

Casting Into The Wind

It might seem like a silly question, but do you want to catch more trout? Then you need to be able to cast into the wind – Hardy & Greys Academy manager Andy Smith says that on stillwaters it's not just desirable, it's often essential!





It's a bit like reversing a trailer or caravan into a parking space – many of you will have tried it, got into a total mess and, having convinced yourself it's an impossible task, have avoided it ever since.

In reality it's no more awkward to cast into the wind as it is to have the wind pushing hard behind you. As with the wind at your back it's near impossible to see how the cast might be collapsing and therefore difficult to make any allowances. It's only when you feel the line and or flies repeatedly slap across your back that it becomes obvious something is definitely going wrong.

back, your ability to cast a good distance in front may not be much better than your attempts at casting directly into the wind. If you can cast well enough to get a good 20 yards of line out, you can cast into the wind just by making some subtle adjustments in what you are already doing!

Why Cast Into The Wind?

We know that on a river, trout will never touch a fly if the drag from your line causes the presentation to be flawed, and that is also often very true on a stillwater, especially if it's a dry-fly presentation.

If you ever watch flies being blown from the bankside by an offshore breeze, they generally

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Yet the banks of lakes and reservoirs all over the country are lined throughout the season with both novice and relatively experienced trout fishermen facing the water with the wind pushing hard at their backs.

This really is an essential element of fly fishing that should be worked on and perfected; after all, it's not just a bonus to be able to cast into the wind for normal stillwater activities, it's an unavoidable predicament everyone has to face if they're ever to succeed with saltwater fly fishing.

With the overhead cast, whatever happens in the back cast is in itself mirrored in the forward cast! So unless you are able to power your line into the wind at your

land on the water a good 20 yards out and then continue to drift in that direction, getting further and further away from the bank and you, the angler.

Fish will hunt around, often just waiting for their meal to move towards them in this instance and, as we have all witnessed, depending on the wind direction that's normally going to be a good 25 to 30 yards away and all too often on the limit of most anglers' casting ability.

How many times, when managing the odd extra-long cast, have you been rewarded with some kind of offer or take? Or have watched, frustrated, as boat anglers drifting about 35 to 40 yards out from the shoreline repeatedly hook into fish?



It may be uncomfortable but by fishing into the wind, your chances of catching increase.

It doesn't work every time, as climatic conditions can dictate otherwise, but, on the right days, moving to the other side of the lake or reservoir with the wind roughly pushing in your direction will regularly find fish feeding no more than 15 yards out, with many hook-ups occurring even closer.

Trout will be feeding in close and a careful look into the 'wash' area of water against the bank will usually give you an idea of what the trout are feeding on. You will

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be fishing across a ripple and the fish are far less likely to see you, if at all, so there's no need for long leaders (which helps into the wind) and providing the depth of water is right for the trout they can often be right in front of you.

I have just had a brilliant session on my local stillwater

where, following three days of strong breeze, trout were pocketed up in the far corner and I took 12 fish, none under 3lb, on a waterlogged Hopper not four yards off the bank.

This really does work well and has proved its worth many times for me, especially

when fishing from some form of peninsula or long platform. Casting out directly into or just simply across the wind, slowly retrieving while allowing the flies to naturally move with the drift, has resulted in hit after hit.

However, as an experiment, when turning around and casting downwind where the flies are, then actually dragging against the natural flow, there is not a bite to be had.

It's not often that necessary to cast directly into the wind,

Tips For Casting Into The Wind



Use a tapered leader.



Mark your line when it loads the rod.



Use the wind to fish your flies around in an enticing curve.



Fish will often be close to the margins.



but understanding how to make this cast will enable you to punch out across a wind perfectly without the fly line flying wildly off in the opposite direction.

When I say casting into the wind, I do mean a day when it's just a breeze and not gale force, although if you can take the work-out these conditions hit you with, some quite hostile days can often produce great results.

Many sub-surface fly patterns, such as bloodworm, buzzers and damsel nymphs, fish fantastically just on the drift like this and I have had some seriously great results fishing this method on small stillwaters. I can honestly say that the bulk of the largest fish I have ever taken has been on this method, using very small red, black or green buzzers just in this way.

How To Cast

Firstly, let me say that this is not all about how much you pay for your outfit,

as I have come across a number of great rods for well under £100 that work perfectly. With the right casting technique a 5, 6, 7 or 8-wt rod will have you casting perfectly, providing it is correctly paired with the right weight of line.

Best Practice!

Do not use an actual fly on the line while practising!

Just tie on a small piece of wool or similar until you have some confidence in your ability.

Having understood all of this, we finally need to make the cast, and the most important element of this is rod positioning.

Two Things To Consider

1 Don't use long leaders.
Stay at about nine feet as a maximum length and use a good tapered leader, or if you are making them up yourself keep it all a little on the heavy side if you can, according to fly size, as this will aid the turnover into the wind and will be less likely to tangle.

2 Cast with enough line out of the tip ring to load the rod correctly. Just because you are casting into the wind, don't think that you have to use a short line. This is where many people go wrong – assuming it will be hard to cast out, so best not to have much of a line out.

