



Can Casting

Sharon Rushton ¹

Lesson Outline

***Author's Note:** Remember that this is an introductory exercise. You do not need to share everything you know about tackle and fishing this time out. Keep it simple, to the point and fun. The kids will learn the principles and later learn that they have learned them when they are applied to other kinds of fishing. Enjoy this one. It is quick, simple and a ball for the kids.*

Presentation

- I. Relationships to other fishing methods
 - A. Handlining
 1. Hand held line and line control
 2. Simple and inexpensive
 3. Effective fishing method
 - B. Spinning
 1. Fixed spool (the can)
 2. Lure or bait pulls line out
 3. Retrieve by wrapping line on fixed spool
 - C. Check legality of method in your state regulations
- II. Making a can casting rig
 - A. Select sound can or plastic bottle
 1. Smooth surface
 2. Free of nicks or sharp edges
 3. Remove pull tab
 - B. Select line
 1. Moderately heavy line for easy handling
 - a. 8 to 20 pound test monofilament
 2. Relatively limp line best
 - C. Attach line to top rim, if present
 1. Arbor knot or improved clinch on line
 - a. Wrap line twice around rim

Application

EXHIBIT a can casting rig and **ASK** if participants have ever used a similar technique. **COMPARE** with using hand lines or similar simple tackle, including advantages.

RELATE the can to fixed spool tackle like spinning or spincast tackle. Have participants **OBSERVE** how the line goes on the Reel@ and how it comes off.

DISCUSS legality of this method in your state! **STRESS** making sure **BEFORE** going fishing.

PASS out cans or bottles, line (mill ends work well), and tape to each participant. Lead them to **CHECK** the can for sharp edges or nicks that could cut the line and **REMOVE** the pull tab to avoid cuts.

DISCUSS some things to consider when selecting line for the rig: casting ease, handling ease, size and type of fish or bait/lure. **NOTE** that limp monofilament will behave better.

DEMONSTRATE how to attach the line. **NOTE** that for practical purposes tying and taping the line in place works well.

¹ Formerly Executive Director, Future Fisherman Foundation; currently with the National Shooting Sports Foundation

- b. Tie line securely
 - 2. Tape line to can
 - a. Several wraps of tape
 - b. Both ends of line covered
 - c. Duct tape or electrical tape
 - d. Mark Ahandle@ area with tape
 - D. Wind line onto bottom half of can
 - 1. Leave Ahandle@ clear of wraps
 - 2. Wind same direction as line comes off spool
 - 3. Neat, firm wrapping best
 - E. Attach casting plug or sinker
- III. Using the can casting rig
- A. Throwing method
 - 1. Short distance, accurate method
Similar to tossing a ball or ring
 - 2. Procedure
 - a. Hold can by Ahandle@
 - b. Point can toward target
 - c. Place practice plug in throwing hand
 - d. Toss plug toward target
 - e. Control line with Areel@ hand
 - B. Pendulum method
 - 1. Longer cast, good accuracy with practice
 - 2. Greater control needed
 - 3. Casting process
 - a. Grasp can by Ahandle@
 - b. Point can toward target
 - c. Strip off about forearm=s length of line
 - d. Grasp line with throwing hand
 - e. Swing line like pendulum
 - 1) Back by dropping arm down, back
 - 2) Forward by raising , extending arm
 - f. Release line as it accelerates toward target
 - g. Follow through, can pointed at target
 - h. Control line with hand
 - C. Sling method
 - 1. Longest cast, practice needed for good accuracy
 - 2. Coordination necessary for good results
 - 3. Greater danger of hitting other kids
 - 4. Casting process
 - a. Grasp can by Ahandle@
 - b. Point can toward target
 - c. Strip off about forearm=s length of line
 - d. Hold hand perpendicular to body
 - 1) Upper arm about 45 degrees from body
 - 2) Forearm just below horizontal
 - 3) Swing with elbow and wrist
 - e. Swing plug in arc
 - 1) Upward in front of body

ILLUSTRATE using tape to define the Areel=s handle.@

STRESS getting both ends of the line anchored securely.

DEMONSTRATE winding the line smoothly and evenly on the reel end (the part beyond the hand holding the can) of the rig. **NOTE** that winding the same direction as the line coming off the spool keeps line twist and snarls to a minimum.

Help participants **SELECT** and **ATTACH** a suitable casting plug or sinker.

DEMONSTRATE the direct throwing method of close quarters casting and have each participant **TRY** the method for themselves until they are satisfied with it.

DEMONSTRATE and have the participants **TRY** the pendulum method to get a bit more distance in their casts. **NOTE** that this method requires a bit more control but is similar in process to the earlier one.

NOTE that the line should clear the ground when it is swung to its lowest point.

Have participants **STUDY** the motion and the movements of the arm to make the motion before attempting it themselves. Be prepared to **ASSIST** those having trouble getting the swing under control.

DEMONSTRATE the sling method of casting. Make sure that participants are well separated before they use this method.

NOTE that this method greatly increases line and lure speed when done properly and allows very long casts, but that it demands good coordination and practice for success.

