Chapter 5 • Lesson 2

Casting a Closed-face Rod and Reel Combo

Fishing is the great Minnesota pastime!
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Casting a Closed-face Rod and Reel Combo

Minnesota Academic Standards

Lesson introduces this Benchmark.
Lesson partially addresses this Benchmark.
Lesson fully addresses this Benchmark.

Language Arts

Grades 3, 4, and 5
I. Reading and Literature
B. Vocabulary Expansion:
Benchmark 1—The student will acquire, understand and use new vocabulary through explicit instruction and independent reading.

III. Speaking, Listening and Viewing
A. Speaking and Listening:
Benchmark 2—The student will demonstrate active listening and comprehension.

Grade 3
III. Speaking, Listening and Viewing
A. Speaking and Listening:
Benchmark 3—The student will follow multi-step oral directions.

History and Social Studies

Grades 4-8
V. Geography
D. Interconnections:
Benchmark 2—Students will analyze how the physical environment influences human activities.

Science

Grade 4
I. History and Nature of Science
A. Scientific World View:
Benchmark 1—The student will explore the uses and effects of science in our interaction with the natural world.

Benchmarks

- Social and natural systems are made of parts. (PreK-2)
- Social and natural systems may not continue to function if some of their parts are missing. (PreK-2)
- When the parts of social and natural systems are put together, they can do things they couldn't do by themselves. (PreK-2)
- In social and natural systems that consist of many parts, the parts usually influence one another. (3-5)
- Social and natural systems may not function as well if parts are missing, damaged, mismatched or misconnected. (3-5)

For the full Environmental Literacy Scope and Sequence, see:
www.seek.state.mn.us/eemn_c.cfm
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Chapter 5 • Lesson 2

Casting a Closed-face Rod and Reel Combo

Grade Level: 3-5
Activity Duration: 60 minutes
Group Size: any
Subject Areas: Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Physical Education
Academic Skills: application, communication, kinesthetic concept development, observation
Setting: Part 1 and Part 3: indoor or outdoor gathering space
Part 2: large indoor or outdoor open area
Vocabulary: anti-reverse, bobber, butt end, casting plug, circle hooks, closed-face reel, cover, drag, grip, hook, improved clinch knot, line guides, line opening, reel handle, reel seat, rod tip, sinker, tag end, thumb button
Internet Search Words: children and fishing, non-lead sinkers, spin-cast rig

Instructor’s Background Information

Taking a group of students fishing can be very rewarding. Many students have never been fishing—or they’ve relied on their parents to do the knot-tying, rigging, baiting, casting, and reeling for them. This lesson allows students to practice these skills on their own. It also allows students who have experience with fishing to help their classmates and share their enthusiasm. This lesson familiarizes you with the equipment and skills needed for your first outing. After this lesson, you and your class will be ready to plan for a safe trip and go fishing. See Lesson 6:1—Safety at the Water’s Edge to plan for and embark upon your fishing trip.

Closed-face Rod and Reel Combo

The rods used with closed-face reels are about five feet long and have small line guides. The line is threaded through the line guides, small circles of steel with a ceramic coating, along the length of the rod that keeps the line in place so it’s less likely to tangle during a cast. The closed-face reel sits on top of the rod and has a push-button for releasing the line. Closed-face reels have a cover and are sometimes called push-button or spin-cast reels. This type of reel is simplest to learn to use—the line is less likely to tangle than with an open-face reel.

Closed-face rod and reel combos are very affordable. Ideal for beginners, they’re often used to catch panfish, but they can also be used to fish for a variety of species in numerous fishing situations. For more information on rods and reels used in Minnesota, see Lesson 5:1—Freshwater Rods and Reels.

Summary

Students practice basic rod and reel rigging and fishing skills.

Student Objectives

The students will:
1. Tie an improved clinch knot.
2. Handle a rod and reel safely.
3. Demonstrate how to cast a rod and reel.
4. Show how to rig and bait a rod and reel for panfish.

