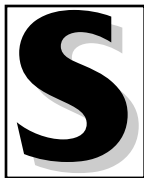


**RIO**<sup>®</sup>  
PRODUCTS



# *Basic **SPEY** & Two Handed Fly Rod Casting*

*by Jim Vincent  
with Simon Gawesworth*

A large, bold, black letter 'S' with a white outline and a drop shadow, set within a square frame.

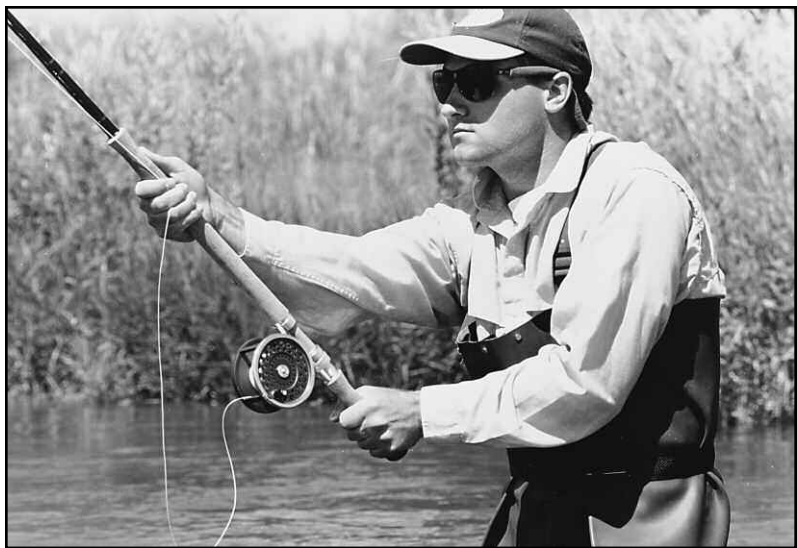
PEY CASTING for Atlantic salmon evolved along Scotland's legendary Spey River. Specialized casts and two handed fly rod designs were developed because backcasting was hindered by rocky outcroppings and trees bent on snaring an angler's flies. The original spey rods were sometimes eighteen to twenty feet long, made of Greenheart wood from British Guiana. The wood was dense and a sixteen foot rod could weigh twenty-four ounces or more. Such long fly rods have several names: double handed, two handed, salmon, long rods or more specifically, spey rods. Not all the casts made with them can be categorized as spey casts, however.

Although single and double spey casts were developed for fishing forested or canyon waters with limited backcasting, they've only recently made the transition to the US and Canada. Interestingly, what were once specialized casts now appear to be revolutionizing fly fishing in North America as well as finding new applications, such as the use of two handed rods in grasshopper or stonefly fishing, or in casting for Pacific salmon or steelhead. There is also a growing number of saltwater anglers who are finding the extra length of these rods very helpful for casting in strong winds or for getting the fly out over the surf. The advantage to fly fishers in learning the spey casts is that in situations where a backcast is difficult, water becomes accessible to the fly that was previously the province of hardware, bait or float fishermen. Once learned, the spey casts can produce—without a

backcast—consistent casting distances of seventy-five to 140 feet. Anglers can benefit in using these wonderful rods to make shorter casts as well. Often you need only the length of the rod behind you. And once the cast is made, the degree of line control is astounding because you can place the fly and mend to keep it in the “bucket” longer than with a conventional fly rod.

Just as conventional graphite rods have different actions, modern two handed rods present various actions, classified in three groups: fast tip, middle and progressive-through-butt action. The original Greenheart rods, like the famous Grant Vibration, had a soft action, but the weight or mass of these rods moving the line produced good spey casts. The new graphite two handed rods have much stiffer actions but are significantly lighter. Good double or two handed rods will make excellent overhand conventional casts and good spey casts as well. I prefer a rod that has a tip bending progressively into the midsection plus the reserve of power in a stiffer butt. This is necessary in order to load the rod with sixty or seventy feet of line out on the water and then follow through with the final forward delivery.

At first, trying to control a fourteen to seventeen foot rod will be frustrating if you mistakenly believe that since the two handed rod is longer and heavier you should use more force to put a bend in it. Just the opposite is true. It's far too easy to overpower a long rod and end



up with a chaotic mess of tailing loops and misdirected energy. Remind yourself constantly not to overpower the rod.

### Overhead Casting

Simple pick up and lay down casts, as well as shooting some line can be learned on the grass. However, it is not really possible to practice spey casts effectively off a grassy surface as a degree of tension is needed to help the spey casts work. In recent times, a number of casters have developed special leaders with long tag ends that make it possible to practice on the grass. Yet, for true mastery moving water or a current is essential in learning how to load the rod in order to complete the casts. All directions in this manual are for the right handed caster. I hope that left handed casters will not mind transposing.

### Hand Positions

Initially, the fifteen and sixteen foot rods will seem very cumbersome. First, stand with the left foot slightly forward in the direction you wish to cast. There are several grip methods. I've seen an accomplished caster like Mike Maxwell keep his upper hand near the reel, yet Goran Anderson puts his upper hand in the midsection of the upper grip. I prefer to have my upper hand fairly high on the cork. I seem to get more leverage for distance casts with this position, but when making a short cast, or casting just with the tip of the rod, I bring my hand down. The lower hand I put comfortably on the lower end of the bottom cork, but I've seen some anglers cast beautifully with the lower hand all the way at the knob. Leif Stavmo uses a ring grip around the bottom of the button with only his thumb and index finger holding the rod. This enables him to hold all the shooting line with the other three fingers off the rod. Try all the grips and find the

one that is comfortable for you to cast.

The right hand should be on the upper end of the cork, level with and just in front of the right shoulder. The left hand, below the reel, at the lower cork, should be out six to eight inches from the left hip.

### Stance & Overhead Casting

You are going to rock back on the right foot in coordination with the backcast and rock your weight forward onto the left foot in synchronization with the forward stroke. You can easily look back over your right shoulder to watch your backcast because you have much more hip movement with this stance. The adage for single handed fly rods—that a good backcast is essential for aerodynamic forward casting—is also true for two handed fly rods.

Start by keeping the tip of the rod at the surface and in one smooth motion apply power progressively until you stop at one o'clock to form the loop. While this stop should usually occur around the one o'clock position, don't let this become an unchanging rule. Longer lengths of line will necessitate a longer stroke. To avoid overpowering the rod, try using just two fingers and the thumb of each hand. It's so easy to overpower these rods with subsequently tailing loops, you must always remember these words: **DO NOT OVERPOWER**. This is especially true of the softer action rods. The caster has to be very smooth and progressive in acceleration with a soft rod to prevent loop crossover or a tailing loop.

After making the stop on the backcast, I like to lower the rod butt slightly which helps keep longer lengths of line aerialized and also

accomplishes that all important drift. This is also done in a single handed rod cast. When your backcast loop has almost straightened out, apply a smooth forward acceleration of power and stop at eleven, drifting to the ten o'clock position on the forward cast. Most of the power and stop is accomplished with your lower hand. You'll notice if you make the forward stop while turning over the rod and pointing the tip toward the opposite bank that you'll get a nice smooth loop. If you're casting one of RIO's interchangeable tip spey lines, you'll see how much smoother your cast will be if you turn the tip over gently. The line will just glide out in a nice loop even with a 200 grain sinking tip.

One very useful cast for the two handed rod and interchangeable shooting head was developed by tournament caster and rod designer, Jimmy Green of Asotin, Washington. Jimmy picks up line from the downstream side and makes the backcast parallel with the stream flow, he then comes over the downstream shoulder to end the backcast. Jimmy turns his body to face the stream for the final forward delivery. The rod actually moves around his head.

Here is Jimmy's method—I hope my interpretation does it justice. He's on the left bank facing downstream, the water flowing from right to left. The line has swung all the way downstream parallel to his bank and Jimmy starts the cast, his weight distributed on his feet at a forty-five degree angle to the current, left foot slightly forward. He faces the downstream position of the line parallel to the current, makes a backcast over his left shoulder in line with the bank. Then as

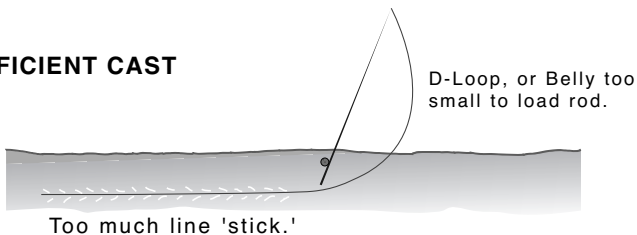
he moves the rod around over his right shoulder for the forward cast, he rotates his body to turn and face the stream perpendicularly and makes the forward delivery. This cast is a change of direction forward cast, very effective for a shooting head style fly line. If Jimmy is standing on the right bank, river flowing left to right, he lifts the line over the right shoulder, then turns and casts forward more over his head by tilting the rod tip. With Jimmy Green's cast there is a lot of movement in the hips.

