cadmium coated, or stainless. Hook designs are variable; style used depends upon the type of fly being tied.

Imitative Flies- flies tied to more closely match specific insects. Imitative flies are most effective in slow-moving, clear water, with finicky trout in fertile streams with large populations of aquatic insects.

Impressionistic Flies - flies tied to loosely suggest a variety of insects or insect families. For instance, a Hare's Ear nymph in sizes 12 - 16 can be used as both a mayfly and a caddis fly imitation and in larger sizes as a stonefly imitation. Impressionistic flies are usually most effective in medium to fast water, in streams with sparser populations of aquatic insects.

Indicator - floating object placed on the leader or end of the fly line to "indicate" the take of the fly by a fish or to indicate the path of the

drift of the fly; used when nymph fishing with a slack line; very effective.

Knotless Tapered Leader - a fly fishing leader entirely constructed from a single piece of monofilament. Extrusion or acid immersion is most commonly used to taper the leader.

Knotted Leader – this is a fly fishing leader constructed by knotting sections of different diameter leader material to each other to make a tapered leader. Most commonly used knots to construct such a leader are blood (or barrel) knot and surgeon's knot

Leader – the leader is the section of monofilament line between the fly line and the fly. It is usually tapered, so that it will deliver the fly softly and away from the fly line

Leader Material – leader material is clear nylon or other type of monofilament. Two types are commonly used. One is the stiff or hard type, used mainly for the butt section and saltwater leaders; the second type is soft or supple monofilament, used mostly for tippet on all line weights, and for complete leaders on light weight fly lines

Level Line - an un-tapered fly line, usually floating. It is difficult to cast, a poor line for delicacy or distance, and a poor choice for an all round line.

Loading the Rod - phrase used to describe the bend put in the rod by the weight of the line as it travels through the air during the cast.

Mayfly - world wide, the most commonly imitated aquatic insect. Most dry fly and nymph patterns imitate this insect. Nymph stage of the mayfly lasts approximately one year; adult stages last one to three days. The adult has one pair of upright wings, making it look like a small sailboat. Mayflies are commonly found in cold or cool freshwater environments.

Mending Line - method used after the line is on the water to achieve a drag free float. It constitutes a flip, or series of flips with the rod tip, which puts a horseshoe shaped bow in the line. This slows down the speed with which the line travels if mended upstream, and speeds up the line if mended downstream. For example: if a cast is across the flow of the stream and the fastest part of the current is on your side, the mends would typically be made upstream to slow the line down so

it keeps pace with the fly traveling in the slower current across from you.

Midge - a term properly applied to the small Dipterans that trout feed on. Many people call them gnats. Adult's appearance is similar to mosquitoes. Midges have two wings that lie in a flat "V" shape over the back when at rest. They are also known as "the fly fisher's curse" because of their small size and trout's affinity to feeding upon them. The term "midge" is sometimes loosely applied (and incorrectly so) when referring to small mayflies.

Monofilament - a clear, supple nylon filament used in all types of fishing that is available in many breaking strengths and diameters.

Nail Knot- method used to attach a leader or butt section of monofilament to the fly line, and of attaching the backing to the fly line; most commonly tied using a small diameter tube rather than a nail.

Narrow Loop - term that describes what the fly line should look like as it travels through the air; a narrow loop can best be described as the letter "U" turned on its side; it is formed by using a narrow casting arc.

Needle Nail Knot - same as the nail knot except that the leader or backing is run up through the center of the fly line for $\frac{3}{16}$ to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch, then out through the side of the fly line before the nail knot is tied; this allows the backing or the leader to come out the center of the fly line rather than along the side of it as in the nail knot.

Nymph - immature form of insects; as fly fishers, we are concerned only with the nymphs of aquatic insects.

Nymphing - word describing fish feeding on nymphs; nymphing right at the surface can be difficult to tell from fish feeding on adults, careful observation should tell.

Open Loop - term used to describe what the fly line looks like as it travels through the air during a poor cast; caused by a very wide casting arc.

Pick-up & Lay Down - a fly fishing cast using only a single back cast. The line is lifted from the water and a back cast made, followed by a forward cast which is allowed to straighten and fall to the water,

completing the cast; good wet fly cast; also useful in bass bugging; most efficient cast to use, when possible, because the fly spends more time in the water (also see presentation).

