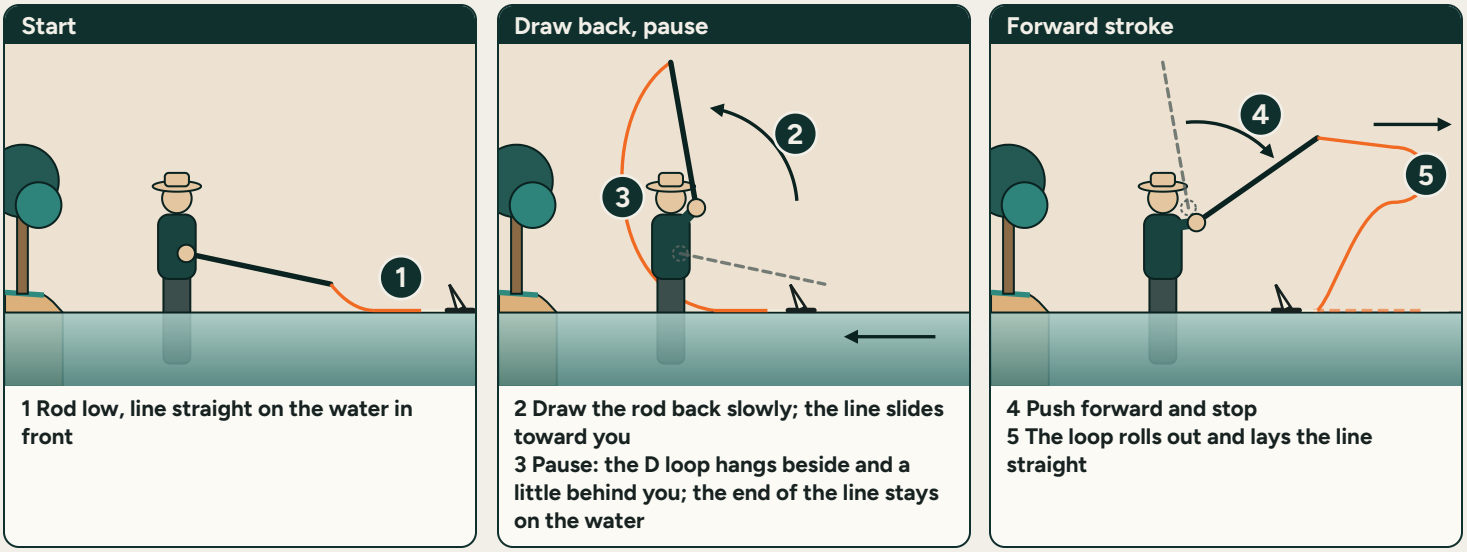
WHAT IS A ROLL CAST AND WHEN DO I USE IT?

A roll cast is a fly cast with no backcast. Draw the rod back slowly until the line hangs from the rod tip in a curved loop beside you. The end of the line stays on the water in front of you. Then a short forward stroke rolls the loop out across the water and lays the line straight.

THE ROLL CAST, SIDE VIEW



1 Rod low, line straight on the water in front

2 Draw the rod back slowly; the line slides toward you
3 Pause: the D loop hangs beside and a little behind you; the end of the line stays on the water

4 Push forward and stop
5 The loop rolls out and lays the line straight

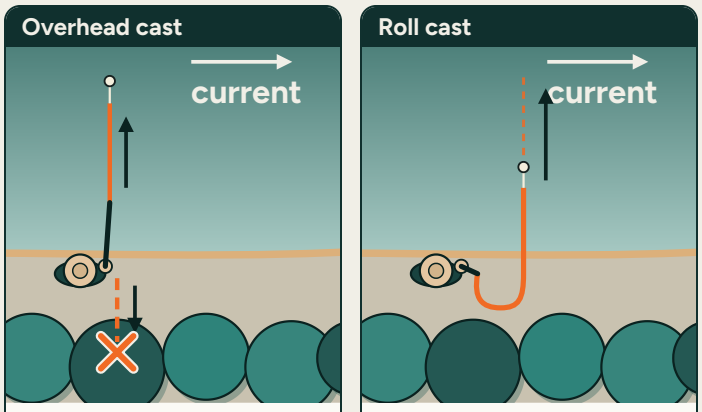
STEP BY STEP

1. **Start with the line straight in front.** Rod tip low, down the line. Line on the water on your rod-hand side, pointing roughly at your target. If there is a lot of loose line, strip some in first; a little slack is fine.
2. **Draw the rod back slowly** until it points just past straight up, hand about level with your ear, tilted a little out to your rod-hand side.
3. **Pause while the D loop hangs beside you.** The end of the line, the anchor, still lies on the water in front of you.
4. **Push forward and stop.** Push the rod forward, speeding up, and stop it sharply with the rod tilted a little up, the tip above your head. Aim at a point in the air above your target, along the line on the water; a roll cast turns only a little.
5. **Let the line roll out, then fish.** Lower the rod tip as the line lands.

IF IT GOES WRONG

- **Line piles up in front:** speed up, stop sharply, and stop higher, aiming above the target.
- **Line just slides toward you:** draw back farther and pause for the D loop.
- **Whole line jumps back at you:** draw back more slowly.
- **Line tangles or hits the rod:** tilt the rod out; keep the line on your rod-hand side and aim along it.
- **Fly still catches the bushes:** draw the rod back a little less and start with less line out.

NO ROOM BEHIND YOU: SEEN FROM ABOVE



The backcast lets the line straighten out behind you. Here it runs into the trees.

The line stays on the water in front. Only the D loop hangs beside you, short of the trees.

WHEN TO USE IT

- **No room behind you.** In an overhead cast you let the line straighten behind you. Trees, a high bank, brush or a boat leave no room for that.
- **Slack line in front.** One roll cast lays a heap of loose line out straight. If there is a lot, strip some in first; a little slack is fine.
- **A sunk line.** A roll cast brings a sunk nymph rig or sinking line to the surface before the next cast.

What the evidence doesn't show. Fly Findr's research holds no study of fly casting, so every step here is anglers' method. No study was found that compared a roll cast with an overhead cast for catching trout. Fly Findr's line guide says a double taper line is good at roll casts; it still recommends a weight-forward floating line as your first line.

Step numbers in the drawings match the steps. Drawn, not to scale. Illustration: Fly Findr