### Spey Casting

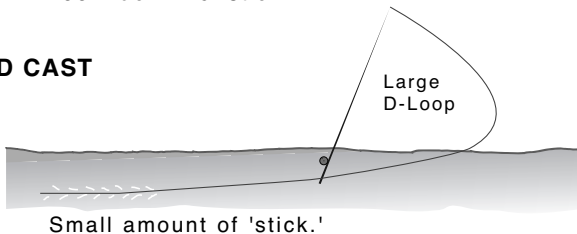
The simplest and most known of the spey cast family is the roll cast. Just as in roll casting with the single handed rod, when using the two handed rod, draw your line back slowly until the rod is about one o'clock behind. Let the fly line sag and form a belly behind you and then drive forward against this belly to complete the forward stroke. The problem with the roll cast is that you are trying to load your rod against a small amount of "dead" line behind you. Far more efficient, though a little more tricky, is the switch or forward spey. This involves a little "kick" of the rod when making the back stroke~just enough to create a larger belly (and thus more weight), so that when you start the forward stroke, you are driving the rod against a "live line." Both the extra belly weight and live line ensure that the rod is very well loaded for the forward cast, resulting in a much longer and less tiring cast. With all the spey casts, the forward cast should unroll completely above the water, like the tight loop of a well executed forward cast made by a single handed rod. Think of the single spey as a



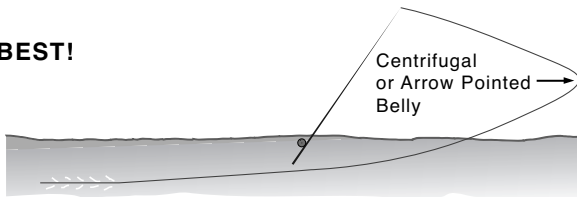
## INEFFICIENT CAST



## GOOD CAST



## THE BEST!



live line roll cast with a change of direction. For all of the spey casts, you need to make this forward spey or live line roll cast. It's the essential final delivery.

Learning to make this live line roll cast is quite simple. Start with about sixty feet of line on a pond laying straight out from you. For the right hand uppermost on the cork, put your left foot forward a couple of feet, right foot back. Instead of dragging the line back to the one o'clock position as you might for the standard roll cast, rock back on your right foot while making a smooth flip or slight cast to your side, letting only a small portion of the line and leader touch the water. The second it touches (anchors), start the forward stroke. The easiest way to remember an effective forward stroke is: Body, Arm, Flick. Start the forward stroke with a slight body lean, shifting your weight from the back foot to the front. As the body moves, push your arms forward and then accelerate the rod to eleven o'clock with a short flick. This flick should combine a slight forward wrist flick of the upper hand with a slight backward tug of the bottom hand. On the backcast, you will form a large "D" shaped loop. Try to make a hard stop of the rod. Instead of a wide open D shaped loop you will notice after a little practice that this backcast loop looks like an arrow point. The point of the arrow is facing behind you toward the shore. The key is to allow as little line and leader as possible to anchor on the water in front of you. Keep your back straight and do not roll the shoulder as this dissipates energy, but do rock from your right foot back to your left foot forward on the final forward delivery. While making the Switch Cast

do not pull the rod directly vertical. Rather, swing the rod out from your body in a slightly horizontal position. Concentrate on making the back cast and forward cast directly opposite one another or what we call the 180 degree principle. You will achieve much more distance and get the rod-loading stop and arrow-shaped belly if you do this. Always try to get the anchor or fly which loads the rod into the water close to your body or within a rod length. A pond is ideal to do this exercise and this motion is the most important action for all spey casts.

Practice, practice, practice. Practice the right hand uppermost on the cork, left foot forward, right foot back, line coming off the right shoulder, and practice the left hand uppermost on the cork, right foot forward, left back, line off to the left side. Once you are able to make smooth aerialized forward spey or live line roll casts that have a forward loop that looks like the forward loop on a standard overhead cast, you are ready to learn the change of direction casts (or true spey casting) which are:

- Double Spey
- Single Spey
- Snake Roll
- Snap T

The Snap T is a derivative of the Single Spey that many casters find easier to learn.

## Double Spey

With the double spey you can cast to any angle from forty-five degrees downstream to forty-five degrees upstream. It's the spey cast to use when the wind is blowing downstream and it's easily remembered by the three D's: In a Downstream wind, use a Double spey with your Downstream arm. It's generally considered the easier of the spey casts to learn because the timing is not as critical as in the single spey.

For the right handed caster, let's start on the right bank looking downstream, the current flowing from left to right, the wind blowing downstream. You'll need a little more room behind you than in the single spey, however, the double spey is actually easier to master than the single spey.

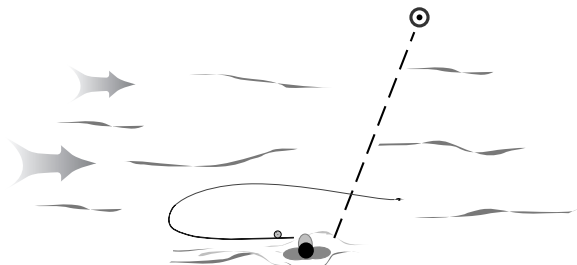
The basic idea is to pick up the line from directly downstream, casting a loop of line upstream parallel with the water (side cast) with the fly remaining just downstream of you. Then, change the direction of the loop from upstream to downstream, speying out the line at the desired angle. Again, the ideal is to aerialize all the line just letting the fly touch the water at its anchor point. In reality, usually a couple of feet of line is also anchored. Face the direction in which you wish to cast. The final forward delivery is from the downstream right shoulder, so your left foot should be forward to transfer your body weight into the cast on the final delivery. Plant the opposite foot forward to balance the shoulder in the final forward delivery and help you rotate at the hips.

Pull out sixty-five feet of RIO's MidSpey Weight Forward line or

the head portion of the shorter WindCutter line so that all the belly is outside the rod tip and allow it to drift directly downstream to your right. When the line is directly below and you feel the maximum drag, point the rod down toward the water so that the tip is one inch above the surface. Lift the rod to the starting position of eleven o'clock, tip parallel with the current and fly. Sweep the rod upstream, across your face in a half moon arc, stopping roughly twelve inches above the water. This lifts most of the line off the water causing the current drag to load the rod. You'll then gently cast the line, which you've picked up with the rod loaded, to form a loop parallel with the current. The fly should land just downstream of you. The rod is now across your chest, the line looped upstream, parallel with the current. This is the most difficult stage to estimate for the double spey.

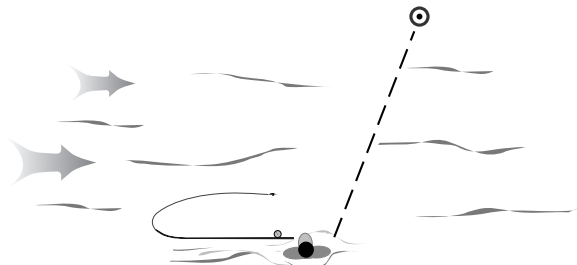
With too much power, you will throw the fly way upstream above you. Too little power and the fly will be too far downstream to form the loop and forward delivery. Every current is different. Faster currents are easier to cast in than slower ones. It will take a few casts to judge the right amount of power needed. Try lifting the rod horizontally and evenly loaded in order to gauge how much of a "flip" upstream is needed to put the fly below and downstream from your body. I turn my upper hand palm up fairly fast, just before the finish, and it helps me gauge this side cast.

If the fly lands upstream of you, let the fly line flow back down even if it's frustrating to wait until you have the maximum drag once again. It is important to remember that in the single spey the fly is cast



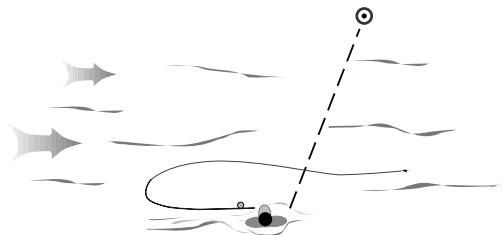
Correct position after stage 1.

**DOUBLE SPEY**

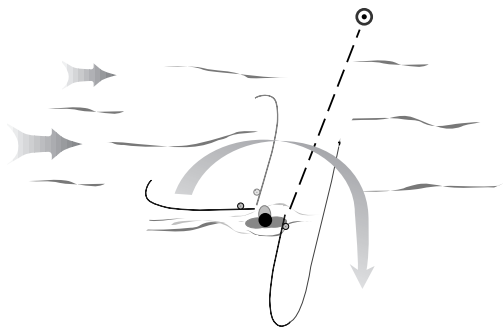


Fly too far upstream— dangerous.

**DOUBLE SPEY**



Wrong— fly too far downstream.  
**DOUBLE SPEY**



Correct position after stage 2.  
**DOUBLE SPEY**

just above the angler. In the double spey, the fly should land downstream of the caster.