Materials

- Nylon cord or rope (one-quarter-inch thick, cut in two-foot lengths), one per student
- Hula-hoops, one for each group of four or five students
- Tying an Improved Clinch Knot Sheet, one for each group of four or five students
- Parts of a Closed-face Rod and Reel Combo Sheet, one per student
- Fishing rods with closed-face reels and 6- or 8-pound test monofilament line, one per student
- Casting targets or hula-hoops, one per group
- Casting plugs, one per group
- Bobbers (one-inch round clip-on type), at least one per student
- Split shot sinkers (quarter-ounce, preferably non-lead), at least one per student
- Hooks (size 6-10), at least one per student (try circle hooks with a long shank)
- The Perfect Rigging Sheet, one per group
- Fishing Rod and Reel Maintenance sheet
- Adult helpers, one for every five to ten students
- Pencils or pens
## Parts of a Rod

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Butt end</td>
<td>Base of the rod handle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grip</td>
<td>Handle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line guides</td>
<td>Guides line to the rod tip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rod tip</td>
<td>End of the rod</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Parts of a Closed-face Reel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cover</td>
<td>Covers the interior gears and spool of line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drag adjustment</td>
<td>Adjusts the tension on the line when a fish is pulling on it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line opening</td>
<td>Where the line comes out of the cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reel handle</td>
<td>Crank to reel in the line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reel seat</td>
<td>Connects the reel with the rod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thumb button</td>
<td>Releases the line when depressed and released</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Casting a Closed-face Rod and Reel Combo

It’s a good idea to practice casting before going to the water with a group of students. Some students actually prefer casting practice to fishing.

Casting plugs are sold at stores, but they’re easy to make. Cut one-inch diameter dowels into one and one-half-inch lengths and insert a small eye screw into one end of each length.

The following steps will help you demonstrate how a closed-face reel works. Tie a casting plug, a weighted dummy lure without a hook, to the end of the line. Hold the grip of the rod with the reel on top. The casting plug attached to the line, should hang about six inches from the end of the rod, or rod tip. Using the same hand that holds the rod, push the button with your thumb and hold it in. Notice that nothing happens. Now release your thumb and watch how the line comes out and the casting plug drops. Pull some line out of the reel and notice how it keeps coming. Turn the reel handle forward and listen for a click. This will secure the line by engaging the drag feature. Now try to pull more line out. It shouldn’t come out without resistance.

Adjusting the drag changes the amount of resistance in the line. Drag refers to the tension on the line as it comes out of the reel. If the drag is set so tightly that no line is released, a large fish pulling on it could break the line. If it’s too loose, it will be impossible to reel in even the smallest fish. To check the reel’s drag adjustment, tie the line to something sturdy. Move the drag adjustment lever so the line comes out easily. Gradually lift the rod until it bends, tightening the drag adjustment as you increase the tension on the line. Now jerk the rod, as if setting the hook. The drag should slip slightly. If it doesn’t, loosen the drag until it does. Now reel in the line.

Some reels have an anti-reverse lever to prevent reeling the line in backward onto the spool. Be sure the lever is in the on position before practicing casting.

Before you cast, choose a spot at which to aim. On the lawn, you may aim for a hula-hoop or other target. On water, you should aim to cast for cover. Cast toward where the fish are—and cast for accuracy, not distance. Many fish spend time near places with cover and food, such as vegetation, drop offs, docks, fallen logs, or brush piles.
Casting a Closed-face Rod and Reel Combo

To demonstrate an overhead cast, hold the button in with your thumb. The rod should be straight in front of you. Make sure the line isn’t wrapped around the top of the rod. Remember to look over your shoulder to make sure no one is standing behind you when you cast; look overhead and behind you for any obstructions (such as power lines, tree branches, bushes, pets) before you cast. Lift and bend your elbow to bring the rod tip back over your shoulder as you watch it. Then bring the rod tip forward over your shoulder again, watching it until you’re pointing the rod to a point just above the horizon. Release your thumb as you bring the rod forward, and point the rod tip in the direction you want the casting plug to go. Watch as the casting plug takes the line straight out in the targeted direction.

