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Choosing A Fly Rod

By Cameron Larsen

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For many reasons, it is with some trepidation that I approach this subject. As I have stated in previous articles about fly fishing gear, you ask 15 people, and you get 15 different opinions. Choosing a fly rod is no different. In fact it might be the epitome of that statement. Fly anglers are picky about their fly rods, and they love their fly rods. To many it is like comparing spouses, and if you love your spouse then you have the best one. But having said that we can lay down some truths about the fly rod industry, and then go into more specifics about the fine art of finding you a partner with which to share the passion of fly fishing.

What is it to be used for:

The first thought when selecting a fly rod, is it's most often intended use. Are you casting for Tarpon or small trout on a creek? Most likely somewhere in between, and maybe even several uses. You first need to think about the size of the water you are mostly going to be fishing, and then the size of the fly you intend to cast. After that you need to consider the size of the fish you intend to catch. The rod size effects both the casting and the playing of the fish. The nice thing is if you are both a smallmouth bass and a rainbow trout fisher, you can probably get by with one rod. The same for Largemouth and Steelhead and Salmon. You might not get the ultimate choice for either, but depending on your budget you can get a very nice choice for a variety of fishing conditions.

THE #'s:

Fly rod sizes are categorized by number's. Unlike flies, where the smaller the number, the larger the fly. Rods go by the larger the number the larger the fly rod. A number 3 rod is a very light rod, used for small trout in small streams. A 12 wt. rod is used for Tarpon, Stripers and other fish that need long distance casting, big flies. The most popular all-around rods are in the 5-6 category, here you can cover the whole gamut of trout fishing and a good chunk of bass fishing as well. A number 6 rod can also tackle small steelhead and other sea-run fish, if the angler is skilled. Most steelhead angler's will

Choosing A Fly Rod

choose a bigger rod however, in the 7–9 range, and they can also fish salmon with that range as well.

The other number to consider is length. 9' is by far the most popular length right now. You can cast a 9' long distances without getting tired, and have good control of the drift. If fishing smaller streams and or bushy areas, 9' will frustrate you, as there isn't enough room to maneuver it. Rods commonly go down to 7' and even shorter ones can be found. If doing a lot of fishing out of a float tube, longer rods are common place, as one can get more distance with a longer rod, and the extra length helps to keep the fly off the water on the backcast.

Action:

Here it gets even more complicated, as different manufacturers call the action of their rod different things. But basically action can be broken down into slow, moderate and fast. Many manufacturers have 4 classification, but they all are based on the same concept. And that is how much of the rod will

bend, when casting.

A fast (or super fast) rod will have only the tip bend, they offer the longest casting distances, they also are great if you are fishing in the wind. Allowing for tighter casting loops, they are great for shooting head lines, double–hauling casting techniques and are a treat for the skilled caster. They are however, are harder to learn on and therefore not recommended for one's first fly rod.

The next level down is medium and is the most popular action being sold today. They flex further down the rod than the fast action. Great for beginners, it is also the choice of most experienced angler's who don't own a bunch of rods. For beginners they are forgiving to learn on, providing more accuracy then the super fast. They don't cast as far however, and you will battle the wind more in this type rod.

The last level is slow or full bend, often bending all the way to the grip. These rods are dying out, which is a shame, because for fishing small creeks they are the best. They don't cast very far, but you don't need that on tiny creeks, but what they do best is absorb the shock, so your tippet doesn't get as stressed, there fore your chances of snapping off the fly are reduced.

Grips:

The choice of grip is often over looked when choosing a fly rod. This is a mistake, as the grip is important in the comfort of your fly rod in your hand. Most decent fly rods these days use standard cork as the material. full wells grips are the choice if you have large hands, and half wells grips are popular with lady anglers. They both many ways you can hold the rod, and your hand seems to naturally find it's preferred method of holding the rod. It can also be altered once fatigue sets in, so you can fish longer without cramps.

Manufacturer's:

There are many of them, and guess what, the most common names all make great fly rods. With the advent of graphite in the 70's the fly rod industry was revolutionized, and now one must not spend a

Choosing A Fly Rod

fortune for a bamboo rod, to enjoy great fly fishing.

I, personally have fished almost every name brand on the market today. Like every other angler I have my preferences but I must admit the differences are nil, and I could probably learn to like any of them, just as well as the ones I won. I currently own rods from Scott, LL Bean, Loomis and Cabela's, and they all have characteristics I love and some I would like to see improved, and I am a very happy owner of them all.

I do look for the lifetime warranty, and it offered by virtually all major rod maker's today. It is figured into the price of the rod, and you must register your rod upon purchase to qualify for it. But if you have your rod for any length of time you will undoubtedly be glad you have it. Whether you broke your rod tip off fighting a fish, trying to free a snag, or in the car door, most rod makers will send you a replacement.

Recommendations:

Realize these are very basic recommendations and use them as a starting point. But for small streams and brook trout I like 3–4 weight slow action rod. They are still out there, but you may have to look. For other trout and small mouth bass I like 5–6 wt. rods and medium action. And for largemouth, salmon, and steelhead, try a 7–9 weight fast action rod. Look for future recommendations on Saltwater Fly rods

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Tips on Fly Fishing

By Nicky Pilkington

There are thousands of live–bait anglers, who are excellent sportsmen, but the fly fisherman can practice better conservation from the beginning.

Basically, fly fishing is not only one of the fastest growing sports; it is one of the foremost forms of conserving natural resources as well as providing aquatic recreation.

Choosing A Fly Rod

Fly fishing is, very simple when three things are right: you must have a suitable rod; you must get a line to match it; and you must learn correct casting technique.

For people who wish to know some tips on fly fishing, here is a list of some pointers that could help anglers harness their fly fishing skills:

1. Material of the rod

For one of moderate means, and especially for the beginners, hollow glass is advised since it will require less care than bamboo and will not take a set if improperly handled or stored.

2. Line

Your fly casting skill will not progress with a mismatched rod and line. About 99 times in 100, the troubled fly caster has a line much too light to bring out the action of his rod.

That is why it is important to know that on any given rod, the fly fisherman should use the same size line for anything from small trout and bluegills up to the largest sea fish.

In choosing the size line, anglers should get a C level, an HCH double-taper, or a GBF three-diameter. This choice is based on the fact that a high percentage of fly rods bought nowadays are hollow glass, and that a great majority of these works best with lines of those sizes, almost regardless of lengths or weights.

3. The correct casting technique

In casting, it is important to get about 20 feet of line out front. Anglers should always remember to cast a straight line. Avoid jerky movements even if it is on a faster mode in order to do so.

Best of all, the angler should be relaxed because taunt muscles will ruin his casting.

Boiled down, there should be no reason why you should not learn the fundamental principles just as easily as those who now enjoy fly fishing.

Probably, the best and surest way to learn to cast successfully is to spend a day on the stream with some fisherman who is a competent caster.

Lessons learned on the stream are the best tips you can acquire anywhere in your quest for learning

fly fishing.

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