Then begin to move the rod horizontally downstream tearing most of the line out of the water, making a “white mouse.” When the rod is close to your downstream hip, start a smooth acceleration of power, bringing the rod upward and behind your downstream shoulder to a one o’clock position. The fly still needs to be anchored in the river at the same place in which you completed the first move. Try to keep as much line as possible off the water. Ideally only the leader (cast) and fly should be anchored. There is only a slight pause at the one o’clock position. During this motion the tip of the fly line can slide parallel to or slightly behind you, but the fly must be in front and downstream. Remember, you are trying to create a big belly of aerialized line behind you. This line will form a giant D, or even better, an arrow-shaped loop which Simon Gawesworth calls the “V-loop or arrow pointed belly.” In one fluid motion, rod angled at one o’clock, rising upward and away from you, left arm close to your right breast, right arm slightly away from the shoulder, rock forward onto your left foot. Push out with the right arm then pull with the left hand on the final forward delivery, aiming high toward the trees. If you don’t stop the rod’s motion at this point, all you’ll get is a sloppy roll cast. You want a nice tight loop, well over the water, just as when you’re casting a single handed fly rod with a wedge driving out the front of the loop.

You can also shoot line for optimum distance, if necessary. The



final loop will be at least four to ten feet above the water and look like a regular overhead cast rather than a roll cast.

This is where the rod action comes into play. As you get more confident and competent, the faster tip action rods will give you the best spey casts. Just like overhead casting with a single handed rod, the tip action with the spey rods will give you tighter forward loops and faster, more arrow pointed D loops behind. The progressive action rods with a good stiff lower section will enable you to make the fulcrum or final delivery near your waist. The softer action rods will necessitate your making the final forward delivery higher up on your body or by your face. Some anglers call this the Gillie Style.

One alternative that might help your double spey is in the second stage. While bringing the loop of line from the upstream position to the downstream position, draw a flat inverted V ( ) with your rod tip. You would gently swing the rod tip out toward your target, then accelerate back to the side and behind to the launch position. This has the effect of creating a much faster belly behind you and thus more load.

### Timing and Weight Transfer

The vital element in spey casting is timing, but the more I slow down and relax the better I cast. The most prevalent error made by beginners is having too much “line stick” (line lying on the water) because the more line stick the more power you need to get the fly line airborne. Weight transfer is critical in making a smooth double spey cast. Start by leaning onto your forward left foot, make the little flip of loop parallel with the current. Then transfer the weight to your rear

right foot when you bring the loop of line downstream to the launch position. Then transfer your weight again to the forward left foot on the final forward delivery.

After you have accomplished the double spey with the right hand uppermost on the cork, go to the left bank and try practicing the double spey with your left hand uppermost on the cork and right foot forward. It will feel awkward at first until a modicum of proficiency is achieved, but keep at it. Force yourself to learn with your left hand uppermost on the cork as well as your right. You can make both double and single spey casts by angling the rod over the opposite shoulder, but to be a proficient spey caster, you should learn to cast with both left and right hands uppermost on the cork.



### Double Spey

At the start of the double spey, lower the rod to just an inch above the surface.



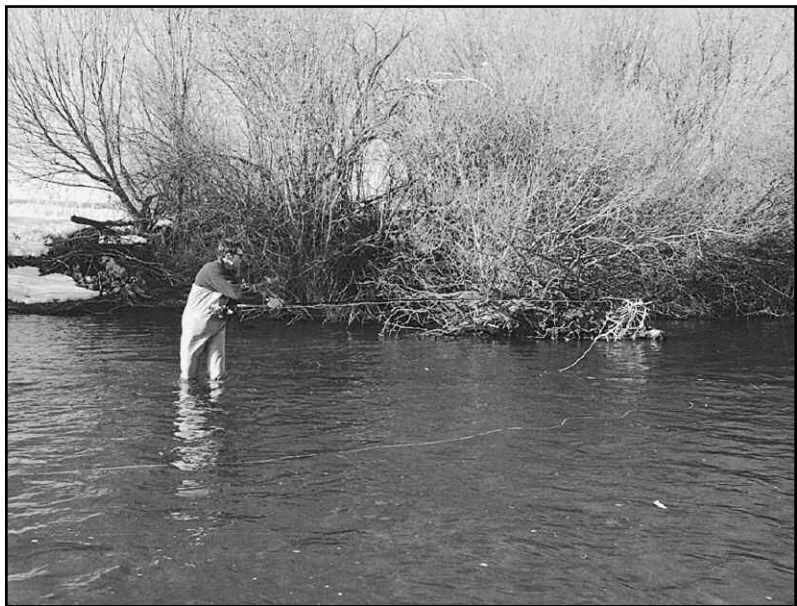
Double Spey

Lift the rod to the eleven o'clock position and pause.



### Double Spey

Sweep the rod upstream across your face and down to the water.



Double Spey  
End position of stage 1.

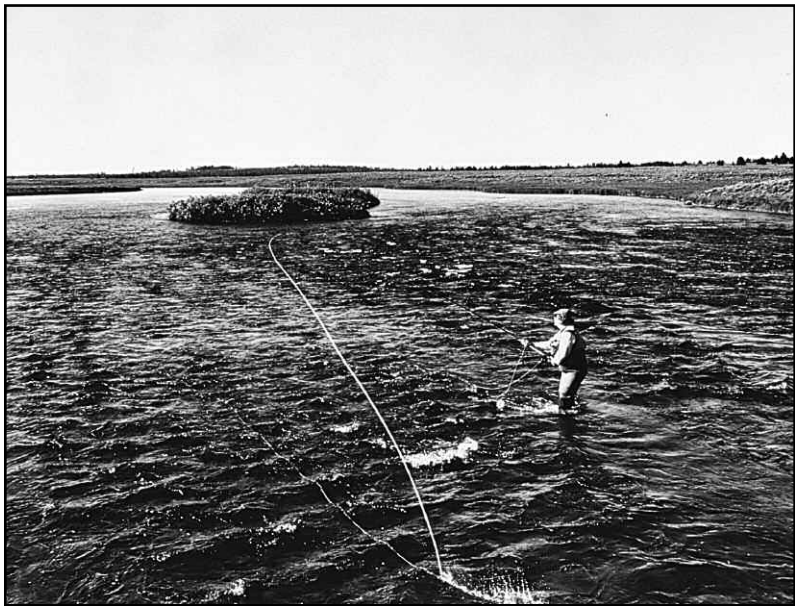


Double Spey  
Forming a loop parallel with the current.

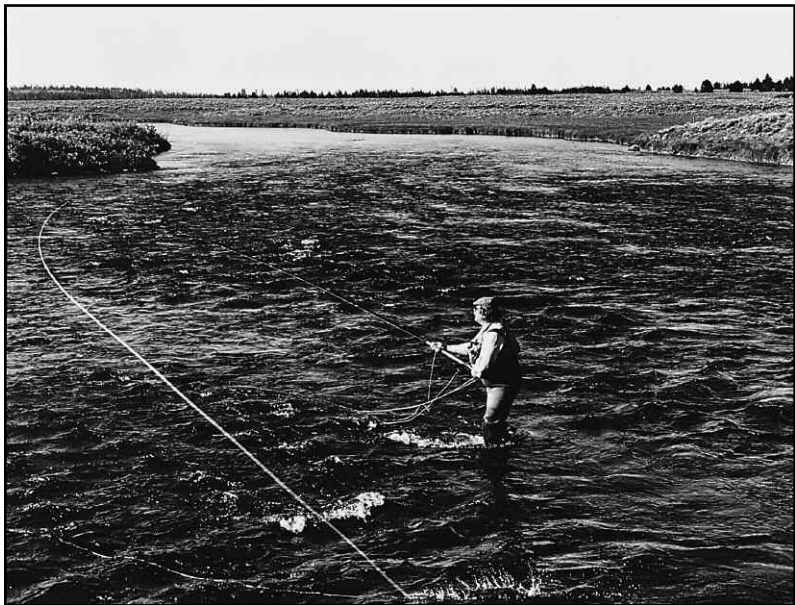


Stage Two – Double Spey  
Move the rod downstream. Note the White Mouse.





Double Spey  
White Mouse moving line downstream.

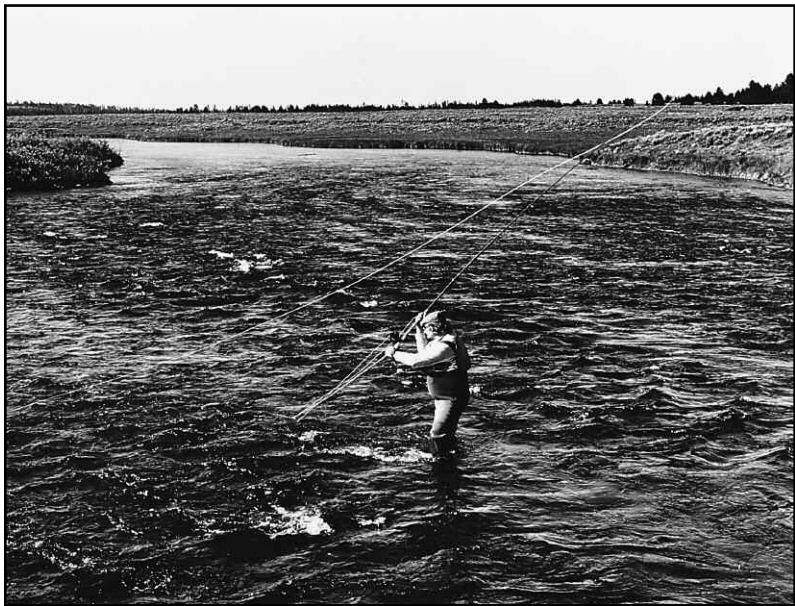


Double Spey  
Moving the rod horizontally downstream.



