



# GUIDE RECOMMENDED

*FLY FISHING TIPS FROM THE PROS*

## Over 50 Proven Fly Fishing Tips, Tricks and Techniques that will help you catch more fish!

Thank You! I appreciate you signing up for my email list. I know how easy it is to be bombarded with emails, so I promise to limit my notes and only send valuable fly fishing information.

Below are tips, tricks and techniques I've collected over the last 20 years of fly fishing. Some you may have heard but others I'm hoping are new. Enjoy, be safe and get out to the river!!!

1. Slow down, take a deep breath and observe your surroundings. What do you see in the cobwebs from last night? Which way is the wind blowing? What about the sun, will you cast a shadow over the water? We're all excited when we first get to the water's edge so don't blow it before casting a line.
2. A good hat and polarized sunglasses will help you see into the water. Sunglasses PROTECT your eyes; hooks are designed to penetrate skin and bone. If the bottom side of your brim is light colored you may want to paint it a dark color. (why do you think football players blacken below their eyes)



3. Think survival, Fish grow up being afraid. Fish live long lives by perfecting their survival instincts. Fear of movements, vibrations and changes will trigger a trout to run and hide. The biggest trout have learned this, so look for safe places, like under over hanging branches, undercut banks and sunken logs. Combine safety and food and you will find fish.

4. It's ok to lose flies. If a nymph isn't getting hung up on the bottom occasionally you're not fishing it correctly. If you don't lose a dry fly to some branches occasionally you're not casting into the right places. Don't let a \$2.00 fly stop you from casting.
5. Sound travels more efficiently in water so don't stomp down the trail and don't jump down a bank. If you're wading, walk softly, don't move rocks with your feet. Learn to "stalk".
6. Fish have a "cone" of vision just like humans. If a fish, if that trout is submerged deep it has a wider cone of vision. Try to stay LOW and creep up behind or to the side of fishy water.
7. Purist will hate me, but fish feed mostly underwater. If you want the odds in your favor learn to nymph. Switch to dry flies when you see rising trout.
8. Nymphs are usually weighted, casting weighted flies over your head usually results problems. Knots, tangles and splashing casts are all bad. Learn to be a proficient roll caster. Short, accurate controlled tasks are always best.
9. When nymphing make sure your fly is getting down in the water column, adding a little weight or using a bead head fly can make a huge difference.
10. Practice "high sticking" when nymphing. A long leaders and longer rod are best (+10'), the idea is to have a minimum amount of line touching the water and to stay connected with the fly.
11. A quick and easy trick for changing the look of your fly; add a small colored bead to the tippet above your nymph or streamer.
12. Short casts can be difficult. I usually "over-line" my rod. So if I have a 6 weight rod I'll put a 7 weight forward line on it. Over-lining helps with roll casts, and if you're a beginner you'll be able to feel the rod load a little easier.



13. Sharp hooks catch fish. Ever notice what's sitting next to the guide in a drift boat? A hook file or hone.

14. Check your tippet for wind knots and nicks. A knot can reduce the line strength by 50% and if the line is nicked change it. There is nothing worse than breaking off when checking your line could have landed that fish.
15. Fly color selection, if observation doesn't fill in the answer, use a light color in the summer and darker colors in the spring and fall.
16. Minimize your false casts and don't "line" your fish. Lining is casting over the fish and spooking it. Practice casting at home, fish when you're at the river.



17. Fly Line color is most important for the fisherman and not the fish. Get line that is easily seen so you can detect light nibbles. Just be careful not to "line" the fish.
18. If you're fishing "new" water and aren't sure where to fish. Stop at the local fly shop and ask. One tidbit of knowledge from a local source could save the day. Once at the water scout your intended area first then go back to your vehicle and gear up. Your recon could save a lot of time. More than once I've found myself on the wrong side of the river.
19. Lots of folks wade down the center of the river. Casting to one bank then switching to the other. This tends to spook the fish. Fish can see a person waving their arms around. Heck I've seen people signal airplanes this way. A better strategy is to fish from one bank/side then find a place to cross and fish the other side.
20. Fish "sneaky" stay low, be quiet, try not to cast a shadow over the water, keep trees and brush behind you, dress in muted colors. Green, Brown and Grey.
21. You've heard this before, layer your clothes. Wool and fleece are preferred in cooler weather. I didn't understand the value of this until I went for a swim in February on a 18 degree day. Those comfy cotton long johns were not the right clothes to have on. Within minutes I was cold to the bone. You might ask how the right clothes going to help you catch more fish. Every additional moment with your line is on the water increases your odds of hooking up.
22. If I was to recommend one piece of clothing, get a wading rain jacket. The shorter length and tight collars at the waist and cuff help keep the water out. The hoods usually have a built in brim to help shed water. Fishing in the rain can be super productive!