Popping Bug - a bass bug made from a hard material. Usually cork or balsa woods, as these are high floating materials that can be made into a variety of shapes.

Presentation - the act of putting the fly on the water and offering it to the fish; the variety of presentations is infinite, and changes with each fishing situation. The object is to present the fly in a manner similar to the natural insect or food form that you are imitating.

Reel Seat - mechanism that holds the reel to the rod, usually using locking metal rings or sliding bands.

Retrieve - bringing the fly back towards the caster after the cast is made; can be done in a variety of ways; important points of retrieving are to keep the rod tip low and pointed straight down the line.

Rod Flex - The manner in which the rod bends during the cast during the acceleration phase of the cast. Tip-Flex rods bend primarily through the tip section, Mid-Flex rods bend down into the middle section, and Full-flex rods bend throughout the entire rod during the cast.

Roll Cast - one of the three most basic fly casts; allows a cast to be made without a back cast; essential for use with sinking lines, to bring the line to the surface so it may be picked up and cast in a normal manner.

Running Line - a thin line attached to the back of a shooting taper (shooting head) line. The line may be 20 to 30 pound monofilament, braided nylon, narrow floating or sinking line, or other material. Usually 100 feet in length, it allows the fly fisher to quickly change the type of line being used by interchanging only the head section.

"S" Cast - cast used to put deliberate and controlled slack into a cast; used in getting a drag free float and in conjunction with mending line

Saltwater Taper - a weight forward fly line that is similar to a bass bug taper

Setting the Hook – this is the act of pulling the hook into the flesh of the fish's mouth. The amount of effort needed to do this varies with the size of hook, type of fish, and breaking strength of leader; most people strike too hard on trout and warm water fish and not hard enough on salmon and saltwater fish.

Shooting Taper or Shooting Head - a short single tapered fly line, 30-38 feet long; shooting heads are designed for longest casts with minimum effort; shooting heads allow quick change of line types (floating, sinking, sink-tip, etc.) by quickly interchanging head sections; shooting heads are most commonly used with salmon, steelhead, saltwater, and shad fishing, though they can be used in all types of fly fishing.

Sink Rate - the speed at which a sinking fly line sinks; there are at least 6 different sink rates for fly lines, from very slow to extremely fast.

Sink-Tip Fly Line - a floating fly line where the tip portion sinks; available in 4 foot, 10 foot, 12 foot, 15 foot, 20 foot, 24 foot, and 30 foot sinking tips; the 10 foot sink-tips are most commonly used and are practical in many applications; sink-tip lines are useful in all types of fly fishing, but especially in wet fly or streamer fishing.

Sinking Fly Line – this is a fly line in which the entire length of the line sinks beneath the surface of the water.

Spool – the spool is the part of the fly reel that revolves and which holds the backing and the fly line; may be purchased separately.

Standing Line - the part of the line that is joined to another piece of line when tying the tag ends together. Two standing lines are joined by tying their tag ends into a knot.

Stonefly - very important aquatic insect; nymph lives for one to three years, depending on species; most species hatch out by crawling to the shoreline and emerging from its nymphal case above the surface, thus adults are available to trout only along shoreline and around midstream obstructions; adult has two pair of wings which are folded flat along its back when at rest; stoneflies require a rocky bottomed stream with very good water quality.

Streamer - fly tied to imitate the various species of baitfish upon which game fish feed; usually tied using feathers for the wing, but can be tied with hair and/or feathers; tied in all sizes

Stripping line - Retrieving the line by pulling it in through your fingers as opposed to winding it in on the reel. Term sometimes used to refer to running line (not a common usage).

Surgeon's Knot - excellent knot used to tie two lengths of monofilament together; the lines may be of dissimilar diameters.

Tag (Tag End) - the end of the line that is used to tie a knot

Tapered Leader - a leader made of monofilament and used for fly fishing; the back or butt section of the leader is of a diameter nearly as large as the fly line, then becomes progressively smaller in diameter as you approach the tip end

Tippet - the end section of a tapered leader; the smallest diameter section of a tapered leader; the fly is tied onto the tippet.