Double Spey

Starting to come around to form the D loop.



Double Spey

Moving rod backward to form D loop.



Double Spey  
Forming the D loop, or Belly.



Double Spey  
Perfect arrow pointed belly.



### Double Spey

Transfer weight to front foot and make a positive stop.



Double Spey  
Loop above water with wedge.



### Single Spey Cast

The single spey allows the line to be picked up from directly parallel with the angler downstream and, with a change of direction, cast across the stream—usually at a forty-five degree angle—without a back-cast. It's usually employed for a quartering downstream technique as when fishing a dragging dry fly for steelhead or Atlantic salmon in North America and Canada. It's the cast to use if the wind is blowing upstream or if many rocks, trees or brush form a barrier directly behind you. The advantage of the single spey is that the loop is formed more upstream and out from the angler than with the double spey. It's also the most powerful spey cast if distance is the primary goal. The single spey becomes more difficult when the casting angle is greater than forty-five degrees to the direction of the flow, but with practice one can cast at a ninety degree angle. Using just the right hand on top of the cork, both left and right shoulder casts can be made depending on the direction of the current. However, using just the right hand uppermost and leaning the rod over the opposite shoulder (right bank for right handed caster) will not have as positive a result as using the left hand uppermost on the cork. Though awkward at first, try to practice also using the left hand on top of the handle. Once learned, the left hand single spey is incredibly useful, especially if you're on the right bank and a strong wind blows upstream or the area behind you is full of obstructions. I've had to force myself to learn both right and left hand dominant positions uppermost on the cork by alternating single spey and double spey casts while fishing through a pool no matter which bank I am on. If you force yourself to do

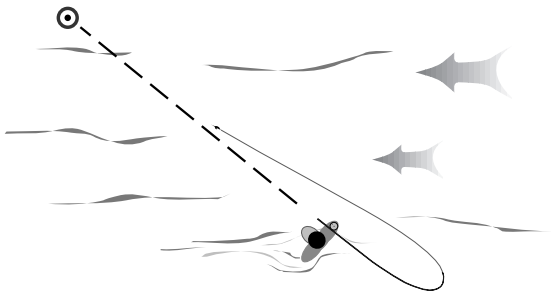
this you will learn the left hand single and double spey casts.

For the single spey, you pick the line up from downriver and place it on the water just upstream of where you are standing. Ideally, only the tip of the fly line should touch the water, the rest of it creating a belly 180 degrees to the target. As the fly line kisses the water, instantly start the forward stroke—splash and go!—speying out the line from the upstream shoulder.

For the right handed angler with the right hand on top of the cork, stand in the river on the left bank (water flowing from your right to left) perpendicular to the current, left foot forward. Using the opposite foot forward from the top hand position in order to transfer your weight on final forward delivery will enable you to pivot from the hips. Try not to wade deeper than your knees, especially while learning the spey casts. I believe that for every foot deeper than your knees, you will take off five feet (1.5 meters) from your optimum forward cast.

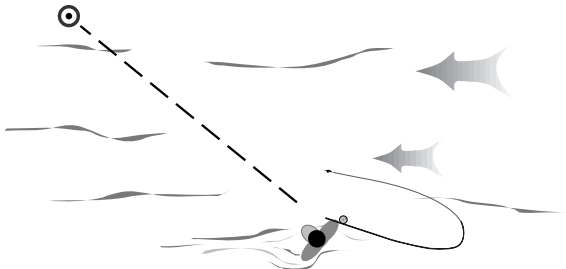
Now, here you are, standing on the left bank looking downstream. The river is flowing from your right to your left. The final delivery will be from the upstream shoulder. Fifty to sixty feet of the RIO MidSpey line has drifted directly downstream to your left. Hold the rod tip pointed toward the fly, just an inch above the surface, then pull in a yard or two of line in order to straighten it and keep a tight load. Raise the tip to a ten o'clock position and at the aim point where you want to complete the cast. This will be at ten o'clock but at a forty-five degree angle to the bank, lifting most of the line off the water and producing a big bend in the rod due to the current's drag on the line.

After the lift, immediately drop the rod two inches and sweep the rod upstream horizontally, but with a shallow dip or saucer and around to a one o'clock position, stopping directly opposite your target. As you come around, swing at your hips to put weight on your back right foot. By rotating at your hips you will help the line get behind you to the launch position. It is very important that the dip starts immediately after the lift. All too easy is to swing the rod horizontally before the dip. Which will result in the anchor point too far upstream as well as a "Bloody L." This will form a belly or D Loop directly in line with the target, allowing the fly to touch just upstream of you. Very little power is needed as the rod is already loaded from the lift stage. The fly should be upstream and forward of the caster, far enough upstream so that it doesn't come sweeping past as you make the change of direction. But if it's too far upstream, it will be difficult to spey out the line. Your back-cast and line should be directly opposite the direction of the forward stroke. Try to keep the rod rising slightly as you come around. This will keep the loop of line off the water. Ideally strive for just the fly hitting on the water forward and upstream of the caster, thus anchored on the water. However, it's essential that most of the line remain in the air, a ballet accomplished in one smooth motion with no stops in the action. Immediately make the forward delivery as soon as the fly alights on the water upstream of you. At the start of the cast you will rock your weight slightly forward onto your left foot, then on the backcast pivot your weight to your right foot, rotating your hips to the right, and on the final forward delivery rock your weight back to the left foot.



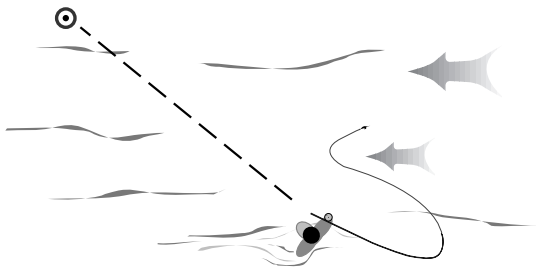
Correct— rod, belly and fly line opposite target.

### **SINGLE SPEY**

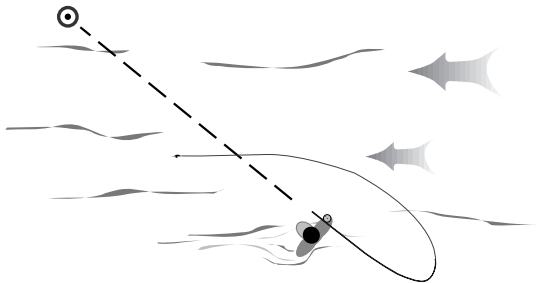


Wrong— not lined up.

### **SINGLE SPEY**



The Bloody L.  
**SINGLE SPEY**



Dangerous- fly too far downstream.  
**SINGLE SPEY**

Remember: Body, Arm, Flick.

If you use too much power on the lift, the fly will land too far upstream in order to spay out correctly. Also, if you dip the rod too much just before the launch position or use too much power at this stage, you will get what is called the “Bloody L.” The anchor of fly, leader and the tip of line will land in what looks like a reverse “L” shape. This causes the line to stick even more so in the water making it very difficult to complete the final forward delivery. Try to keep the rod flowing smoothly, slightly inclining more flat out toward the river, not over your shoulder. Practice getting the loop of line behind you.

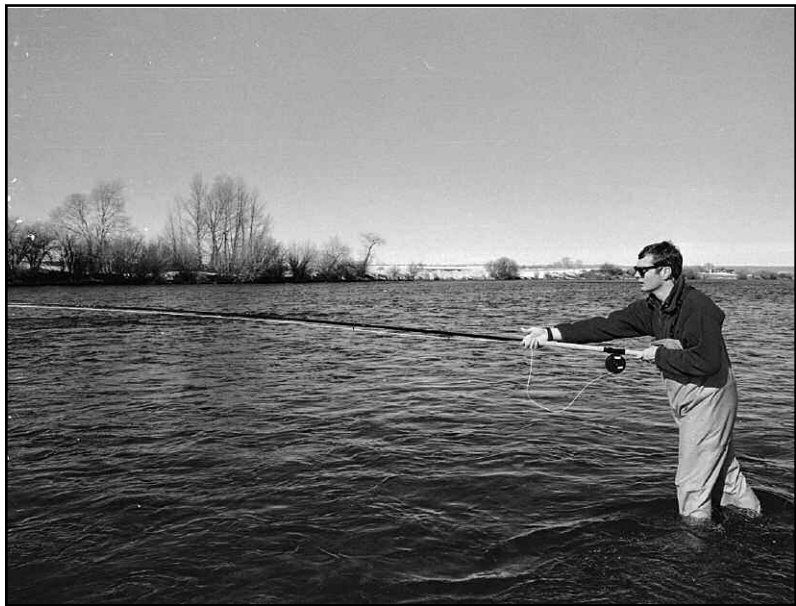
#### White Mouse and Line Stick

Two phrases in the classical Scot’s method of spay casting describe this phenomenon. The first is the “White Mouse” and the second is “Line Stick.” The White Mouse is the effect of the line on the water as it goes ripping along the surface. The loaded rod, the swish and change of direction leave a “White Mouse” wake.