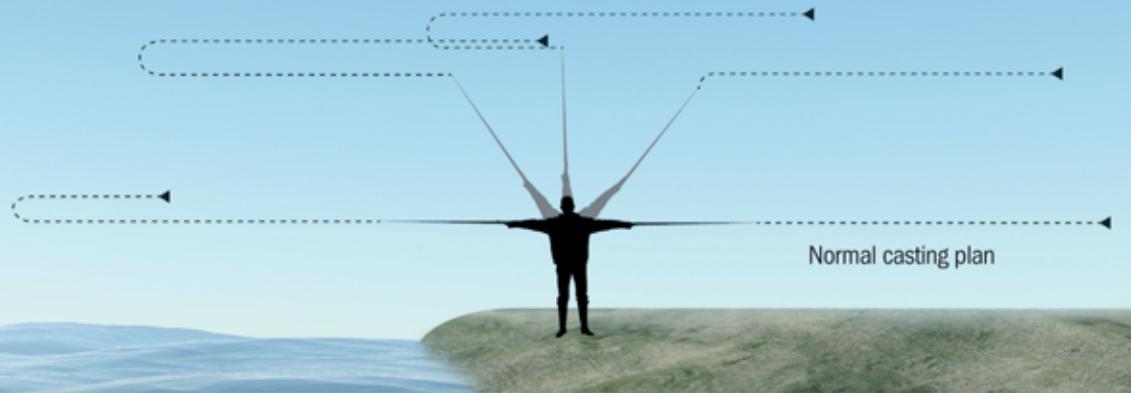
Unless about 12 yards of the fly line is already out of the rod tip as you cast, the rod will not flex enough under the weight of line and the cast will fail as the wind throws the line back at you.

Perhaps this is why some anglers suggest using a line one weight heavier than the recommended rod rating for such conditions, which will work well for the novice who really isn't ever getting enough line out to load the rod properly. A good tip is to mark your line with a permanent pen at about 10 to 11 yards back from the front end, and ensure that mark hangs out from the tip ring as you begin to perform the overhead cast. Honestly, your rod will now load correctly!

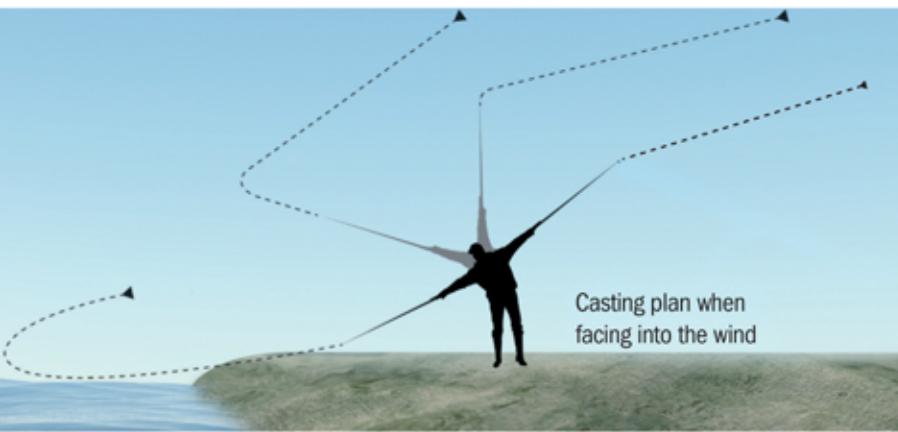


Casting Into The Wind Correctly

1



2



See images 1 and 2. If image 1 illustrates the normal casting plane, image 2 shows how this simple position change will work for casting into or across the wind. Angle the cast movement down towards the water – in simple terms, instead of your normal rod stop positions for the back and forward strokes of the overhead cast, stop the lift into the back cast much earlier and therefore higher above your head, and then aim much lower on the way forward. If you let the rod drift back at all into your normal position and then try to apply any kind of power into the forward stroke, the cast will fail.

Angling the forward part of the cast down quite abruptly towards the water under normal conditions would have the line crashing down hard; however, the oncoming wind will generally lift the line up and level, allowing the fly line to go out straight. If the line

continually crashes into the water it just means that the angle you have used is too low and needs to be raised slightly. Then, if by raising your casting angle, the line then fails to go out, almost falling back towards you, it just means that the forward

and power of the wind.

Any effort that you feel is needed into the forward part of the cast should not be applied until the last part of the delivery, when the rod has actually passed the side of your face. That additional effort should be applied

that you are extending the amount of line that will be going forward. If you know about hauling, add a haul into the forward part of the cast and this will effectively load the rod even more and reap dividends to project the line forward.

“If you struggle to achieve 20 yards on the nicest of days, then that has to be addressed before you get to beating off the wind.**”**

stop position you have chosen has now gone too high again and needs to be aimed lower.

Try picking a position on the horizon and aim at the point where the opposite bank joins the water at the point you have selected. If needs be, aim for a patch of weed or some kind of marker even lower.

At this point you will see for yourself how the line will go out differently according to the position of the stop

merely by a slight squeezing of the rod handle and pressure from your thumb, and not with any kind of brute force.

With wind in your face there will be no need for any kind of additional effort as you lift the line off the water; in fact, assisted by the wind, the line will be travelling over your head into the back cast at quite some pace, and at this point you can even get into the habit of letting line slip into the back cast so

Practice Makes Perfect
As with anything, including reversing a trailer, it needs practice and perhaps a little help along the way from a good instructor!

I know I always go on about instruction, but this really is an area where a qualified APGAI or AAPGAI instructor will have you sorted out in no time.

Obviously if you already struggle to achieve a good 20 yards on even the nicest of days, then that casting issue has to be addressed before you get to beating off the wind. Then again, you wouldn't be reversing a trailer or caravan either, unless you had learnt to drive properly. ■