Turn Over - words that describe how the fly line and leader straighten out at the completion of the cast.

Unloading the Rod - unbending the rod or transferring the casting energy from the rod back into the fly line.

Waders - high topped waterproof boots; two main types used in fishing: boot foot and stocking foot; boot foot have boots built in, just pull on and go; stocking foot requires the use of a pair of wading shoes and provides better support and traction.

Wading Shoes - shoes built specifically to be worn over stocking foot waders; can be made of leather, nylon or other synthetic materials.

Weight Forward - an easy casting fly line because it carries most of its weight in the forward section of the line; instead of a level middle section, like a double taper, it quickly tapers down to a fine diameter running line which shoots through the guides with less resistance for added distance; the most versatile fly line.

Wet Fly - (1) any fly fished below the surface of the water; nymphs and streamers are wet flies (2) a traditional style of fly tied with soft,

swept back hackle, and a backward sweeping wing; the forerunner of the nymph and streamer.

Wet Fly Swing – this is the typical presentation method for fishing a wet fly. Cast the fly downstream and across, and then swim it across the current. A wet fly swing is commonly used to imitate swimming mayflies, emerging caddis, and small fish.

Wind Knot - an overhand knot put in the leader by poor casting, greatly reducing the breaking strength of the leader

As you read through this book, refer to this glossary if you don't understand what a term means. We have tried to provide a comprehensive list of the most commonly used terms that you may come across.

You will need to have the right equipment if you are going to be fly fishing as a hobby or as a sport. There are just certain things you can't do without.

GETTING THE GEAR

Fly fishing isn't the cheapest sport in the world when it comes to getting outfitted with all the gear you need. But the truth of the matter is that when you invest in some quality equipment, you'll not only enjoy the sport more, but you'll have better luck catching the fish you dreamed of when you have the right equipment.

Let's start with clothing. You can wear anything you want underneath the vest and waders, but these two items of apparel are vital to successful fly fishing.

Vests

Fly fishing requires a lot of parts and accessories. You'll have to carry them all with you, and the most efficient way to do this is with a [fishing vest](#). These vests have many, many pockets where you can stow all your gear like flies, lines, weights, etc. Here are some things to consider when buying your fly fishing vest:

What types of weather conditions will you be encountering during your fly fishing trips? Weather and temperature are both huge considerations when it comes to your fishing vest. If you will be fishing mostly in warm weather, get a mesh vest that is more ventilated. For colder weather, get a vest that is big enough to allow for layers underneath so that you don't freeze!

When fly fishing, you will probably be doing a lot of wading in water, so you will want a vest with a short waist. This will keep your equipment above the waterline and avoid damaging it.

Think seriously about how much you will be carrying with you. Lots of pockets are great, but if you fill all of them up with unnecessary equipment, you'll weigh yourself down. You will, however, want a vest with various sizes of pockets to accommodate the different things you will be carrying with you.

The pockets in your vest should be easy to open and close. Ideally, you should be able to get in them with just one hand. Vests with Velcro to seal them are the best, and look for one with a "D-ring" on the back so you have someplace to hold your net.

Make sure that you can move easily once your vest is filled with your chosen equipment. If you are weighed down too much, casting can become difficult.

Vests come in various colors, and you will want to pick one that blends with the vegetation of the area you will be fishing. Tan is good for fishing in the West and green will match the foliage of the East.

Also find a vest with few places where your line can get caught during casting. Lines and leaders have a nasty habit of getting caught on fly patches, zippers, sunglass holders, and anything else that sticks out on your vest

Just find a vest within your budget that meets the basic guidelines listed above and you should be ready to go.

Waders

Waders are a combination of pants and boots all in one piece that will keep you dry inside while you're wading in the water. That's why they call them waders! The last thing you want is to have your waders leaking while you are waist deep in a cold Colorado River in November. What do you look for in a good pair of [waders](#)? Here are a few suggestions:

Waders can be used for a variety of outdoor activities like duck hunting, goose hunting, and, of course, fishing. Consider what your primary use of your waders is going to be. If you fish more than you hunt, then the type, thickness, and color of your waders is going to be important. Consider what the temperature of the water is going to be when you wear your waders. That will determine how thick your waders need to be.