“Line Stick” refers to the amount of line left on the surface—the line not in the air. “Too much stick” is a term referring to too much of the line being anchored on the water’s surface during the final forward delivery.

Note: To better get the feeling of this change of direction, wind in the line and tie off the yarn or practice fly to the reel. Now rotate the rod tip fairly fast in a clockwise circle. Feel the torque on the rod as you rock back on your heels and then forward. This clockwise torque is why we tape the ferrules before we start to cast. You’ll be doing this motion

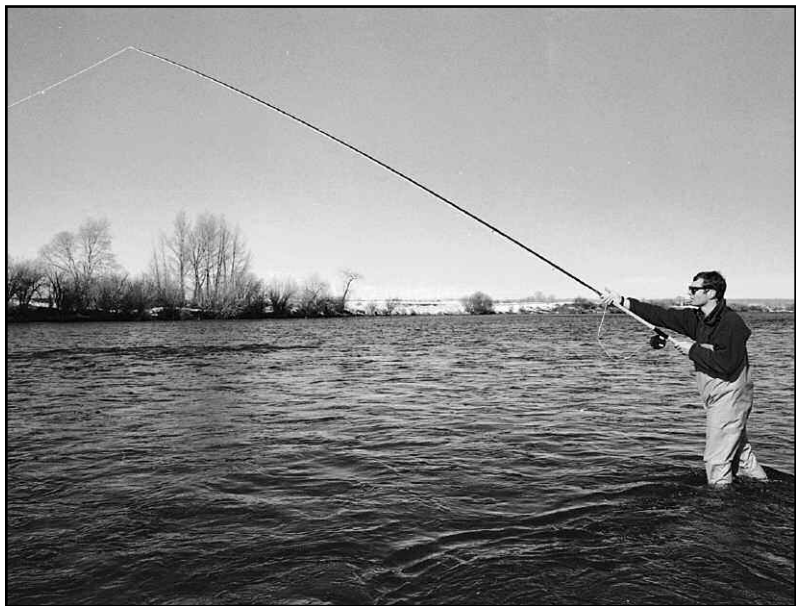
with the line out in the next step. It's advisable to tape the ferrules together to keep from casting off a rod section in this twisting motion. Also, for all practice use only yarn at the end of your leader (cast) or a fly with its point broken off. I prefer a real fly because of its weight and it seems to help in getting a good anchor. And always wear some type of eye protection.



### Single Spey

Start the rod pointing toward the target, low.





### Single Spey

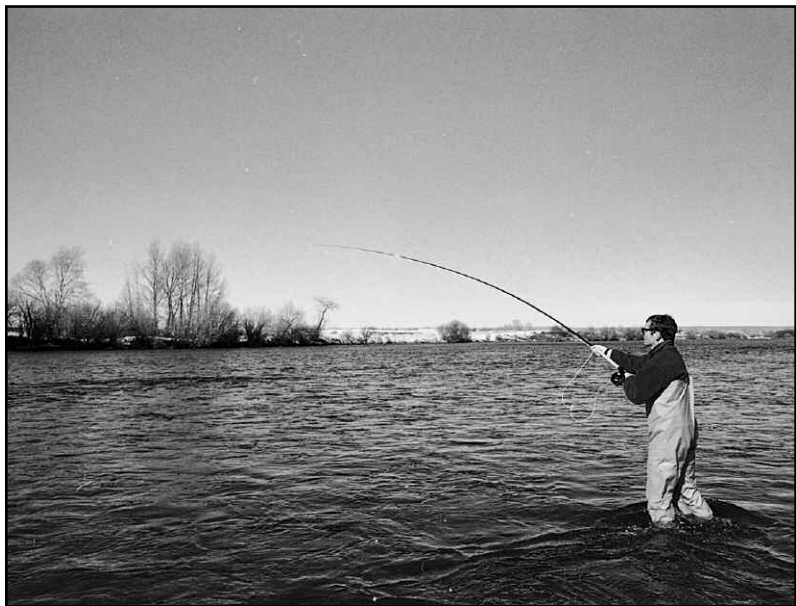
Lift the rod to about 10:30, still pointing at the target.



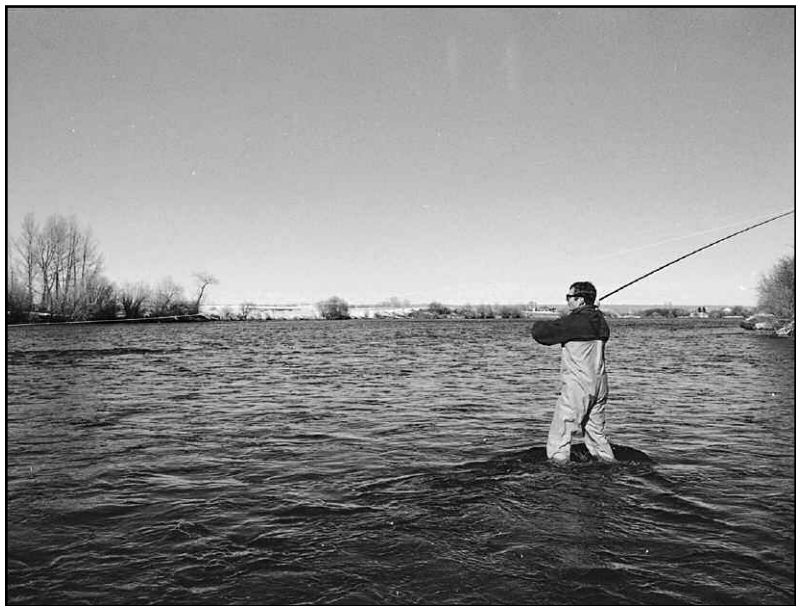
Single Spey  
Start of dip and horizontal outswing.



Single Spey  
Rod accelerating back.



Single Spey  
Rod at lowest point of dip.



Single Spey  
Rod at end of back stroke.



Single Spey  
Start of forward stroke.



Single Spey  
Finish in this position.



Single Spey  
Shoot line at this position.



### Single Spey, Method Number Two

There are two ways to accomplish the single spey. The first is as described before. The second method is preferred by some accomplished casters. The difference is in the start of the cast. I've met some Scots gillies who like to start the cast by lifting the rod up and moving it slightly in toward the downstream bank. Using a rolling motion with the uppermost back of hand toward the sky, the hand is turned over so the palm is up when the rod is swept out again into the river. The movement flows into an underhand half moon sweep as the line and fly are carried upstream of the body into the launch or final forward delivery. The total motion is in a gentle figure eight design. Sometimes I use this motion when I am casting a sink tip or full sinking line in order to get the line moving toward the surface, but I find it very inefficient to come inshore and then out again when using a full floating line. Also, it is very easy to dip too much with this style and get a Bloody L.

However, no matter which way you prefer to start the cast, the rod—after being cast lightly upstream and parallel with the current—will still be loaded from the upstream cast and a pull should be felt on the rod tip. Now the rod tip is rising from the last phase, rotated fast in a clockwise direction from a forward and upstream position to a backward and slightly over-the-upstream shoulder position necessary for the start of the final delivery of the single spey. The rod is still rising upward pointed at one o'clock forming a big aerialized loop. Your left arm should be bent and close to your right breast, with your right arm bent and slightly out from your body, the rod positioned at a forty-five

degree angle to your body.

In one continuous fluid motion, keeping the load on the rod tip, the line swinging, pull the cork with the lower hand in toward your body while driving your upper hand forward. Most of the power is accomplished with the lower hand and the upper hand acts as a fulcrum with just a little push out. With a progressively stiffer action rod you usually only need to “kiss” it forward adding more force for longer lengths of line. The fulcrum is low by pivoting with your left hand slightly above your waist. With a softer action rod you must jab the tip upward and forward with more force, and usually your hand will be much higher even to the side of your face. I’ve also seen accomplished spey casters with a soft action rod make the final forward delivery right from the chest by making a jabbing motion or what is sometimes referred to as a “Power Push.” No matter what type of action your rod has, you need to rock your body weight forward onto your left foot on this final forward delivery. Good spey casting has the same body weight transfer as projectile sports such as golf, baseball, tennis, discus, hammer, or javelin throwing. The body weight transfer is essential, much more important than the power applied by your arms alone. When you come forward, try to keep from rolling your shoulder. This only dissipates the energy, and may be stressful for your shoulder. Try to keep your back straight and make a good hard stop on the forward delivery. This forward stop is a little quicker than in a standard overhead cast.

By pulling the lower handle in toward your chest as you rock forward onto your left foot, the power increase is amazing. This body

weight transfer combined with the final forward delivery will create an elliptical aerodynamic loop and you will be astounded at how far the line will travel. The whole delivery is intended to produce a standard tight loop forward cast above the water. Remember that all stages must occur in one fluid motion. I've broken them down for analysis, but in real time there are no pauses. The whole key is to keep everything moving with the load on the rod, much as in the Belgian Cast.

