

FISHING FROM A POLED SKIFF – THE BASIC SKILLS

If you are unfamiliar with fishing from poled skiff, there are several nuances you'll want to be aware of and some basic skills you'll want to develop.

1. First and foremost, the most important skill to be developed is being able to double haul and cast 60 feet of tropical, weight forward, floating fly line with no more than two false casts, and deliver the fly with some degree of accuracy. All the major fly line manufacturers make a tropical line that is produced to respond well to the warmth of the tropics. Most of the time, you are casting to a moving target, and you don't have time to use 5 or 6 false casts, feeding out 5 or 10 feet of line on each false cast, to get the length you need. Being able to double haul and shoot line increases your chance to get the fly to the fish while he is still in your target range. Speed of delivery is as important as accuracy. This skill is a matter of developing the timing and technique – there is no strength involved. It is a good idea to take a waterproof marker and make a 3 or 4 inch mark at 60 feet on your saltwater fly lines. This will help while practicing. Also, when stripping line out on the casting deck, the mark will let you know when you have enough line out. When you can cast so that black mark is outside your rod tip with no more than two false casts, you're on the right track.

2. **THE READY POSITION:** this is all about line management, a key ingredient to fishing from the front of a poled skiff. First, double check constantly to make sure you are not standing on the line. Also, best to wear topsiders or some type of shoe without laces. Shoe laces can catch the fly line coming off the deck at the most inopportune times. You begin by stripping out your 60 feet of fly line. Next, determine how much line you can leave outside your rod tip while searching for fish. The more line (weight) you can have outside your rod tip, the faster you can get the line moving. Lastly, you are holding the fly between a finger and thumb in a manner that it won't hook you when you react quickly. When you are ready to begin your cast, drop the fly and make a quick roll cast to get the line in motion. Also, make sure that the hand you're holding the fly with is free of any sun block or lotion – the odor from even a very small amount of lotion touching your fly can turn-off a fish.

3. **THE MOMENT:** OK, you've done everything well and the fish has responded to the fly and you have the hook set. The fish is now ready to streak off in a flash. After the hook is set, there is only one task to concentrate on until it is completed.....clearing the line off the deck and through your guides without your feet or anything else interfering with it. This may sound simple, but it will require extreme focus.....for days you may have been trying to get a permit to eat your fly. Now it happens and your heart is pounding wildly. From the moment the hook is set, you have to totally forget about the fish, pay attention to your line, and get the line on the reel.