The material of your waders can be very important as well. Again, you will need to take into consideration why type of weather condition you be wearing them in. Here are some of the more popular materials:

Neoprene – This is the most popular material for waders. It is very durable and can take a lot of abuse. It comes in many thicknesses, so you can choose the one that will best fit your needs: 3mm or 5mm. 3mm is best for places where it is usually of moderate weather with a few cold days. This is also a good thickness if you have to walk a ways to get to your fishing spot or if you walk a lot while you're fishing. 5mm is the choice for colder weather spots or if you want to use your waders for hunting as well.

Gore Tex – This type of material is relatively new and is a breathable fabric that is comfortable and watertight. It allows moisture to escape even while in the water. These types of waders can be worn in the summer time and sweat is not an issue. They can also be worn in the winter with a pair of sweat pants underneath and the moisture will be released keeping you dry. These types of waders are also very comfortable and are conducive to walking while fishing.

Canvas – These are considered "old school" waders and are hard to find anymore. While they are durable and cheaper than other materials, you will sacrifice comfort,

flexibility, and breathability when you choose canvas as a material. These are generally a good choice for someone starting out in the sport of fly fishing.

Nylon – This is another good choice for beginners. They are lightweight and will keep you dry and warm. However, nylon waders can get quite warm inside because they are not made of a breathable material and when you sweat inside them, you could get quite uncomfortable. Because of the accumulation of moisture, this could lead to hypothermia in cold weather.

Rubber – This material was long considered the one of choice among fishermen because the rubber waders are generally cheaper. But the drop in price for neoprene and Gore Tex has caused rubber waders to drop in popularity. You will have less flexibility and virtually no breathability with rubber waders, plus they can be cumbersome.

Getting your waders to fit right is also very important. If your waders don't fit right, you will find yourself tiring more easily and growing uncomfortable just a short time into your fishing expedition. Your waders should provide enough room so that you can wear clothing underneath without being too tight.

If you order your waders off the Internet, make sure the site has your height, weight, and shoe size. They should be able to guide you toward the right pair. If you go to a sporting goods store, take the time to try on the waders. Do a couple of knee bends and walk around. Put your foot up on a chair and make sure that they don't ride up on you.

You will also need to make a decision as to what type of boot and boot soles to get. Some waders have the boots connected to the wader in one piece. If you are going to spend most of your fishing and hunting time in cold weather, this type of wader should be your first choice. They provide the best cold water protection and most are insulated. This type of wader is also very easy to put on and take off.

Stocking foot waders are quite popular these days among hunters and fishers. This is because of their weight advantage. They are constructed the same way as boot waders but without the built-in boots. This type of wader has a neoprene sock

attached, so you will have to get a separate pair of wading boots. Be aware that if you pick stocking waders, the possibility of gravel and debris getting into your boots is greater and can cause great discomfort for you.

Chest high waders are the best kind to get so that you can go into deeper water without getting wet. When you get your waders home, they should be washed off thoroughly. Wash your wading boots as well. It's also a good idea to wash the waders down with a 10 percent bleach solution after you've been fishing to kill any possible molds or fish diseases that might be clinging to the material.

Fly Rods

Fly rods and line weights are typically written as Nwt where the n is a number. For example, you can have 8wt, 9wt, etc. All rods are matched to fly lines according to weight. So if you have an 8wt rod, you'll need an 8wt fly line although you can safely go one number above or below the weight if need be.

It is important to use the correct fly line with the appropriate rod weight or it will significantly affect your casting performance. It can also warp the rod.

Some rods are multi-rated (7-8wt, 7-8-9wt, etc.). The advantage to a rod like this is that you have a variety of fly lines that you can use with the same rod. The disadvantage is that you will be sacrificing flexibility in the rod itself.

Selecting a [fly rod](#) depends a lot on what type of fish you will want to catch. Some rods are better suited for smaller fish and bigger fish. Here is an idea of the weight of rod you will need for certain situations:

1-3 Weight: delicate presentations with small flies, designed for trout or pan fish on small to moderate size waters

4-6 Weight: trout, pan fish, and small bass, 4wt is for delicate presentation, 5wt is good for trout on spring-fed creeks or bigger rivers, 6wt is best on big waters or in windy conditions

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