### Single Spey - Advanced

The best performance from a spey cast will be when the D loop or belly is: A.) Directly opposite where your forward cast is going to go, B.) Travelling back fast, in an arrow, or better still, a needle point (pulling the rod back and increasing the load on it) and C.) As big as possible (where there is room) The arm movement of the forward cast should be long. If you follow the basic rule of thumb mentioned earlier when forward casting (Body, Arm, Flick), the body still starts the forward cast and the arm follows through, but the flick of the rod tip should be as late as possible, when your upper arm is almost fully extended. Remember to try and time it so that both the bottom and top hands push/pull together. This “mega spey” can only be achieved with a fast tip action rod, a low, fast and almost flat back stroke, precise timing and a RIO spey line!

### The Learning Process

Stop the cast immediately if the fly floats back downstream and past you to prevent being hit by the fly. You should practice both right shoulder and left shoulder single spey casts, using just the right hand on top of the cork, and then do the same on the right bank with the left hand on top. I guarantee you'll feel very awkward when you first start using the left hand single spey, but it will come with time and practice. Again remember to keep the fly upstream of you. In all spey casting, the length of the rod tip movement must be increased as the length of line being cast increases. Short casts, short strokes; long casts, long strokes. As you develop your spey casting skills there will come a time when you're pressed up tight against a bank with trees or obstructions directly at your back. You will learn to adapt by casting the line loop more out and directly upstream of you instead of behind and working just the tip of the rod, but this is an advanced technique you will learn on your own. One excellent practice for any of the spey casts is on a pond or lake where you can make the final forward delivery over and over. This is the most critical part of the casts. The three critical points of good spey casting are:

- (1) A big arrow-shaped D Belly
- (2) Small Line Stick (small anchor point)
- (3) Belly and rod tip directly opposite  
or 180 degrees to the direction of the forward cast.

There are basically two schools of spey casting: The classic method developed in the United Kingdom herein described and the Scandinavian technique which uses long weight forward or shooting head lines.

### Scandinavian Spey Casting

Goran Anderson, a Swedish master caster of the long rod arts, has developed a modified spey cast he calls the Underhand Cast. The main difference is the style of line. He uses a shooting head of thirty-six to forty feet (eleven meters) and instead of changing the line direction to change direction, he uses a unique technique of breaking the line from the surface, then pivoting his body to face the direction he wishes to cast, then forward speying immediately. Goran developed this cast because of the difference in amount of weight being applied to his shoulder. A long belly Weight Forward Spey line can weigh 1500 grains (ninety-seven grams) or more, but a shooting head style will weigh 400 to 600 grains (thirty-two grams). Multiply the difference in weight by the number of casts you make in a day and basically you are only lifting and casting half the pounds (kilos) to your body with the shooting head. Goran felt he was just too drained at the end of a hard day's fishing using the longer lines so he developed his unique style using the shooting head. The main disadvantage of using the shooting head is that you have to strip in line to the head on every cast, whereas with the conventional fly lines a cast is made with very little retrieval of line. It is also almost impossible to make a double spey cast with a shooting head.

However, the newer Snake Roll cast developed by Simon Gawesworth works very well with a shooting head. An overwhelming advantage of the RIO Interchangeable Tip WindCutter fly lines is that with sinking tips the flight time is much longer and more efficient for distance. Goran's basic Underhand Cast is similar to the standard spey

casts but slightly different.

Instead of going through all the gyrations in a double spey cast, he's more able to use just a forward spey stroke with the shorter shooting head type of line. His grip is more in the middle of the upper cork and his lower hand is at the knob or butt of the rod. He pivots the rod in the upper hand by keeping a loose grip and shoots line with the shooting head style of line from this upper hand. If he needs to change to a more radical direction than forty-five degrees, he pivots at the hips to turn his body from downstream to face the current as he gets ready to make the final forward delivery. Often he adds a really neat trick on the upstream lift at the beginning of the cast by describing a small circle with the rod tip counter-clockwise in order to break the fly line free of the water. Goran then comes back, anchoring only the fly and leader in the water, forming the D loop and then propelling the line forward in the traditional manner. Like the other accomplished artists of the two handed rod, Goran is able to make casts with right or left hand uppermost on the grip. A long seventeen foot leader (five meters) helps to anchor the fly and load the rod. I also like long leaders for traditional spey casts.

#### Snake Roll Cast

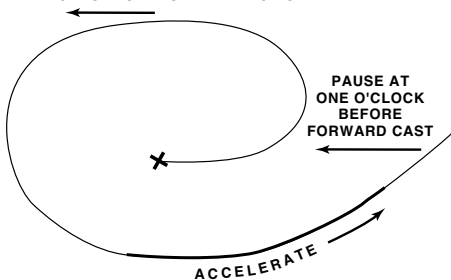
Simon Gawesworth, one of the finest casting instructors in the United Kingdom, taught me this cast and I now use the Snake Roll in place of the double spey cast or any time there is a downstream wind.

On the right bank, water flowing left to right, wind blowing downstream, point the rod tip downstream and wait until your line and fly are washed taut, directly downstream of you. The easiest way to

picture the rod tip movement is to imagine you are painting a large oval counter-clockwise egg shape, or better still an “e” shape with the tip, directly on your right hand side. Start slowly, backwards and flat, pushing the rod behind you. Accelerate the rod over in front of you, then “kick” the rod sideways and up to one o’clock. This kick should pick the line out of the water from downstream of you, and change the position of the line so that it lands in the water in front of you—pointing in the direction of where you want your forward cast to land. Then just kiss out the forward stroke. The centrifugal force of this cast will pull the line out of the water and let just the fly and leader land out and downstream of your body. The arrow-shaped D loop will form and then you forward spey.

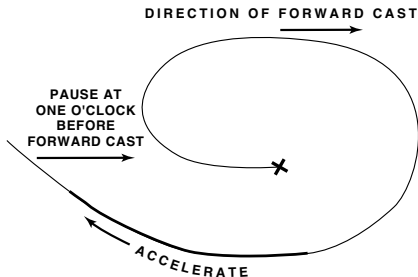
On the left bank, left hand on top, you do just the opposite and paint a clockwise oval or egg shape, again applying the power on the back half of the egg as you come into the launch position. This takes some practice, but it’s an excellent cast.

DIRECTION OF FORWARD CAST

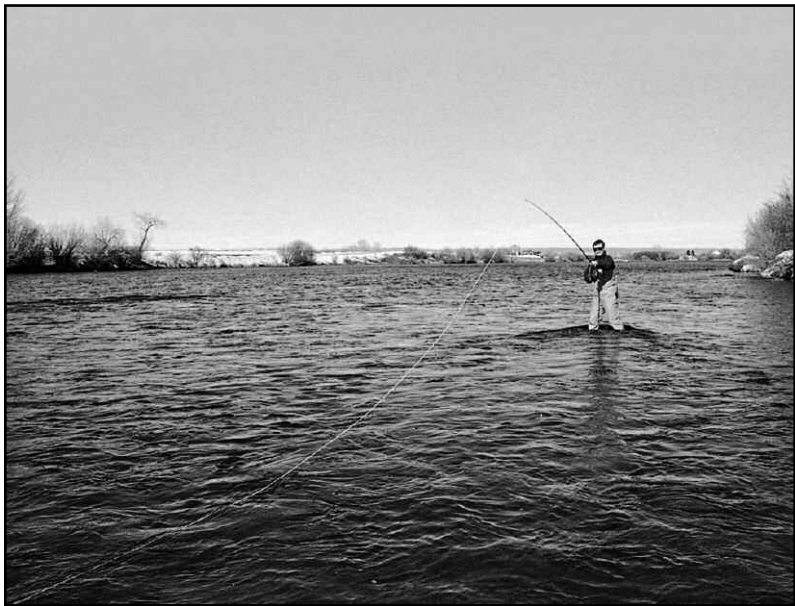


Rod tip path with  
right hand Snake Roll.  
**THE SNAKE ROLL**

Rod tip path with  
left hand Snake Roll.  
**THE SNAKE ROLL**







Snake Roll

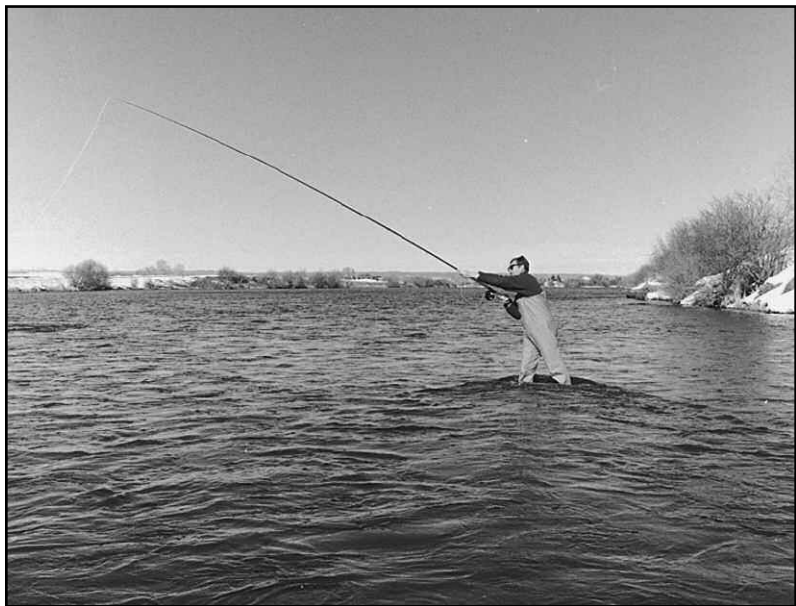
Rod pointing downstream, line taut.