23. Fish will hold in slow water, but usually the food drifts with faster current. Fish the transition between fast and slow water, trout will dart out from the slow water to feed.
24. My father use to say “you’ll never catch fish if you keep holding your face that way” **Relax** when you’re at the river, enjoy the moment. You’ll cast better, you will be more aware of your surroundings that can provide clues to catch more trout. What are those starlings eating?
25. To catch more fish, assume your fly will be taken at any time. This is more difficult when nymph fishing. Always be ready to strike!
26. Strike often, learn to set the hook often. It’s nearly impossible to tell the difference between the tick of a stone and a light strike. Learn to strike with a short rap to the side and then pause. If nothing is on let the fly continue its drift.
27. Water temperature, if you discover a spring adding water to a river, fish downstream from it. This can prove to be super productive on warmer days. That cold water is like air conditioning to a trout.
28. Learn to do the “San Juan Shuffle”. If the river you’re standing in has sea weed and grass growing up from the bottom stir it up with your feet/boots. Then drift a nymph or scud directly downstream of your position. By stirring up the grass you’ll knock nymphs and scuds loose which will be carried with the current.
29. Approach every day on the water with an open mind. If a proven method in the past isn’t working but you know you’re on productive water switch things up. There’s a reason we carry all those flies, use them.



30. Would you eat a steak if it was moving around on your plate? No - it’s not natural. It’s the same way for a bug drifting in front of a fish, if it’s not presented in a natural way (drift) you’ll get snubbed. Try to make a short cast with a drag free drift. Drag is bad, some ideas to reduce drag; learn to mend the line, use a lighter tippet, lengthening your leader, tying the fly on with a loop knot even tying on a fly that is more visible like a parachute will let you see the drag and compensate with a mend.
31. Don’t teach your kids or spouse to cast. Especially on a fishing trip. The Divorce Attorney’s bill will be much more than hiring an instructor or getting a guide for your spouse or child before you go.



32. More fly rods are broken by doors and ceilings than when casting. When not fishing, break down the rod and store it in a tube. Having a backup rod is invaluable when a rod breaks. I carry a “backpack” style rod in my gear for just these occasions.
33. If you botch a cast don’t yank it up and re-cast again. Let it ride out the drift as best you can. Toss in a mend to help if needed. At a minimum a botched cast can show you what the current is doing.
34. Don’t attempt a long casts if it’s beyond your skill. Learn how far you can cast accurately and stay within your limits. If it’s 30 feet, stay within 30 feet or less of your target. If fishing with a guide, let them know your range and he’ll work to keep you within it.
35. Think about your position, before making a difficult cast look around to see if you could approach that run, riffle or hole from a different angle. This might mean coming back to the same spot from the other side of the river. Crappy casts spook fish.



36. Sunrise and sunset are magic time. Hatches and temperature changes will be occurring so try to be on the water at this time.

37. Fly size matters - in order of importance try to match first size, then shape, and finally color. I remember tossing a size 14 parachute adams to some water that I knew held fish. After 8 casts and 8 refusals I switch to a size 22 griffins gnat and bam – the first cast was a score.
38. Prospecting and blind casting, if the water looks fishy (think structure, deep, channeled, drop-off...) plan your casts. Your first casts should be close, say 6 to 8 feet away, then add a foot or more to each of the next casts.