Common Casting Problems

The weight of the lure and drag on the line determine the distance of the cast, not how much power you use. Remember that, in casting, accuracy is more important than distance.

How far did the line go? If the line hit the ground directly in front of you, you didn’t release the button soon enough. If the casting plug took the line high in the air, you released the button too soon. Try to get the casting plug to land directly on its target.

When practice casting with a group of young anglers, some common themes will be evident. Gentle coaching will correct the following.

The Lob

If the casting plug goes further vertically than horizontally, you released the button too soon. (Try releasing the button a bit later.)
The Grounder
If the casting plug hits the ground before gaining much horizontal distance, you released the button too late. (Try releasing the button a bit sooner.)

The Winder
If the casting plug wraps around the tip of the rod, you released the button too late or not at all—or the line was wrapped around the tip before you started your cast.

Distance Record
If the casting plug went twice as far as necessary to reach its intended target, use less power. Emphasize accuracy over distance.

Some students may want to do a side-arm cast. Although this is a valid technique, in a group situation, it isn’t as safe as the recommended over-the-shoulder method described here.

What if a line gets stuck in a tree? Make sure others are out of the way, and give the line a good yank—pull away from your body and look away before yanking so the hook doesn’t fly into you if it comes loose. The line could come free or it could break. If it does neither, cut the line and tie on a new casting plug. If you cut the line, the plug or tackle might just slide out of the tree. This process also works for lines snagged on rocks, logs, or water plants while fishing.
Rigging and Knot Tying

There are many types of fishing tackle. The basics are hooks, sinkers, and bobbers. Hooks catch the fish by holding bait and piercing the lip of the fish, sinkers weight the line so it sinks into the water, and bobbers float on the surface, keeping the hook at a fixed depth and signaling, by its movements (bobber submerging below the surface or being pulled across the water’s surface), when a fish is biting on the hook.

Hooks—When taking students fishing for the first time, it helps to use circle hooks. The point faces the shank and is designed to hook the fish in the mouth as it turns to swim away rather than having to set the hook and rely on a quick response. Fish are less likely to be throat-hooked with circle hooks. This can reduce hooking mortality for catch-and-release. If circle hooks are available in your area, buy ones with long shanks that make them easier to handle.

Knots—Students take great pride in learning to tie on their own hooks. It’s an important skill—improperly tied knots can break or slip, allowing fish to get away! There are many different knots, but you only need to learn a few for most fishing styles. One of the most versatile is the improved clinch knot. See the Tying an Improved Clinch Knot Sheet for instructions on how to tie this knot.

Sinkers—Split shot sinkers are small weights with “wings” on one end and a deep slit or “mouth” on the other. If you squeeze the wings together, the mouth opens. Split shot sinkers are made of ceramic materials, lead, tin, or other non-lead metals. Sinkers allow the bait to be cast, and they help it sink. They also keep the line tight so the angler can sense that a fish is biting. Using needlenosed pliers, open the mouth slightly and slide in the line—about nine inches from the tag end of the line. The tag end is the loose end with nothing attached. With needlenosed pliers, pinch the mouth together tightly on the line to hold the sinker to the line securely.

Get the Lead Out

Consider using fishing tackle that doesn't contain lead. Lead is a toxic metal and, in sufficient quantities, it adversely affects the nervous and reproductive systems of mammals and birds. Ask for non-lead tackle at your bait shops.

Circle hooks decrease catch-and-release fish mortality. If circle hooks aren't available, you can use regular hooks. It helps to flatten the barb, the small point opposite the tip, with needlenosed pliers.

Many students have seen people cut fishing line by biting on it with their teeth. This is a safety concern because people can chip teeth or swallow a loose piece of line. Use nippers or nail clippers to cut fishing line. Many students have seen someone secure a sinker by biting on it. Sinkers are easily swallowed and they’re made of hard metal that can chip teeth. Use needlenosed pliers to open and secure sinkers. Most sinkers are still made of lead, which can be toxic if ingested. Always keep sinkers away from the mouth.

