

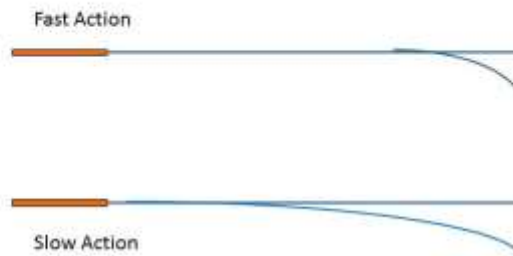
# CAA Fly Casting Discovery Journey Part 1

## So what do you need to go fly fishing?

You will need a fly rod, a reel, line, leaders/tippets and flies – let's break it down.

**Fly Rods:** There are literally thousands on the market but there are 3 key things you need to know:

- Rod Weight:** This term 'Rod Weight' is actually to do with the line 'weight' you intend to use to cast out your flies. Let's keep it simple, 2, 3 and 4 weight fly rods are designed to catch smaller fish and cast relatively shorter distances. 5, 6 and 7 weight rods are generally the 'all-rounder' fly rods. 8, 9 and 10 are predominately designed to hold strength when catching bigger fish such as Murray Cod, Tuna, and Yellow Belly etc. Above 10weight and we are talking large fighting fish like Queen Fish, GT, Marlin etc. Now I am not saying you can't fish for little fish with a 10+weight fly rod (albeit you'd get tired quickly), but you'd be hard pressed trying to just set the hook on a big Barra on a 3weight without breaking the rod!
- Rod Length:** Generally around 7-10ft, majority are manufactured around 9ft. You will want a shorter rod if you are fishing within close confines i.e. trees and bushes and generally casting shorter distances. Longer rods allow for greater reach and allow for longer casting distances where obstacles aren't a concern.
- Rod Action:** The rod action is essentially where a rod flexes when a load (in our case a fly line) is applied. Keeping it simple! A slow action rod will bend from the bottom third of the rod (closest to your hand) all the way to the tip. A medium action will bend from near the middle of the rod and a Fast action rod will bend from the last third of the rod. When you hear the action of a rod is 'stiff' think fast action, when you hear 'whippy' think medium to slow.



Rods also come in a multitude of pieces depending on the level of portability the manufacture is trying to market. Generally a 4 piece is most convenient for travelling and packs down reasonably well. An 8 piece travel rod packs down next to nothing. The days are long gone in relation to a two piece rod is stronger than that of a 4 piece, or a 4 piece impedes the natural rod bend when under load. Technology has come a long way and this is no longer a consideration for concern.

You may be interested in the composites that make up fly rods and this is also a consideration when choosing to purchase a fly rod. Majority of rods today are manufactured from high modulus graphite these are easily the most popular and affordable. Other composites include fibreglass, bamboo, and carbon. Each have their unique characteristics and need to be cast to see what suits you.

Most beginners will fare better casting a 'fast' action rod. The rods are easier, more forgiving and accurate when casting longer distances. With this in mind you should cast the rod before purchasing this will determine what action best suits your style of casting.

Tip: Not always is the most expensive rod, the best in the context of fly fishing. If it feels nice to cast and has a decent warranty, you may have just found your match.

**Fly Reels:** Single geared line holders, critical in sometimes landing bigger fish. A quality reel not only helps you play out a fish by keeping pressure on it, but it balances your fly outfit.

A critical aspect of fighting a hooked fish is providing drag against which the fish works when running away from the angler. The reel can play a major role in providing drag and of course retrieving line as we bring the fish closer.

There is a thought that for basic fly fishing (especially for small trout) the reel is just a place to store the line and a simple/cheaper 'clicker drag' reel will do the job. With a clicker the limited drag is there just to prevent the spool from spinning freely when pulling out line creating bird's nest tangles. For smaller fish 'playing by hand' is quite possible where the line is released under control or retrieved using the free hand. However it is generally preferable to fight the fish 'on the reel' by retrieving all loose line onto to the reel (or hopefully seeing the fish run and to take up all the slack) while maintaining a strain on the fish. With a clicker reel you can use your hand to 'palm' the spool to provide drag .

A critical point to look for when purchasing a more sophisticated reel is the drag – feel it, does it feel lumpy when you turn it? Does the drag initially grab then feel smooth? Does the drag actually provide friction when you apply it? Lumpy is not great as the pressure applied to the fish won't be consistent resulting in break offs. An initial grabbing is a minor concern as the fish may bust you off soon as the fight has begun off the reel as the drag is not smooth from the beginning. A drag that doesn't apply any resistance will see your line disappear and make fighting the fish that little bit harder.

Something else to consider is the arbor of the reel – a term given to a reel's inner cylinder that your line is wrapped around. A large arbor has the advantage of little to no line memory (ie the line doesn't keep its coils), faster line retrieval and the better control whilst playing out a fish. Larger arbor can sometimes hold less line. A small arbor is conversely the opposite.



*Typical large arbor reel with complex internal drag system*



*Typical 'traditional' small arbor reel. You can also see the 'clicker drag'*

Consider your budget when choosing a reel, and whilst not as important as your rod it's something that can't be dismissed.

**Fly Line:** The MOST critical part of the system. A good fly line will cast well on an expensive rod, or a lesser expensive rod and will last you a little longer if cared for correctly. Skimp on a rod or reel, but not the fly line.