Snake Roll  
Rod drifting backwards.

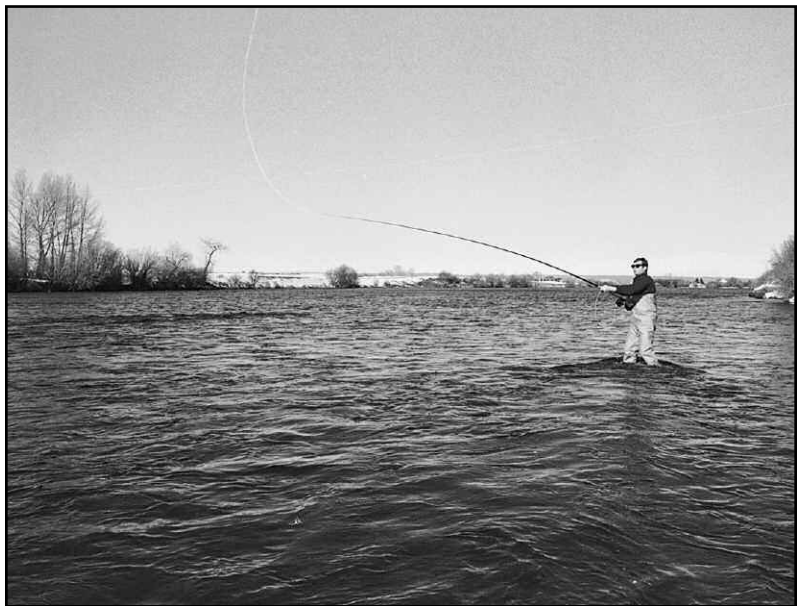


Snake Roll  
Starting the egg.



Snake Roll

Rod at maximum forward point.



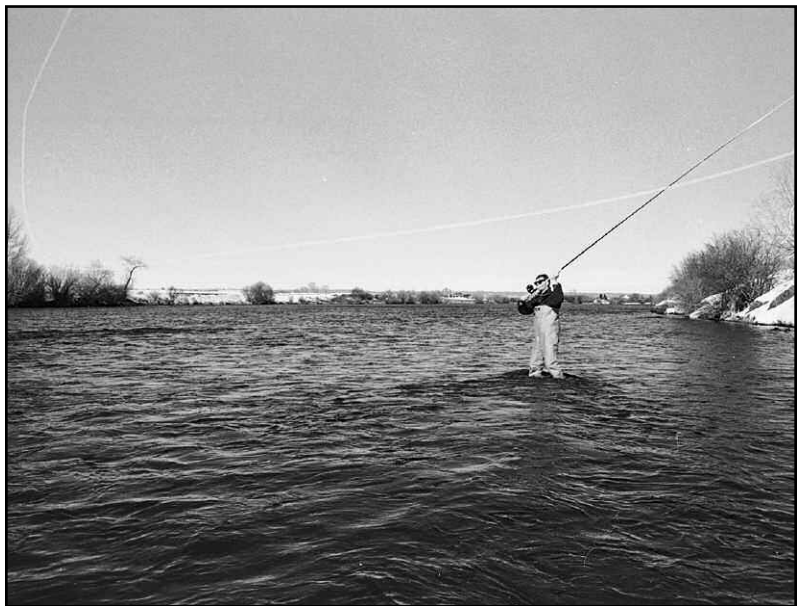
### Snake Roll

Line coming forward—rod accelerating back.



Snake Roll

Rod coming up to one o'clock.



Snake Roll

Rod at one o'clock, waiting for the line to touch.



Snake Roll

Finish forward stroke here.

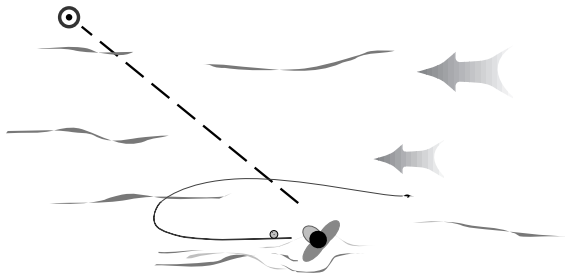


## The Snap T

One of the most recent developments of the spey casts is the Snap T. It's essentially a single spey, though many anglers find this technique easier to pick up and learn than the traditional way. The problem with the traditional single spey is positioning the anchor point in the right place. The Snap T will usually overcome this problem. Like all forms of spey casting, there are variations. Here are couple ways of trying it.

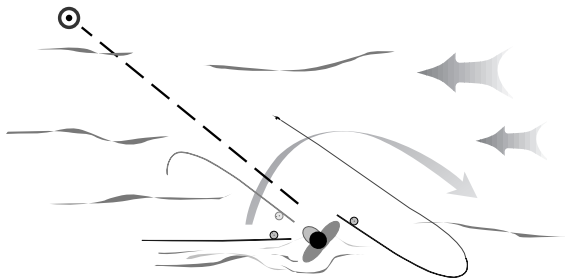
Make sure the fly line has washed taught, downstream of you on the dangle. Point your rod straight downstream at the fly and either raise your rod up to about eleven o'clock and quickly snap it down on the water, still pointing the rod downstream. Or raise your rod to the eleven o'clock position (pointing downstream) and then smoothly and gracefully draw a large curve with the rod tip—like a reverse letter C in a parallel plane to the current—finishing with the rod pointing back downstream where it started. The effect of either of these movements (if done correctly!) will lift the fly out of the water and land it just on your upstream shoulder with the fly line in a large loop back downstream of you. Once the fly and line have landed, chase the rod upstream—flat—then “kick” behind you and up to one o'clock to create the belly. Give the belly time to tighten, then finish the cast with the Forward Stroke.

When using a heavy sink tip you must first roll cast downstream to bring the line to the surface and accentuate the power of snapping the rod under itself while drawing the reverse C.



Rod, fly line and fly position after the 'snap.'

**SNAP T**



Rod, fly line and fly position after the 'chase.'

**SNAP T**



Snap T  
Rod moving upstream.



Snap T  
Rod lifting, line taut.



Snap T  
Rod 'snapped' under and back downstream.



### Snap T

Back at starting position, waiting for the fly line to land.



Snap T  
Chasing the rod upstream and flat.



Snap T  
Rod loaded on forward cast.





Snap T  
Loop outbound!

## **RIO's Spey Fly Lines for Two Handed Fly Rods**

*The chief advantages of spey casting are (1) you can keep the fly in the water longer and (2) with every cast the fly is again presented to fish.*

RIO makes three different tapers of spey line, each one unique and designed for a specific application.

For extremely windy conditions, or when I know I'll be using the longer sink tips primarily, I like to use the RIO WindCutter Spey Line, either in the full floater or the interchangeable tip version. This is also the line we recommend for novice spey casters. The line length varies from 115 to 130 feet (depending on line size) with the head length between forty-eight and fifty-four feet. The front taper is also two line sizes less than the normal line size, which aids in a delicate presentation. The different color, high-float formula running line makes it easy to see where to load the rod. After shooting out line on the forward cast, just pull the line in until the green running line is inside the guides. You will then know you have the head at the tip of the rod. The line is available in two versions, the full floating or the interchangeable tip version.

In the interchangeable tip configuration, the line has a front tip 15 feet long (Tip 1) and a 15 foot (4.6 meters) midsection (Tip 2) doubling as a second heavy floating tip for extreme wind and heavy flies. As well as these two floating tips, the line includes five different sinking tips for complete control of the depths needed to catch fish. This is an easy line to shoot and get distance with, particularly when using the sink tips. The one disadvantage is that you have to retrieve the running line all the way

until the whole head is in by the rod tip. I use this line for late fall, winter and spring fishing when I am using sinking tips more often.

The line comes with a 15 foot clear intermediate tip (1.5 ips), a 15 foot density compensated Type 3 Tip (3-4 ips), a 15 foot density compensated Type 6 Tip (6-7 ips), a 15 foot density compensated Type 8 Tip (8-9 ips) and an intermediate Tip 2 that we call the Sink Tip Compensator. Use this tip in place of the floating Tip 2 when you need the fly to stay down in the current at a greater depth.

RIO also manufactures the twenty-four foot Big Boy Density Compensated Sink Tips from 150 to 600 grains. These tips not only will provide even greater depth but also will eliminate the middle loop-to-loop connection of the Compensator. Just be sure to take off Tip 2 (as well as Tip 1) when attaching these Big Boys and attach them directly to the belly of your interchangeable tip line. In addition to being a heavy floating tip, the middle section (Tip 2) is used to adjust the line weight for a particular rod. For the lighter rods, you will either remove the middle section when overhead casting or pull in more line if spey casting.

