

# How to start a casting club

*Casting clubs can be small or large,  
formal or casual, but they should all have one  
common ingredient: FUN!*

**O**KAY, SO NOW YOU'VE PRACTICED the Level-to-Level disciplines and some of the ACA fly-casting events, and you're pleased with your progress. Initially you probably became interested in casting practice because you realized that better fly-casting skills generally result in improved catches. To be able to place a fly a few feet in front of a slurping fish; to be able to cast a longer line than you ever thought possible to reach that wary bonefish; to be able to deliver an air-resistant bass bug or permit fly exactly where you want to place it—well, that's a wonderful payoff and well worth all the practice hours and effort you've invested.

Perhaps one day you conclude that casting itself is fun. “Yeah, I'd rather be fishing, but I can't go all the time. I wish there were a casting club near me ...” (assuming you don't live near a casting club).

**Well, start one.**

It doesn't have to be a magnificent shrine like San Francisco's Golden Gate Angling and Casting Club. It can be a casual casting club that is conceived by you and a couple of fishing friends or family members. Here is a checklist to help you:

**THE CASTING FIELD:** First you need to find a convenient casting place, which can be at a park, a swimming pool, an

athletic field, a pond or a lake. Water or land. You'll need about 120 feet for accuracy events (remember, you have to allow for a back cast) and maybe 200 feet for distance casting (again, you need room for a back cast), and about 40 feet in width. This should be relatively easy to find. Give some consideration to wind conditions: You want a place that's relatively calm, especially for the accuracy games, and if possible, an area where you can place your targets in different directions to compensate for windy conditions.

**TARGETS:** You don't need anything expensive or complicated, and six Hula Hoops will do for a start; or, you can make your own from an old garden hose (see page 19). Targets should be no problem.

**MEMBERSHIP:** Recruiting other members is usually just a matter of simple "marketing" procedures, and there is no single formula that is applicable to all communities. Here are some avenues for finding other members:

1. Start with your fishing friends or family.
2. Contact your local fly shop or tackle store. This can be mutually rewarding. Explain to the owner or manager what you have in mind. List all the advantages to his store. Emphasize that casting will help his tackle sales because better casters catch more fish and logically buy more tackle. Ask him if you can provide an attractive poster and a flyer for his store. Be aware that many fly shops offer fly-casting lessons (for a fee) and this could make an owner hesitant. Explain to him that his new students would benefit from a club where they can increase their casting skills. You might even consider partnering a casting club with a fly shop.
3. Contact your local newspaper's outdoor writer and tell him about your plans for a casting club and ask for his help. Pick a date (weekend or evening) when you and others will demonstrate one or two events to his interested readers, and, of course, invite the outdoor writer

as an honored guest. If your newspaper doesn't have an outdoor column, send the paper a one-page news release which should include the five *W*s (who, what, where, why, and when) plus your contact phone number and e-mail address. Newspapers are always looking for community projects to write about.

4. Sportsman's or Outdoor Shows: Just about every mid-sized city has an outdoor sport show that generally takes place during the winter months. Some of the shows offer fly-casting exhibitions and instructions by skilled casters. What a great place to get members! Talk to the sport show people. Tell them that you are starting a casting club and ask them if they would place your club's literature or posters at convenient places near the casting demonstrations. Once you have launched a successful casting club, sport shows may even provide a free booth. Obviously you will need appropriate literature and be willing to give casting demonstrations and instructions if requested.
5. Contact other sporting organizations. Is there a fly-fishing club or TU or FFF chapter near you? Or a hunting and fishing club? These are excellent places for obtaining some members, but work in conjunction with these clubs rather than competing with them. **Tip:** Clubs whose memberships are primarily composed of plug casters and spinning enthusiasts may be excellent places for prospecting. Many want to learn to fly cast but may think it's too difficult. Offer to help run a tournament for club members.
6. Other venues for recruiting members will surely suggest themselves depending on your community.

