

Double Hauling

Double Hauling

As fly fishermen and fly casters, we progress through a variety of different levels and often settle at an occasional skill plateau. Every fly caster has plateaus that they reach but often struggle to achieve the next level. The *beginning* caster is pleased at the success of a nice loop that is created on purpose rather than by accident, and happy when the fly goes in the general direction that it was intended to go. The *advanced* caster may struggle with the ability to carry 85 feet of line in the air rather than 84 feet. In the progression of a fly caster's casting skills, the inability to cast using the double haul is usually one of those barriers that prevent him from reaching next casting level.

So what does the double haul do for us?

The haul increases line speed by adding speed to the line as the rod tip moves along its path through the casting stroke. This speed increase creates tighter, faster loops and more line control at all distances. The double haul does this for each cast, forward and back. The control that's attained from double hauling enables the caster to present the fly better, whether it's a dry fly, streamer or a large deer hair bass popper. It lessens the impact of wind on the cast; tighter, faster, efficient loops give the wind less line surface area to catch, cutting through the wind. The control of the fly line between the stripping guide and the line hand improves removing unwanted slack in the casting system. Last, the double haul allows the caster to carry more line in the air with each cast, which ultimately adds distance to the cast. Once mastered, it just makes casting easier and using it becomes addictive.

How do you do the double haul?

There are two techniques that can be used to learn the double haul, which when used together provide the best results. A little bit of coordination is required, but by practicing the hand movements of the line and rod hand using a pantomime, it can be mastered pretty quickly.

Double Hauling

The first technique uses a casting pantomime. I'll dissect the different motions of the line and rod hand from a right-handed casting perspective, and then put them together into the complete casting motion. Initially, pantomime the double haul without a rod in your hand. If you need to hold something in your rod hand, use a pen or a pencil. Before trying the double haul with a rod and line in your hands, you need to build proper muscle memory using the pantomime technique.

Begin with the motion of the line hand by itself. Fly casting icon, Mel Krieger, has coined a term "*downup*" to describe this motion. Start by placing your line hand in front of the middle of your chest. Then in a single, fluid motion, pull your hand down to the left hip and back up to the starting chest position. Repeat this motion until you've developed some muscle memory. Because the *downup* motion is performed during the casting stroke, the muscle memory is necessary when we add in the rod hand.

The haul starts with the rod and line hand together at the beginning of the casting stroke. Raise the rod tip as you would at the beginning of the cast and start the back cast. As the rod hand moves through the casting stroke, perform the *downup* motion with the line hand.

Time the line-hand motion so that the line-hand reaches its farthest down position when the rod hand comes to a stop at the end of the casting stroke. While the line is unrolling, reset the line-hand to the rod hand position. This is the up of the *downup*. Once the line has unrolled, you are ready to start the next haul on the forward cast. The motion is the same.

The line hand hauls in proportion to the rod hand, as a mirror image. For shorter casts, with less line speed, the haul is shorter. For longer casts, as the casting stroke gets longer and the line speed requirements increase, the haul must be longer.

Good, crisp rod stops and good timing are important to successfully using the double haul in your casting.

Double Hauling

The next technique that's very helpful in learning the double haul is casting with rod and line in a horizontal cast, parallel to the ground.

In this exercise, start facing perpendicular to the casting plane where the rod tip will move from left to right. Place the rod tip to your left with about 25-30 feet of line out sufficiently beyond the tip with minimal slack. Pull out a few feet of line on the ground so you have some line to haul and shoot. This starting position will be the beginning point of the back cast. Perform one cast, using the hauling motion that was previously described. Let the line completely unroll and land on the ground to the right of you. If everything is done properly, at the end of the rod stop, a nice tight loop should form and the slack line in your line hand should completely shoot out of the rod. Do the same thing on the forward cast, casting from right to left. Practice using this horizontal cast, until you have mastered the coordination of the line and rod hand and the fly line and the rod. Once you're comfortable with the horizontal double haul, try casting in the vertical plane that is the normal casting plane.

Should you try to figure this out on your own?

While the double haul is relatively simple to do once you've mastered it, getting to mastery can be challenging and often frustrating. Hopefully, the explanation in the previous section is useful. Before you start to learn to double haul, your casting skills need to include the ability to throw reasonably tight loops out to 40 feet, which by definition means that you are executing good, crisp rod stops. You need to have the ability to cast with a minimum amount of slack, managing line with a line hand and the rod hand. And, you need to be able to shoot line. If you can do all of the above, your chances are pretty good of being able to figure it out on your own. There are a number of videos available that teach the double haul – Mel Krieger's *Essence of Fly Casting* or Joan Wulff's *Dynamics of Fly Casting* to name a couple. The Texas Fly Fishers casting program offers a double haul clinic, or an hour or two with a FFF certified casting instructor should be sufficient to help you master this skill.

Double Hauling

Good luck!

- David