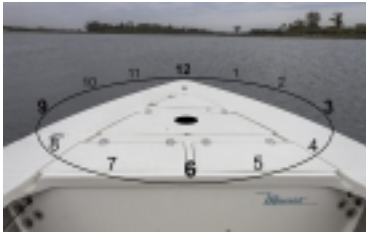




## The Saltwater Quick Cast

*An excerpt from Fly-Casting Finesse, by John Field*



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**Whether you're sight fishing while on shore, wading, or standing on the deck of a flats skiff, you must have the advantage of surprise. You must be able to quickly make far, accurate casts so neither you nor the boat you're in spook fish. When permit, tarpon and bonefish are spooked, they will leave in a hurry and possibly alert other fish they encounter on their exit.**

An experienced and considerate Captain will always try to push the boat into a favorable angle for visibility and to cast at a fish. Many times though, that is not possible. He will call out the location of the fish using the numbers on a clock face and other instructions. The reference for the center of this clock is the center of casting deck or platform on the bow.

Ideally casts should be made at 10 or 11:00 for a right-hander. This provides the least chance of detection by the fish, an opportunity to adjust the boat angle and the possibility of multiple shots. Fish that intercept the boat will spook from it. Fish approaching from this caster's right will often require a backhand cast. If the fish is at 12:00, present with a sidearm cast that won't hit the guide on the poling platform at 6:00! Or, if there is time and it won't spook the fish, the guide can push the boat into a safe casting angle with the bow facing 2:00.

The Saltwater Quick Cast helps the angler organize equipment in a state of readiness to minimize the time to safely and accurately present the fly. The object is to present the fly with the minimum number of false casts in order to load the rod, extend and shoot the line. The first thing in the order of actually performing this cast is to consider the running line. It has to be ready to flow smoothly through your hands and guides. If it won't, it will blow the shot.

Your fly line must be absolutely clean and in good condition. Additionally, all line connections must be minimal so they will not catch in the guides. I recommend washing fly lines in warm soapy water every three days of use. I also carry a terry face cloth and some fresh water onboard to run a line through if I feel dried salt on it. Even if a manufacturer states their line has built-in lubricant, I'll clean and apply Glide line cleaner and lubricant at night, instead of socializing. I'll let it dry overnight and in the morning I'll buff the line with a dry terry and reel it up, ready to go.

Place one right in front of you on the platform. If you're going to fish from the bow deck, putting the line in the cockpit places it out of the wind and away from your casting area. I hate it when it blows off the deck and into the water. Even though the coils won't be directly under the rod-guides in the cockpit, I've never had trouble shooting the line. I prefer a clean uncluttered deck and cockpit, so I do a little housekeeping before stripping-out line. When I'm ready to fish in a skiff in warm weather, I take off my sandals or deck shoes and go barefoot. This way, I can feel any line beneath my feet. I strip out about eighty feet of line and stretch all of it between my hands and lay it on the deck. I then make a clearing cast. That's when you cast it out and strip it in. This is my recommended procedure for putting the line in the cockpit.

I carefully make the largest coils I can in the left side of the cockpit behind the casting platform. If you only strip line off the reel and onto the deck, the coils will be in the incorrect order for a cast. It will pull from the bottom up and tangle, instead of pulling from the top down. I stop arranging the coils of line with about two rod lengths of line, plus the leader, extended past the rod-tip. I hold the fly hook by the bend between the index and thumb of my line hand with the point facing away. This is for safety. Control the line leading up to your stripping-guide with the index finger of the rod hand. You can now shake another rod length of line out of the rod tip, so the large loop of line just grazes the water. You will have about 20 feet of fly line ready to begin the Saltwater Quick Cast. The following description is for your longest cast.

You might not need as many false casts or hauls for a close cast.

