Casting Reference Card

The Joe Humphreys' Fly Fishing Stream School - Inspired by the Methods of Joe Humphreys

CASTING QUICK REFERENCE CARD

The 5 Humphreys Casts

The 5 Casts at a Glance

Cast	When to Use	Key Mechanic	Common Mistake
Short Stroke	Open water, most situations	Thumb squeeze at both stops; hand and forearm one piece	Wrist breaking; too long a stroke
Roll Cast	Backcast blocked	Lift slow to 2 o'clock, D-loop anchors, stop at 10	Lifting too much line
Bow-and-Arrow	No backcast room (brush)	5-step, simultaneous release	Hand on hook - SAFETY RISK
Tuck Cast	Nymphing, deep/fast, pocket water	Stop at 12 o'clock or higher, wait for the bounce, nymph tucks under	Stop too low, or firing before the tip bounces
Downer-Upper Cast	Pocket water and plunge pools below	Down stop (the Downer) + immediate fast lift of hand and forearm (the Upper)	Teaching the down stop alone; following through

Joe's 3 Rules of Casting

1. "If the fish can't see the fly, it doesn't matter how pretty your cast is."

2. "Short and sharp beats long and lazy every time on a brushy stream."

3. "Casting is a means to an end. The end is a fish."

Two Tips

Casting Into the Wind: Drift the rod further forward before the stroke. Hand and forearm, thumb to elbow one piece - not the shoulder. Keep the rod level and right into the wind. The back two fingers pull; the thumb pushes down. Do not dump the rod tip.

Distance Secret: Climb the angle on the back cast - stop the rod high and wait. Feel the rod load before making the forward stroke. 'You can feel it right down to your casting hand.' Many casters fail at distance because they rush the forward stroke before the rod has ever loaded. Wait. Feel it. Then tap and squeeze.

“Wrestling and fly fishing? They’re both physical sports. Secondly, the technique is so important. There’s technique and smarts involved. You have to have great fly control so that the fly will float perfectly, drag-free.” - Joe Humphreys

The Tuck Cast - the Bounce Says Go

Come up into the cast and stop the rod hard at 12 o’clock or higher, centered on your nose. Then WAIT: feel the pull of the weight behind you and watch the rod tip bounce. The bounce says go, and not before. Then the forward tap: the nymph tucks under and drives into the water first. The higher the stop, the deeper the tuck. George Harvey’s cast, taught by Joe to a generation.

The Downer-Upper - Both Parts, Every Time

Sharp downward stop fires the nymph into the water: the Downer. Then, immediately, lift the casting hand and forearm fast, thumb and forefinger pointing up, to drive the nymph to the bottom after entry: the Upper. Both parts are required. Elbow tight, stroke compact.

The Nymph Rig - Quick Facts

• Split shot: 8-10 inches above the fly, never on the fly. Brown = medium, Yellow = light, Black = heavy. Tin or tungsten only.

• Strike indicator: set at 1.5 times the water depth above the fly (2 feet of water, 3 feet above the fly).

• Before the first cast: rough the fly body on a streamside rock, sharpen the hook on a small stone.

Strike Indicator Colors

• Chartreuse/Yellow: Best for most conditions

• Orange: Low light (early morning/evening)

• White: Overcast days, gray sky

• Rule: Use smallest indicator still visible

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The Short Stroke - Step-by-Step

(The Most Important Cast)

STEP 1	**Grip: Thumb on TOP. Firm but relaxed. Like holding a hammer. Thumb to elbow is one solid piece.**
STEP 2	Pick-up: Smoothly lift line off water. Accelerate as you go UP.

STEP 1	Grip: Thumb on TOP. Firm but relaxed. Like holding a hammer. Thumb to elbow is one solid piece.
STEP 3	Back Stop: Abrupt stop at 12 o’clock - straight up. SQUEEZE THUMB. Feel line straighten.
STEP 4	Pause: Brief. Let line fully extend. Feel the rod load.
STEP 5	Forward Stroke: a short drift and a tap with the hand and forearm. The wrist never breaks.
STEP 6	Forward Stop: Stop at 11 o’clock. SQUEEZE THUMB. Thumb pushes down. Tight loop forms.
STEP 7	Follow-through: Lower rod tip toward water. Feed line into drift.

Bow-and-Arrow Cast - 5 Critical Steps

Master this for tight spaces!

1. Pinpoint your target BEFORE you grab anything

2. Determine distance and loop the line

3. Grip the fly at the hook bend, point away from your palm; younger kids grip the leader instead - SAFETY!

4. Pinch the bend between thumb and forefinger; the other fingers stay open and away from the point

5. Breathe, then release all contact points simultaneously

Remember: Casting is Practice

Practice before the season. No rod? A broom handle, a stick, or just your casting hand teaches the stroke. With a rod, tie yarn to the leader and practice in your yard. Glasses on whenever there is weight on the rig - the one rule works in the yard too. Master the short stroke first. Tight loops = accuracy. Accuracy = fish.