**THE CASTING PROGRAM:** Obviously there is much flexibility to the casting program and much will depend on the membership. You might consider having informal tournaments on some sort of set schedule (e.g., once a week, once a month, whenever). Periodically, you might have a more official fly-casting tournament, with some name like *Season-*

*Opener, Windy-City Fly Casting Championship or Waushara County Tournament.*

Keep it simple to start. Select one of the first Level-to-Level disciplines from this book. As your members gain experience and skill, cast the One-Minute Event (Level Seven) because it moves fast and is lots of fun. Try the ACA events after your members have gained fly-casting proficiency. The goal is to present events that challenge the members' skill and ability, but are not so difficult that they become frustrated and look for another activity.

**THE OTHER SEASON:** In the northern climes we associate fly fishing and fly casting as a spring-to-fall happening. The winter? Well, many anglers tie flies or become involved in other activities. But why not offer fly casting?

There may be a high school gymnasium, a health club, an athletic club or some large hall that might be suitable for fly casting during the winter months. You may be able to make an arrangement to use the facilities for a very nominal fee or other value exchange. For fly-casting accuracy events you don't need much room (an indoor basketball court will do nicely), and the fact that dry flies are feathery light means that there would be no damage to the floors (as opposed to plug-casting weights). You will need a few Hula Hoops and make sure that all participants wear the right type of athletic shoes (so as not to damage the floors). You might find that the winter fly-casting sessions and even tournaments become more popular than during the spring and summer seasons because of the plethora of outdoor activities, including fishing.

**ORGANIZING THE CLUB:** After a few sessions and informal get-togethers, you should plan a club organizational meeting, inviting all members and prospects to participate. Decide on the appropriate time to have such a meeting (make sure that it doesn't conflict with the World Series, Super Bowl, Air Shows, etc.). Prepare a meeting agenda well in advance; don't play it by ear. Here are some salient points to

be included in your agenda and some general statements:

- ***Mission of the club:*** Agree on the club's mission or vision. For example: to promote fly casting, increase one's skill, develop comradeship, provide friendly competition for those who want it, and, later, perhaps even offer club fishing trips.
- ***Casting club name:*** Select a temporary name for your club. It can be named after your town, e.g., *Peoria Fly Casters*, or an individual, e.g., *Jimmy Green Fly Casters* (Jimmy passed away recently and was one of the great innovative forces in casting and fishing). Explain that this is a temporary club name and ask for other suggestions.
- ***Budget and membership dues:*** Develop a budget based on expected costs associated with a modest new venture. How about \$20 a year for individual membership or \$30 for families? Explain that the money would be used for printing brochures, buying more targets, etc.
- ***Election of officers:*** Since you and some of your friends initiated the club, volunteer to serve as officers for the first year; thereafter, officers would be elected by the membership.
- ***Committees:*** If you develop a sufficient membership, you should ask for volunteers for various committees. Examples: *Public Relations* (someone who would contact the media for future publicity of tournaments or practices); *Membership* (someone who would lead membership drives and explore new ways to get members); *Prizes and Awards* (to work with local business for various prizes and donations. Incidentally, prizes don't have to be fishing related, e.g., a gift certificate from a book store or a clothing store, free car washes, dinner for two at a restaurant, etc.). *Club Identification:* Besides a club name, eventually you may want to have a club logo, stationery (to write to tackle companies, park districts, etc.), club T-shirts, caps, etc.

- ***ACA affiliation:*** You may also want to become an affiliated American Casting Association member club (ACA annual club membership is only \$50 per year).

Okay, you and your club are growing and growing. You can offer club fishing trips (local or distant), a picnic/tournament with family members participating, perhaps chevrons for casting accomplishments. Many things.

On the other hand, maybe your club has only a half-dozen members and you want to keep it simple and casual. No problem. I believe the Seattle Casting Club has only three members: Bill Van Natter, his wife Peg and Charles Judy. They've won many medals at National tournaments.

At the minimum, members enjoy a wholesome activity and become better casters because of competition and because they learn from each other.

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