So before we go much further – a few terms for what is actually on your reel (it is not just the line):

- The inner-most layer on the spool is backing. This is braid like material and purpose is to assist filling a spool so the reel is to capacity and the fly line is wound in the largest curves possible. The backing also provides you with a backup line should the fish take line from your reel spool in excess of your fly line.
- The fly line itself – more on this below.
- Leader and tippet – this is the piece of transparent material between the end of your fly line and your fly. It allows for the final subtle delivery of your fly, presenting your fly just like a bug or insect would do when landing on the water surface. Leaders are often tapered to allow the fly line energy to continue through to the fly. Tippets are not tapered and are the sacrificial piece of line you tie your flies to. Tippet is relatively inexpensive compared to pre-made leaders from tackle stores. Leaders and tippet can be comprised of monofilament or fluorocarbon, and the use of either is really dependant on your fly fishing situation. We'll touch on this more in the coming months.

Fly lines come in a range of weights, tapers, coating materials and inner cores.

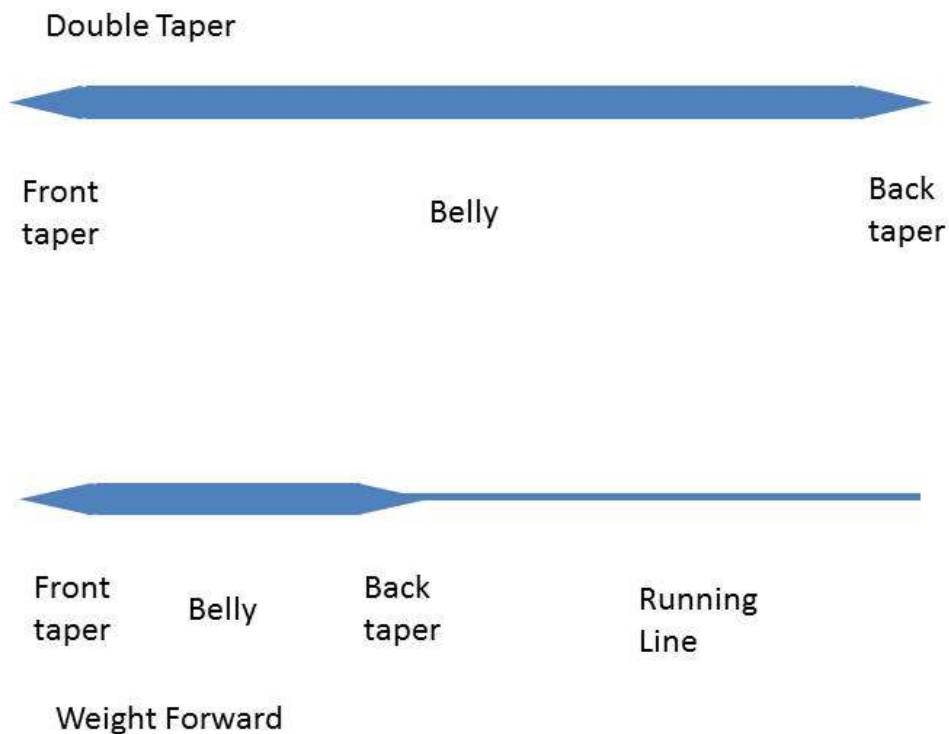
Simple? Think this:

- Fly lines are designed to match the corresponding rod weight (or vice versa).
- The term 'taper' is used to define where the thickness of the fly line is located along the length of line.
- Coating materials will define whether the line will float or sink as does the inner core.

Let's expand on the fly line tapers, you will hear the terms Double taper, weight forward, Level line and Triangle taper.

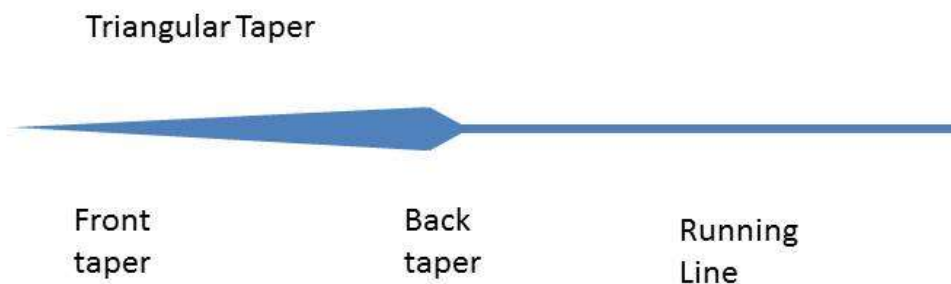
**Double Taper:** Skinny at both ends and thick in the middle. There is an argument that double taper provides a caster with a more delicate presentation of the fly onto the water. A difficult line to cast long distance but is easier to 'mend' (an action which will be discussed in a future issue.). It has an advantage also that as you can reverse the line once you wear out one end!

**Weight Forward:** Thicker at the casting end assisting with loading the rod (we'll learn more about this in the coming months) generally will cast further than a double taper. Pretty poor at delivering a subtle presentation



**Level Line:** Exactly as the name suggest, one diameter the whole length of the line, far less expensive and less common on tackle shop shelves.

**Triangle Taper:** A reasonably long taper providing mass for long casts, but will deliver subtle presentations similar to double tapers.



Next month let me take you on the next step in the journey where we put our rod, reel and line together so we are able to get out onto the lawn to get a feel for what it's about!