DEMONSTRATE and **POSE** the arm positions and motions without a line or lure. Have participants **PRACTICE** the movement, imagining a line and lure.

CAUTION that the lure swinging through the arch is moving very fast and could hurt someone if they were hit by it.

DEMONSTRATE the release and its similarity to what they have

- 2) Downward behind body
- f. Release line
 - 1) Exaggerate swing on cast
 - 2) Extend arm toward target
 - 3) Release line
- g. Follow through, can pointed at target
- h. Control line with can hand

already learned. Have teen or junior leaders **ASSIST** anyone who is releasing early (thrown into the ground) or late (thrown very high or even behind the caster).

STRESS the importance of safety with this technique, particularly being conscious of where the hook and sinker are at all times.

NOTE that this type of equipment can be used effectively with bait or with lures that are best when fished very slowly.

IV. Fishing with can casting

- A. **Caution:** safety first
 - 1. Demonstrate ability
 - 2. Adequate space
- B. Useful with baits or lures fished slowly
- C. Casting hand retrieves line and plays fish

Summary Activity

Set up a series of targets (3-10) of various sizes and at various distances. Some of these should be close and easy and others should be more challenging. Set a number of casts per target and allow all the participants to have the same number of attempts, recording hits (inside the target) and misses (outside the target). It is often wise to offer at least one station where the objective is to cast as far as possible, too. This helps the youngster who can cast a long ways but does not have excellent accuracy. Arrange some set of awards for the activity, making sure that everyone receives something in the process.

Lesson Narrative

Can casting is an excellent method of introducing casting principles before getting into discussion of different types of rods and reels and their applications in fishing. The hands-on exercise in can casting has a strong relationship with the forces involved in other types of casting, particularly those that use fixed spools, e.g. spincasting and spinning. It begins to develop timing and a sense of touch that are very important in methods introduced later.

Can casting is common in many parts of the world. It is an advanced form of handlining. Some people do not have access to rods and reels, but they have access to line and terminal tackle like hooks and sinkers. Early anglers used hand lines, where the line was simply coiled in the hand and the hook or lure was thrown into the water allowing the line to pay out from the coils. That method is still in use in many regions today, and it still catches fish. Once a fish eats the bait or grabs the lure, the line is simply pulled in hand over hand to bring the fish to shore or boat. Commercial fishermen even used the technique with multiple hooks, coiling the line in a tub as they laid a line of baits for fish like cod.

Can casting is a form of handlining that permits the angler to cast rather than simply let the currents or movement of a boat or raft move the bait or lure. Some people in the United States and many in other parts of the world have discovered that this technique can be effective as well as inexpensive. The tackle is simple B a can, bottle (not recommended) or similar smooth object is used as a reel. Line is attached to it and wound onto the spool neatly. Appropriate terminal tackle is attached, then the baited hook or lure is cast using the arms to provide the power.

Can casting works in a way similar to a spinning reel. The fixed spool holds the line. The momentum of the bait or lure pulls the line off the spool. Good can casters can rival spinning tackle in distance. A word of caution is advised. Always make sure this method is legal before using it. Some states require that a rod be used in order for the fishing to be considered recreational. In states where can casting is legal, participants can use this method very inexpensively. All it requires is the can, some line, a hook, perhaps a sinker or float, and some bait. All of that might cost less than \$1.00 to get you started.

Making a Can Casting Rig

Start with a sound, washed soda bottle (no beer cans please!) or a plastic bottle with a lid. You can have kids bring their own or you can save some for the purpose. Have the kids check to make sure that the

surface is smooth without nicks or sharp edges that might catch or cut the line. On cans you may want to remove the pull tab to reduce the number of objects that could snarl the line.

Select an appropriate line. Mill ends work great for this purpose. Because monofilament tends to cut flesh, outfits that are to be used for actual fishing should have moderately heavy line. For exercise purposes, lighter lines will permit longer, easier casting. In general, lines in the 8 to 20 pound test class are about right for actual fishing. They are heavy enough to be handled easily, but light enough to get good casting distance. Limp monofilament line lies better on the spool and is somewhat easier for kids to handle when spooling and tying knots.

If using a soda can with a reduced size rim, that makes an excellent place to attach the line. For instructional purposes, the easiest approach is to simply to wind the tag end of the line around the recessed rim two or three times, then bind it in place with a piece of electrical tape or duct tape. Just make sure that both ends of the mono are caught under the tape. For fishing, the line can be attached with an arbor knot or an improved clinch knot tied around the line. If a knotting approach is used, avoid discussion of the knots, just show them the one you want to use and have plenty of help handy to assist in tying them.

If the taping approach is used, tape both the tag end and the end of the standing line to the can with several turns of tape. The tape can even be used to provide a marker for the handle end of the can and remind kids that they should not wind line back any further than the leading edge of the tape.