39. Follow somebody's lead by reading the signs. This might seem silly, but if the trail leads straight to the river's edge there's probably a good reason. They are either fishing or crossing.
40. Reel drag, when setting the drag on your reel think "less is better". The rod guides, current and angle to the fish all add drag. Unless you're fishing in the salt for big fish, palming the spool to add a little resistance is fine.



41. Learn how to disassembly your spool from the reel body. Many times I've gotten debris inside my reel. Simply removing the spool and rinsing it out can clean up the problem.
42. The art of landing and releasing a trout, is to do it quickly. To improve the chances of your fish surviving land it quickly. The balance for you the fisherman is to know when you're horsing to the point of breaking off.
43. An important clue to dry fly fishing is looking for a mid-stream foam line. You've seen them, a foam line signals a transition between current speeds. These can be hard to fish drag free with a dry fly, but foam lines can be productive.



44. Keep your fly dressed, this is especially important with a dry fly after catching a trout. Check the wings to see if they've rotated or the hackle has been damaged. Dry the fly with crystals and treat it with floatant.
45. Be sparing with your floatant application. A little floatant goes a long way; just wet your fingers until they have a little shine then rub on the fly. Most important treat the bottom of the fly that's what is touching the water.
46. In cold weather apply floatant to your rod guides; it will stop them from freezing up.
47. I'll say it again, short casts yield better drifts. Think about it, if you have a lot of line on the water it will be pushed and pulled at different speeds causing drag. It's usually better to reposition for a shorter more accurate cast.
48. Fly line care and maintenance, fly line is expensive learn to take care of it and it will last years. After you load your reel you need to stretch the line. This is easy to do, find a stationary round pole (think of a fence pole) loop the line around it so you have the line in one hand and the reel in the other. Now back up and un-wind line for 25 feet or so. Grab the line and in both hands so it doesn't come off the reel and pull. The idea is to stretch the line. You only have to put about 5 to 7 pounds of force on the line. This will take the loop set out of the line and will improve how the line passes through the rod guides.
49. Fly line care and maintenance, Clean the line! Strip the line into a bucket of water with a little mild detergent (I like Simple Green). Then reel it back onto the spool passing it through a towel to dry it. Then strip the line off again onto a clean surface and TREAT the line with a line dressing that contains silicon. I usually squirt pea size amount into a soft rag and reel the line in through it.



50. Don't spread sun screen or bug spray all over your hands then touch your fly! Believe me fish can smell. You wouldn't lick DEET like a lollipop, so don't ask a trout to.
51. If you contaminate a fly with sun screen or bug spray try rubbing river muck/mud on it.
52. Don't cast onto a rise. When you see a soft dimpling rise, the trout is rising up in the water column and drifting back. Wait a moment or two for the trout to reposition and cast three feet or more ahead of the rise.
53. Once you locate a trophy fish, if possible pursue it until you catch it. This doesn't mean casting to it for hours on end, it means toss a half dozen casts and switch up your fly or technique. If that doesn't work move on for a while but plan to come back. What does

this do; it gives you a chance to think about what you did and what you should try. One of the best fishermen I know chased the same fish for 6 days. Eventually he won! This tip reinforces the idea of being flexible and capable of changing you tactics.

54. On those slow days when fishing with a buddy switch up your techniques. One could fish an indicator rig and the other can swing streamers. Jump to the technique that's working once you've discovered it.



55. After you've spooked a fish or you're ready to move on, reach down and pick up a few rocks and rotting branches. Look close at the bottom of the rock or peel away the loose bark. Usually if you're on productive water the bottom of that rock will have a couple bugs crawling around, note their size and shape. The truly big bugs can be found on woody debris. Is anything on that rock in your fly box? If not it should be!!
56. At the end of the drift, let your fly "hang" for 10 seconds or so. A dry fly may sink or that nymph will rise, but sometimes that change will trigger a strike.

The biggest tip I could give you is spend time fly fishing. Get your friends and children to go with you. Start having consistent annual trips so the dates get on the calendar and other activities get scheduled around it. Heaven help the man that gets married on the trout opener! You can shorten your learning curve by hiring a guide, in fact before spending money that new rod, use that money to go on a trip with your old rod.

Good Luck! Tight Lines and Be Safe

David

My FFF is Faith, Family and Fish