

The Ultimate Fly-Casting Challenge

Cast 40 feet in four seconds and there's not a fish you can't catch **BY KIRK DEETER**

LONG CASTS, while impressive, are often overkill. What matters most in the real fishing world is accuracy under pressure. Pro redfish angler Travis Holeman shared this "40 feet in four seconds" practice drill that will help you lose the casting "yips." His theory: If you master shorter casts—on target and on time—you will hook more fish, from trout rising in the river to bonefish cruising the flats. It's a great two-person exercise you can do in the backyard.

The Challenge: Set out five targets (trash-can lids, hula hoops, doormats, whatever) at 40 feet. When the caster is ready, the timekeeper calls a random target, one through five. Using a stopwatch, or shouting "one Mississippi, two Mississippi..." (like the pass rusher in a flag football game), he or she counts four seconds. The caster must hit the target before time is called. Mix it up, then trade places.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR SCORE

[1] This drill makes judging distance second nature, so you focus on aiming the cast, not measuring line. The trick is to start by paying out 20 feet of line, draping 10 from the end of the rod, and coiling 10 near your feet. Then hold the fly in your off hand. (Factor in a 9-foot leader between the line and the fly, and you're nearly three-quarters of the way to 40 feet.)

[2] To get that slack line airborne, first roll cast away from you, off target, and release the fly. Next, fully load the rod on the back cast. If you start by yanking backward and pulling the fly out of your hand, you'll only get yourself tangled. Strip out the remaining line as you make one false cast.

[3] Once the line is in the air, train your focus on the target. Use your thumb to direct the cast. The rod tip ultimately tells the line (and fly) where to go, and the thumb tells the rod tip what to do. When you shock the rod and make your final cast, if the target is lined up at the tip of your thumbnail, odds are your fly will land on the money.