The MidSpey is an excellent spey casting line. With a sixty-five foot head, it is a little longer than the WindCutter and perfect for the intermediate spey caster. RIO has designed this line for the spey caster who has mastered the basic techniques and is looking for a line that will improve his or her casting and fishing skills. The head is long enough to mend and control precisely the way the fly “fishes,” yet short enough to load the spey rod easily. Like all RIO spey lines, the MidSpey is two-colored. The body is tan and the high float running line is yellow, making

it very easy to know where the head ends and where the rod will load best. I have grown to like this line as an all-round spey casting line. Simon Gawesworth rates this as one of the most efficient spey lines RIO manufactures. Just like the WindCutter, the MidSpey comes in the same two versions: a full floating and an interchangeable tip version with two floating tips and five sinking tips.

For the accomplished spey caster, the GrandSpey is RIO's longest belly spey line. It has the advantages of both the mending capacity of the double taper and the shooting qualities of a weight forward line. The GrandSpey has a length of running line tapering into a medium length rear taper, a short body section and a very long, complex multi-compound front taper of up to seventy-five feet. The overall head length is between ninety and 100 feet (depending on line size), while the line length is between 120 and 140 feet. The line design is based on a time-tested taper. In 1895, Alexander Grant, creator of the Grant Vibration two-handed fly rod, cast a massive 195 feet with the continuous taper line he had designed. RIO has improved the front of Grant's classic taper so that it easily casts big flies and sink tips.

The GrandSpey line has three advantages over the traditional double taper line:

- (1) The length of the heavier line is 140 feet (42.7 meters) for extreme distance casting, not often used to its full length, but there are rivers and times when you will need this length.

- (2) The length and complexity of the front taper ensures that energy, once imparted into the line, travels down its whole length making it

much easier than a double taper to turn over a long line.

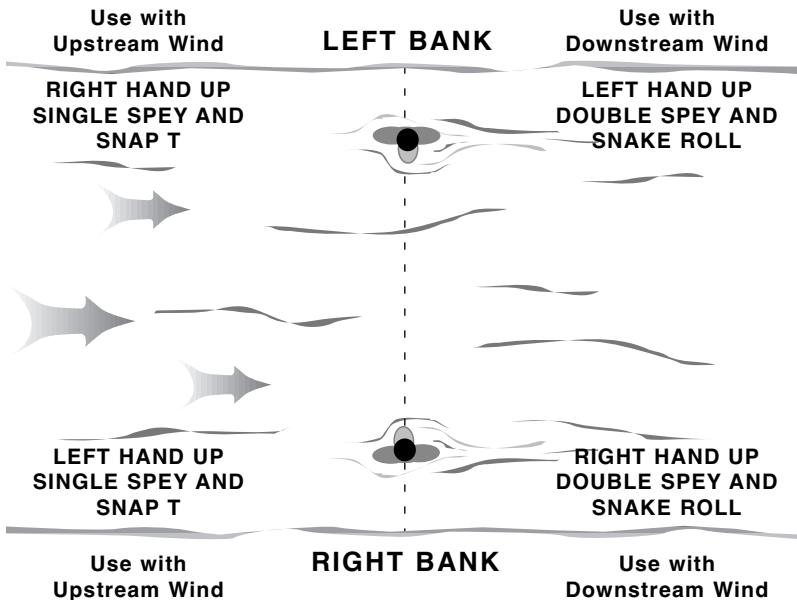
(3) When extreme distance makes it necessary, shooting the thinner diameter running line is a far better technique than shooting the thick body of a double taper. The complexity of the GrandSpey multi-step compound taper is necessary in the design of a line that can cast such a long distance, yet remain heavy enough to load a rod at only fifty feet. While the line has two rod designations, in reality it was created for the heavier number in order to load the corresponding rod (for example, using a, 8/9 line to load a #9 spey rod.)

If the line seems too heavy for your spey rod, just pull in more of the belly before making the cast. If it is too light, let more belly out. You can find the perfect point that loads your rod and mark it with some 10 lb nylon tippet. Just tie a small four-turn nail knot in the area at which you would grip the line with your hand. You can find this casting position by feel even in the dark. Like the other RIO spey lines, the GrandSpey has a different color running line to the head. The head is chartreuse in color and the running line is tan. Generally, you will want to pull in a rod length of the back taper and body until the chartreuse color is in your hands. You need to have some back belly diameter inside the rod tip to keep the load on the whole rod during the cast. This line also comes in a floating and an interchangeable tip version. However, because of its length, there is only one floating tip and five sinking tips. In relation to RIO's other spey lines, the advantage of the GrandSpey is that in traditional cast and swing spey casting it is not advisable to pull in a lot of running line in order to make the next cast.

A useful product from RIO for the spey caster is the WindCutter Upgrade. Many spey casters start by learning with the WindCutter line—still the best taper for beginners—and the really big sinking heads. However, there are many occasions where a longer head is needed, either as the caster's skill progresses, or because the angler wants a long head to cast and swing, rather than having to strip in running line and shoot it out again. The WindCutter Upgrade does just this. It is a thirty foot replacement for Tip 2 (the middle section) of the interchangeable tip WindCutter Interchangeable Tip Spey Line. Simply remove the standard Tip 2 and replace it with the WindCutter Upgrade and you have a spey line with a head that is sixty-nine feet long, instead of fifty-four feet. Much better for cast and swing fishing and a whole lot less expensive than buying a new interchangeable tip line!

While fighting fish with the interchangeable tip lines you have to change your technique slightly when the loops are travelling through the guides. Although the loops are as small as possible, they may have a tendency to catch on a guide when the fish is pulling and the rod tip is raised too high. Thus, I lower my rod tip, reeling fast to get the line into the guides. When the fish starts to pull line again, I lower the tip quickly so the loop goes out again smoothly. This is a minor hindrance compared to the great convenience of having one line and being able to change the sink rate of the tip so easily.

RIO also manufactures 7' & 12' Powerflex® Core Sinking leaders in 5 different sinking speeds that are also useful for converting spey lines into temporary sink tips.



Which to use and when.  
**THE SPEY CASTS**

You might consider purchasing these two videos from your fly tackle dealer:

Basic Spey & Two Handed Fly Rod Casting with Jim Vincent, 58 minutes long. Produced by RIO in 1996.

International Spey Casting with Simon Gawesworth, Jim Vincent and Leif Stavmo, 80 minutes. Produced by RIO in 1999.

#### *Acknowledgements*

I hope this booklet will help you get started using the two or double handed fly rod.

*I would like to thank my many mentors and associates for helping me with the casts and offering positive criticism in the development of these specialized fly lines. I'm sure I've forgotten someone, and I heartily apologize for any omissions. In random order they are:*

*A very special thanks to Mike Maxwell of British Columbia, Canada. In Great Britain, a thank you to Simon Gawesworth, for teaching me the weight transference aspect of spey casting, and his Snake Roll Cast, and for his help in editing this booklet. In Sweden, thank you to Goran Anderson, Leif Stavmo and Christer Sjoberg. In the United States, thank you to Harry Lemire, Bob Stroebel, Dec Hogan, Steve Rajeff, Tim Rajeff, Jimmy Green, Mel Krieger, Jerry Mahoney, Trey Combs, Pete Soveral, Leroy Teeple, George Cook, Todd Hopkins, Steve Schmidt, Al Buhr, Jon Farrar and Bruce Richards. And thank you to Bo Ivanovic, a great angler and friend, and all my students, who always teach me ever more about the two handed fly rod and spey fishing. Thank you one and all.*

*— Jim Vincent*



***RIO Products is Fly Fishing's Creative Specialist in  
Fly Lines, Leaders & Tippet Materials™***

These are just a few of the RIO Products created to meet the challenges and demands of fly fishing. We make our products to last! RIO's spey fly lines, manufactured at our factory, include:

**WindCutter® Spey Line**, the easiest fly line for learning how to spey cast.

**WindCutter®, MidSpey and GrandSpey™ Interchangeable Tips Spey Line** with floating and five sinking tips for a multi-purpose, multi-application spey line with loops that do not hinge. Includes a shooting head wallet.

**MidSpey Spey Line** with a medium length head. A great all-round spey line combining a head short enough for shooting distance, yet long enough for “mending.”

**GrandSpey™ Fly Line**, with a unique long belly weight forward taper for those who like traditional methods but desire to shoot line on the final forward delivery for extreme distance.

**WindCutter® Upgrade** for lengthening the WindCutter interchangeable tip spey line to around 70 foot when some degree of proficiency is achieved.

Also use our Sink Tips, Shooting Heads & Lines, etc.

RIO's Knotless & Hand Tied Leaders for Steelhead & Atlantic Salmon are clear with a thicker butt of slightly stiffer copolymer for propelling large flies.

RIOMax™ Tippet Material is a medium stiff nylon with 30 to 35% elongation. Coated for maximum abrasion resistance and superb knot strength.

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