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Bobber—To attach a clip-on bobber, put your thumb over the button and press down. Watch how a small “hook” comes out of the bobber at the bottom end. Attach the line onto this small hook, about eighteen inches from the end of the line.

Release the button and put your thumb over the spot on the bottom of the bobber where the tiny hook receded into the bobber. Pull the edges of the button down. Another small hook should come out of the top of the button. Clip that top hook onto the line so the button end of the bobber points towards the rod tip.

Although slip bobbers are easier to cast, the “tiny hooks” clip-on bobbers are quicker and easier for children to put on by themselves. Some anglers tie the line around the “tiny hooks” on clip-on bobbers to prevent them from slipping. Hooking or wrapping works just as well, and it’s easier to change the depth of the line when fishing—this is especially important when going fishing with a large group.

Hook the line above and below to keep the bobber from slipping.

Carrying a Closed-face Rod and Reel Combo Safely
Walking to the shore with a group of students carrying fishing rods with swinging hooks would be dangerous. The best way to carry a rod is by putting the hook into the lowest line guide toward the grip, holding the rod just above the hook to prevent the hook from slipping out, and keeping the rod tip pointed upward and out of the way. Remind students to always pay close attention to where their hooks are while carrying rods.
**Procedure**

**Preparation**
1. Gather adult safety helpers, knot tying, and casting equipment.
2. Cut the nylon cord or rope for knot-tying into two-foot lengths for your class. Consider melting or knotting the ends so they don’t come unraveled.
3. Set up a practice casting area. Put the hula-hoops on one end of the field and the casting targets at the other end, about twenty feet away. (If you’re casting outside, it will be easier to cast with the wind.)
4. Use an improved clinch knot to tie the casting plugs onto the rod and reel combos to be used for casting practice.

**Activity**

**Warm-up**
1. Ask the students if they’ve ever gone fishing. There are usually a few students who have, and they’ll be eager to share their stories. Did they fish from shore, dock, or a boat? Who went with them? What (if anything) did they catch? What was their favorite part of the day?
2. Tell the students that, whether or not they have fishing experience, they can learn how to fish and practice their fishing skills.

**Lesson**

**Part 1: Knot-tying**
1. Pass out the *Tying an Improved Clinch Knot Sheet*—one per student—so the students can refer to it as you demonstrate tying the knot. Using a hula-hoop and nylon cord, demonstrate how to tie an improved clinch knot as shown on the sheet. The hula-hoop represents the eye of a fish hook. The nylon cord represents the fishing line with one end of the line attached to a rod and reel. The other end of the line (the tag end) is free.
2. Have a student hold the hula-hoop while you talk through the steps and tie the knot.
3. Untie the knot and have the class talk you through the steps as you tie the knot again.
4. Divide the class into groups of four or five. Give each group a hula-hoop. Give the students their length of cord, and ask them to practice tying the knot onto the hula-hoop. Assist those who need additional help, and encourage those who tie the knot successfully to help others.
5. Make sure everyone has mastered this knot before going on to rigging.
Part 2: Parts of a Rod and Reel and Casting
1 Pass out the Parts of a Closed-face Rod and Reel Combo Sheet. Have students fill out the sheet as you go over the parts and functions of a closed-face rod and reel combo.
2 Demonstrate how the reel works.
3 Demonstrate a cast. Remind students to always check above and behind them for obstacles before casting.
4 Demonstrate how to safely carry a fishing rod.
5 Line the students up in three rows. Each row should have a rod and reel with a casting plug on the end. Tell the students that accuracy is more important than distance in casting. Sunfish live close to shore under docks and near plants and fallen logs. Ask the students to think of the casting targets or hula-hoops as sunfish habitat for which they should aim. After a student practices three casts, they should move to the end of their row.
6 Instruct students to get help from an adult if a line gets tangled or stuck in a tree.

