

## COMMON CASTING TERMS

### An introduction

Working on the SL definitions has been an interesting and occasionally puzzling journey for me. We have touched on educational psychology and philosophy, linguistics, physics and many weird and sometimes not very wonderful corners of the human psyche. I have learned more about casting and, very occasionally, fishing during the three years or more that I have been directly involved in discussing these things than I ever thought possible.

It is interesting, to me at least, that the arguments we have had over the wording of casting terms has mirrored experiences in my other non angling life. In this other world we have written and published government approved occupational standards. Established and published a base understanding of common industry terms. Written, developed and rolled out certificates of basic and advanced competence which meet both government and industry requirements for safe working practices. We have established regional centres for assessment with trained and qualified assessors. Finally we have begun the process of standards harmonisation within the EU territories. It has taken five years...so far...

The casting terms discussions, which have been, in many instances, equally difficult, have been running almost in parallel. In both of these worlds there have been many compromises and some straight up nose to nose roaring matches...there will, no doubt, be more. Passions can be raised even in these most arcane and publicly invisible regions of our lives and occasionally, on the river bank, I wonder why the hell I give a tinkers toss one way or the other about casting terms, why does it matter? The motivation in my working world is to prevent death or very serious injury and the other is...errrm...not sure really?

...well, here's the first problem...Why do we want a set of commonly used terms in fly casting?

The main issues seem to me to arise from the processes involved in multi-site training, certification and assessment. If there is to be a common standard of competence, how can we be sure that that standard is the same in Birmingham Alabama as it is in Birmingham West Midlands?, how do we know that the assessment process is the same in both places ? Could an assessor from Newcastle Australia deliver an assessment in Newcastle Tyne and Wear and vice versa? We would hope so, but it makes things easier, notwithstanding any other language complications that may exist, if we communicate using terminology that means the same thing wherever we may be on the planet.

Matters are complicated a little by the vast pot pourri of terms that already exist within the angling literature and the odd fact that the very specific context in which we use our words changes the meaning to one that would then run contrary to the common meaning accepted in the non-angling world, "Loop" for example. We use the same word in different contexts to mean different things, my Old Uncle Bill still "makes up a cast" when he ties up his leader whereas making up a cast for the angling glitterati means creating some book worthy rod and line twiddly dee virtuosity which more humble anglers have never previously witnessed and will probably never have occasion to use.

Sometimes then, we have to live linguistically in two places at once and we have to clarify the variation from the common meaning of a word or term when we use it in an angling context. This is especially true if we are teaching.

For example, if we don't explain what "loop" means to a non-casting student when we are teaching then they are going to think we are pretty odd when we start a whoopin' and a hollerin' at a perfect, narrow, parallel legged ....errmm.....

"Wooooahh.... Mrs Buttlethwaite.....absolutely corking top bobber of a loop"

"Loop, sonny?" ...." what fkn loop ?...its a fkn "bight".. right?"

Scary old bird is Mrs Buttlethwaite, big woman, Naval type.... ☺

On top of this we know that we can differentiate between one loop and another by adding another commonly used word as a modifier. This means we can say "wide loop", "narrow loop", "pointy loop", "round loop", "useable loop", "sh\*t loop", "fast loop", "slow loop", all different but all of which belong to the family of casting "loops" which is just another way of saying that these are things which all possess the property of being "loopy".

So what exactly is this loopiness that all of these things possess, what common features are there that permit us to group these things together? It plainly isn't speed or size or shape or even whether it's of any use or not....so what then is the essence of "loop"?

You can try and [work it out](#) for yourselves...I'm moving on...

-----

So, basically, we think that these terms are necessary so that we can successfully communicate between ourselves as instructors and deliver a standard certification process across the globe. We will use these terms not only in that process but also, inevitably, with students of varying experience in a teaching context. The terms, as a set, therefore have an objective, a use and a purpose.

A cast too has a purpose; it has an objective, which, in most cases, is to deliver a very light thing quite a long way towards a fish. No doubt there are other more obscure objectives in performing a cast but by and large it is not a thing that happens accidentally whilst you are queuing in the bank.

In the family of "Casts" we can include Spey Casts, Roll Casts, and Overhead Casts. We can add further subsets; under the family of Spey Casts for example we can add Single Spey Cast, Double Spey Cast, and Circle Spey Cast. May be we can add a subset of Back Casts or Forward Casts, all of which are using the same process of adding a modifier to indicate difference between one and another. We can in fact split as many times as is necessary to cover all possible things that possess the property of "castness" in an angling context.

If we can cover all possible Casts using this infinitely branching taxonomic structure then I don't think it is unreasonable to believe that we can cover the elements that form these casts within the same sort of structure, a non limiting structure that allows us to add complexity when required and which satisfies all of our other objectives from a communications point of view.

So here's the second problem...What are the common elements that make up all possible casts?

For the purposes of determining these elements we can assume that a cast is normally performed with a rod, a line and a human being.

(umm....normally anyway...human wise Mrs Buttletwaite is a borderline case here and you can cast without a rod, we can file it under "casts/rodless/possibly humanless".)

Anyway, the actual physical characteristics of the rod and the line and, very definitely, the human being are all variable. In fact the conditions in which we perform a cast in the physical world are almost infinitely variable and so we seek to discount these variable influences by trying to describe imaginary and perfect casts in the abstract. In this case therefore, we are also describing casts that are not only rodless and humanless but have actually never taken place at all, which is a bit of a brain fizzer innit? ☺.

There are a variety of different approaches that we could take here, they are all artificial constructs, some are more effective than others. Some, our taxonomic structure for example, permit an expansive attack on the problem, others, where the terms are more self referential or interdependent will be more limiting. Whatever structure we choose we must identify each element in some way, we could look at what each element is for, or what it does, or why it does it, or perhaps how it does it. We are looking for unifying characteristics which group elements together and which may also differentiate them from other groups.

In the same way that we believe a Cast has a purpose, here at SL we believe that the elements that make up a cast have a purpose too and can be both grouped and differentiated in this way. There's an explanation [here](#).

Naturally there are [other](#) more general definitions propositions currently either already on the market or in development. But in the specific case of casting analysis it remains a challenge to those responsible for the proposed FFF set to decide whether their terms will stand up to public scrutiny once published. On the basis of the almost incomprehensible bloop that I have been permitted to see so far, it is my opinion, which, admittedly, counts for absolutely nothing, that they will not.

It's fair, I think, to say that although there are improvements that we can make both to the individual SL terms and the text explanation, it is structurally solid and it meets the original objectives to provide an understandable set which is capable of describing all possible casts. You can try this for yourself with the SL set, have a go at a PU&LD, a Roll Cast and a Single Spey, it's easy.

My personal challenge to those that wish to promote the FFF terms is to ask whether they work for *any* of these simple casts let alone anything more complex...it is my once again worthless personal opinion that it would take some serious bottle to publicly say that they did....

Mark Surtees