The first cast depends upon the wind direction. Wind blowing in the direction of the cast helps straighten the line and load the rod, or against it and it will cause resistance. If the wind is in your face, start with a backcast and hold the hook away at an angle so the wind won't swing it into you. If the wind is behind you, start with a forward overhead cast or a roll cast. Let the cast pull the hook out and away from the fingers of your line hand and let the wind straighten the line and leader. If you wish, you can even let the fly anchor briefly to waterload casts. Double-haul and shoot as much line as possible on two to three false casts and release the presentation cast! Make sure to maintain high line speed and no slack. If your fly hits the water, try shooting less line, raise the trajectory or shorten your pause. You can even use your backcast for the delivery. The backcast is also the best way to cast to a fish on your rod side, especially if it's a close shot.

One mistake many new anglers make is lowering the rod to make their stop on the presentation cast, instead of making the forward stroke longer and maybe slightly higher in trajectory than the last false cast, then lowering the tip. I watch anglers false cast on my skiff and everything looks great until they make the last cast. I sometimes say when they're false casting, just let the next one go! The Saltwater Quick Cast can also be used when sight fishing for striped bass, sharks, redfish, carp, trout etc.

I've developed a workshop for practicing guide-angler communications and quickly casting to a radio-controlled fish on an indoor or outdoor field. I use the casting platform from my skiff and a six-foot platform ladder to simulate the relation and perspective from a full flats skiff. If you can't drill with a coach, practice at home and in the wind, before you make your first trip and before each season for maintenance.

If you're wading on the flats or in the surf, or casting from shore features like rock or jetty, a stripping basket will take the place of the boat cockpit in helping protect and arrange your line. I like the Orvis stripping basket, but still have my old Rubbermaid wash basin and bungee cord I keep in my flats skiff. If I need to anchor and fish off the stern, or I have a guest on the bow, I use my stripping basket. I can even run around the gunnel with my rod in hand to attend to something without tangling.

If on the other hand, you wade in rivers or streams and you make long casts,

you probably wouldn't want a basket, since it'll float up on your body. If you make one that water can flow through, floating line can float about in it and foul, just like on a swamped deck, as I found out. In this case, holding coils of line in the line hand will work best. The way to arrange the coils is to strip-in and coil six feet of line and hold it between the last two fingers of the line hand. This one should touch the water so tension prevents it from fouling on the way up the guides. Some call this the River Loop. The next loop, slightly smaller goes between the next set of fingers until you are holding four coils in descending size. When you shoot the line, release each loop by reducing the pressure in each set of fingers until the cast is away. Hopefully it doesn't foul.

Billfishing the bait and switch method with a fly requires as much readiness as flats fishing. It entails trolling hookless teasers and substituting a fly for the teaser at the moment you yank it away from a billfish in pursuit. I like being the tease them with my Cam Sigler Teaser Rod and Daisy Chains. The line runs through the blank to prevent it from wrapping on the guides, but even if the line wraps on the blank, you can just submerge it and the line usually slides off.

Organizing the fly tackle for bait and switch requires a FlyLine Tamer (or the equivalent), in the corner of the stern of a sportfisher or center console. The Line Tamer's location should enable you to have your casting arm pointing outward and casting parallel to the beam. Usually you would not use an outrigger on that side to provide casting room. You will have only as much line in the Flyline Tamer as you need for cast. That might be only the head plus forty feet of running line. Hang the fly on the stripper guide and hold the line to the rod with a Velcro strap so the wind and vibration don't let the line spill into the water. When appropriately sized billfish appears behind a teaser, grab the fly by the bend of the tail hook if it's a tandem and release the strap holding the line. When the mate pulls the teaser away from the fish and the Captain puts the motors in neutral, safely make your cast aiming just beyond and slightly outside of the fish to avoid lining it. The fish will usually turn around toward the sound of the fly and bite it going away. If it does, the hook will hopefully stick in the corner of the fish's mouth. Even though the boat is in neutral, it should continue forward momentarily at enough speed to keep your line high and taught. If the fish doesn't strike, strip until the fish strikes or the Captain puts the boat in gear and the teaser is replaced. If you really want to satisfy a compulsion for this kind of fishing, contact Captain Jake Jordan at [JakeJordan.com](http://JakeJordan.com). He runs billfish schools in the Caribbean and elsewhere.

**Field Tip:** double leader for saltwater quick cast and place the leader line junction between the little finger and the ring finger of the same hand. This trick helps loads the rod quicker and might save one false cast.

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