Part 3: Rigging
1 Give everyone a rod and reel with no rigging (no casting plug, hook, sinker or bobber attached to the line).
2 Hand out The Perfect Rigging Sheets.
3 Have the students pull out line so a two-foot length hangs from the end of the rod tip.
4 Demonstrate how to put on each piece of tackle.
5 Hand out the tackle one piece at a time so students don’t lose the small pieces. Have students rig their rods.
6 It often helps to tape the hook to the top of a desk or table using a piece of masking tape, with the hook’s eye exposed over the edge. The students then have both hands free for for tying the improved clinch knot, and the sharp hook is safely secured.
7 Check to make sure that everyone has a properly rigged rod.
8 Secure the hooks safely to the rods by hooking them to the loop on the rod (near the grip) or to the bottom line guide eyelet, and tightening the line.
9 Review how to safely carry a fishing rod.

Wrap-up
1 Review why accurate casting is important.
2 Review the parts of the rod and reel combo.
3 Review how to safely handle hooks and carry a rod.
4 You’re ready to go fishing! See Lesson 6:1—Safety and Fishing at the Water’s Edge to prepare for your fishing trip.

Assessment Options
1 Assessment options include the Checklist and Rubric on the following pages.
Checklists are tools for students and instructors. Checklists involve students in managing their own learning. They help students understand and set learning goals before the lesson begins, and help them monitor their progress during the lesson, ensuring that they meet learning goals and objectives by the end of the lesson. Students can also use checklists to discover areas that may need improvement. Checklists help instructors monitor each student’s progress throughout the lesson, facilitating appropriate adjustment of instruction to ensure learning by the end of the lesson. The instructor may wish to have students add several of their own learning goals to the checklist to personalize it, and to accommodate varied learning needs and styles.

Grade

17-18 points = A
Excellent. Work is above expectations.

15-16 points = B
Good. Work meets expectations.

12-14 points = C
Work is generally good. Some areas are better developed than others.

9-11 points = D
Work does not meet expectations; it’s not clear that student understands objectives.

0-8 points = F
Work is unacceptable.

Casting a Closed-face Rod and Reel Combo Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Points</th>
<th>Points Earned</th>
<th>Points Earned</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total Points

18

Score
## Casting a Closed-face Rod and Reel Scoring Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Criteria</th>
<th>4 Excellent</th>
<th>3 Good</th>
<th>2 Fair</th>
<th>1 Poor</th>
<th>0 Unacceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handling rod and reel and casting safely</td>
<td>Releases the button when the rod tip points upward and forward. During casting, rod tip is at ten- and two o'clock positions.</td>
<td>Releases the button a little too early or too late. During casting, rod tip varies slightly from the ten- and two o'clock positions, but is close.</td>
<td>Releases the button much too early or too late. During casting, rod tips of not at the ten- and two o'clock positions, but rod movement is controlled.</td>
<td>Releases the button at wrong time. Rod movement uncontrolled and dangerous.</td>
<td>Doesn't understand how to operate reel for casting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigging fundamentals</td>
<td>Can correctly place the hook, bobber, and sinker on the line unassisted. Can tie a clinch knot.</td>
<td>Can correctly place the hook, bobber, and sinker on the line unassisted. Can tie a clinch knot but doesn't bait the hook.</td>
<td>Can attach a hook, bobber, and sinker but places two of the items on the wrong spot on the line. Needs help tying the clinch knot and baiting the hook.</td>
<td>Needs assistance in placing the hook, bobber, and sinker on their line. Doesn't know how to tie a clinch knot or bait the hook.</td>
<td>Doesn't understand how to rig line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Always looks to the side, front and back before casting. Carries rod and reel in vertical position.</td>
<td>Looks to the side, front and back before casting 75% of the time. Carries rod and reel in vertical position.</td>
<td>Looks to the side, front and back before casting half of the time. Usually remembers to carry rod and reel in vertical position.</td>
<td>Looks to the side, front and back before casting less than half of the time. Must be reminded to carry rod and reel in vertical position.</td>
<td>Disregards instructions for safe handling of equipment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy and casting for cover</td>
<td>Can accurately cast the plug at a target all of the time. Understands the reason for casting for cover.</td>
<td>Can accurately cast the plug at a target 75% of the time. Understands the reason for casting for cover.</td>
<td>Can accurately cast the plug at a target half of the time. Understands the reason for casting for cover.</td>
<td>Can accurately cast the plug at a target less than half of the time. Doesn't understand the reason for casting for cover.</td>
<td>Doesn't aim for target when casting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Score ______ (Calculate score by dividing total points by number of criteria.)
Diving Deeper

Extensions

1. Have students research tackle and fishing techniques for species other than sunfish.
2. Have the students interview an angler, asking why the person likes fishing, or what they’ve learned from fishing.
3. Have students teach another class the fishing skills they’ve learned.