Once the line is attached, it can be wound on the can neatly and compactly from the Ahandle@ part of the can to about 3/8 to 2 inch behind the rounded edge on the bottom. Be sure to leave the Ahandle@ clear of line wraps, since that is where you will be holding the can. Ideally the line should go on the can in the same direction in which it was wound on the spool. That will minimize line twist and snarls. Finish the rig by attaching the terminal tackle. For instruction, use a good sized practice plug or a sinker in the 3/8 to 2 ounce range.

Using the Can Casting Rig

Now that the rigs are made, it is time to start casting! Three methods are commonly used. We will use all three, going from the most simple and easiest to learn to the most demanding. Each of them has some similarity to techniques that will be used later, but we will not spend any time on those techniques unless they are introduced by kids or questions are asked.

The Throwing Method B Many can casters prefer this straight-forward method. Holding the can in your non-dominant hand (not the one you usually use or throw things with), point it toward the target. With the casting plug or sinker in your dominant hand, simply toss the plug or sinker toward the target. An underhand toss is usually more accurate and will give a more gentle presentation when fishing, but an overhand throw can also be effective. The hands can be used to control the flow of the line by placing a finger on the spool if desired. If you are good at tossing rings or balls or at shooting foul shots, this method should be simple.

The Pendulum Method B This method is like the one before except that a longer length of line is allowed to hang from the fingers of the casting hand. The can is gripped as before, but about a forearm=s length of line is stripped off and held in the casting hand. The lure should be well above the ground and out from the body. With the line held in front of you and your forearm parallel to the ground, drop the hand down and swing it backward (toward your back). Be careful here not to swing too violently or the casting plug may come around and hit you. When your arm is extended behind you, swing it forward and flick the wrist toward the target, releasing the line. If the kids have trouble getting a casting rhythm have them practice swinging the plug in a pendulum arc.

An alternative method is to simply hold a finger on the line near the lure, swinging the arm back to load it for a cast. Next swing the arm forward toward the target, releasing the finger holding the line as the can is about parallel with the ground. The first method is very similar to the Aflipping@ technique that will be learned later. The second closely mimics the underhand cast.

On both of them, timing is the critical element. If the lure pounds hard into the ground, the release was too early. If it tends to sail very high it was too late. If it goes straight up or even backward, it was extremely late. Use a positive coaching technique to help the kids learn what to do. Be very careful to use positive language and to teach the positive technique, avoiding the negative or the Awhat you did wrong@ approach.

The Sling Method B Nearly everyone knows about a shepherd with a sling and a rock slaying a giant, not to mention a lion and a bear. The principle is that the leather sling elongates the arm and stores more energy as it is accelerated in around the fingers. The same principle applies in this, the hardest method but the one with the longest casting potential. This method should be used carefully and well away from other people, windows, overhead wires and similar obstructions. Accurate once learned, this one often produces some stray shots early on. Start with the can held by the handle in the non-dominant hand. With about a forearm=s length of line between the fingers and the casting plug and the elbow slightly below horizontal, begin swinging the plug in a vertical circle around the fingers. The power is provided by the elbow and the wrist. Once the plug is moving fast enough for your satisfaction, simply release the line as the plug is moving forward toward the target. Additional control can be gained by exaggerating the final swing and extending the arm into the cast and toward the target.

Can Cast Fishing

Safety is always a concern with youth programs and the user of the can casting technique in actual fishing brings several issues to the fore. Before they do any fishing with this technique, the youngsters should demonstrate an ability to cast safely. Adequate space is a bit more critical with this technique than it is with rods and reels, primarily because an erratic cast may go in an unpredictable direction. In addition, it might be wise for the anglers to wear a leather glove on the casting hand to prevent line cuts.

Can casting is most useful for bait fishing or for lures that are at their best when fished very slowly. Since the line is retrieved directly by the casting hand and fish are played with the hands the direct connection to the fish may prove to be very exciting. Be sure to caution the youngsters about wrapping the line around their hands or fingers, particularly where large fish might be encountered.

The casting event suggested in the summary activity is an excellent way to wrap up a session on can casting.

Exhibit or Sharing Suggestions

1. Demonstrate the can casting technique with another group of young people. Lead them in a discussion of the technique and how it might be used.
2. Explore hook and line fishing methods around the world. Prepare an illustrated talk or demonstration on those methods ad share it with your group or another group that might be interested.
3. Prepare a set of posters showing how each of the can casting techniques is accomplished. Use them to assist your leader the next time the program is taught.

Community Service or Giving Back Activities

1. Lead another group, like a Boys or Girls Club or members at a local community center, in making and using can casting rigs (check local laws first).
2. Lead or assist in taking a youth group fishing using this technique or others accessible to you.
3. Include can casting, plastic bottle casting, and various can crafts in the recycling-reuse program of your community. Emphasize that reuse is even better than recycling and that once reused the items still can be recycled if desired.

Extensions or Ways of Learning More

Consider the principles involved in can casting. Compare those principles with the other types of casting that will be learned later in the program. Note that lengthening the arc on the swing of the plugs in can

casting is the same as going to a longer rod in other types of casting. Research the ways people fish in other parts of the world and compare their techniques to the ones you have learned.