

# A look at the art of casting

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FOR THE JOURNAL

**A**sk fishermen of any species about their favorite method to catch fish, and most would have to say casting. That's because it's one rod and one fish, and the angler feels the bite, sets the hook and plays the fish with no interruption.

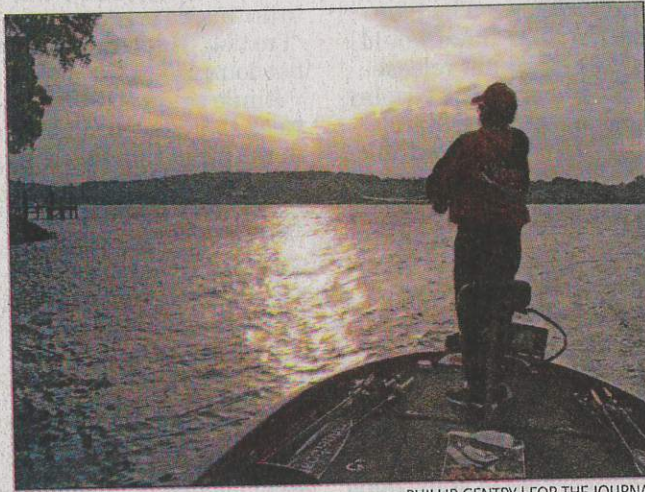
Casting artificial baits allows the angler freedom to make a horizontal presentation while targeting specific structure. Retrieves can be varied based on time of year, water depth and the mood of the fish.

While fish eat a lot of things, the most effective artificial baits will mimic the current food species the fish are feeding on. This gives the artificial angler a wide variety of crank baits, jigs, soft plastic baits, spinners and spoons to choose from.

Casting artificial baits to structure usually indicates casting to visible shoreline structure and working the bait back to the angler. Bear in mind that most often it's not the visible structure the angler is targeting, but the structure below the surface that is holding striped bass.

Given a fish's propensity for holding on one side or the other of structure, most structure fishing with artificial baits will be in and around deep-water structure below the surface. This can also mean casting at a blank surface area in order to achieve the correct depth and attitude once the bait reaches the target area.

Casting on shallow flats is another consideration. Here it is likely an



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**Casting your line is both an art and a skill often overlooked by novice anglers.**

individual fish will give away its location away by swirling. At other times, fan casting a shallow flat, point or hump will be productive to attract strikes. Retrieve the lure above the fish but below the point of visibility from the surface, especially for water that's 20 feet deep or less. Top-water baits, fished on the surface, require an erratic popping or twitching to call attention to themselves. The trick with a top-water or waking bait is to remain calm when it appears a concrete block has been dropped from the sky near your bait. Wait until you feel the fish before setting the hook.

Surface-feeding fish are often slashers and will often turn on a bait or even slap it with a tail, head or fin before coming in to actually engulf the bait.

Casting artificial baits into schooling fish — also known as fishing the jumps or boils — can be one of the surest catch methods available in fishing. The fish are in a feeding frenzy, having trapped the bait at the surface, and will strike at just about anything

that resembles a baitfish. However, some skill and forethought are still required to be consistently successful.

Casting a larger bait than the prey the fish are feeding on may not result in as many strikes, but it may produce larger fish. While fish may appear to be striking out blindly when schooling, the size of the prey does have bearing on attracting strikes. Size-appropriate offerings are therefore an important factor.

Another important factor is depth of presentation. A bait that falls quickly through the water column and is retrieved too far under the fish will result in less strikes.

Just as any sport, time spent learning to cast accurately is time well spent.

The first cast into new water will be the one most likely to get a fish's attention. If it fails to hit the mark, that can result in spooking fish rather than compelling them to bite.

**PHILLIP GENTRY** is the host of PG & Boatgirl Outdoors. Download the podcast on Apple, Google Play, Spotify or at [pgandboatgirl.com](http://pgandboatgirl.com).