For the Small Fry

K-2 Option

1. For younger students, arrange for at least one adult volunteer to help each group of five with knot-tying, rigging, baiting hooks, and removing fish. Encourage students to practice, and to try these activities on their own. Be sure to review hook safety. (Always carry your hook and pay attention to where it is—never let it swing.) Barbless hooks are recommended for this age group.
2. Using short “kid-sized” rods, teach the students to cast the closed-face rig. Use casting plugs instead of hooks. Arrange an adult/student ratio of one to one, or allow one student to cast at a time. Make sure that adults remain with the student casters at all times. Cast in an open area such as a gym or playing field. You can mark standing spaces for the students using hula-hoops or rope. Casting stations should be two pole lengths apart. See Lesson 5:3—Pop Can Casting.
3. Instead of rods, use cane poles or pop can casters—these work well, too. (See Lesson 5:3—Pop Can Casting.)
4. When students are confident with their fishing skills see Lesson 6:1—Safety at the Water’s Edge to prepare for the fishing trip.
Parts of a Closed-face Rod and Reel Combo Sheet

Draw a line from each word to its place on the picture.

- Butt end
- Clip-on bobber
- Closed-face reel
- Drag adjustment
- Grip
- Line guides
- Line opening
- Reel handle
- Reel seat
- Rod tip
- Split shot sinker
- Thumb button
- Hook
Parts of a Closed-face Rod and Reel Combo Answer Sheet

Draw a line from each word to its place on the picture.
Tying an Improved Clinch Knot Sheet

The clinch knot is probably the most popular fishing knot used today. When properly tied, the clinch knot is very strong and it won’t slip. This is a versatile fishing knot, and it can also be used to attach lures to your fishing line.

1. Thread one end of the line through the eye of the hook.
2. Wrap the line around itself five times to make five twists. Fishing tackle manufacturers have found that five wraps of the line work best. With fewer than five wraps, fish might pull out the knot. With more than five wraps, the line may break.
3. Take the tag (loose) end of the line and put it through the first twist, near the hook.
4. Notice the new loop you have made. Take the same tag end and pass it through the new loop. (This is the “improved” part of the knot that prevents it from slipping.)
5. Drop this end.
6. Slide the whole knot down to the hook.
7. Gently tug on the end you previously dropped.
8. Neaten the knot. It’s important to make sure the knot is “neat,” or that the coils are tightly lined up. If there are loose wraps, or wraps on both sides of the eye, the knot may snag and break.
9. Voila! There should be neatly stacked coils lined up next to the eye.
The Perfect Rigging Sheet

Perfect Rigging

Too Little Weight—or Bait Is on Bottom

Too Much Weight—or You Have a Fish

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Fishing Rod and Reel Maintenance

Questions and Answers

What if the line doesn’t come out of the reel?
You may have a tangle under the reel cover. Unscrew the reel cover to check. Otherwise, check the button to see if it’s catching properly.

What if there’s a tangle?
Loosen the tangle and scoot it off the end of the rod. This makes it easier to untangle. You can always cut the line and re-rig if necessary.

What if it seems like there is sand in the reel or it’s gummed up with something?
Take the reel cover off and clean the reel with a wet paper towel. You may want to put a little oil on the gears.

How often should I change the line?
Once a year. Old line becomes brittle and may break easily. Old line may look curly as it comes off the reel. Return old line to a sporting goods store for recycling.

What if the rod tip breaks off or the line guides come off?
You can cut the tip down to the next line guide. Displaced line guides can be glued back into place.