



A Sisterhood of Anglers.

Choosing a Fly Rod Outfit- Rod/Reel/Line Weights

When the time comes to purchase your first fly rod, it can quickly become a seemingly daunting task. There are endless options of rods, reels and lines available on the market today and most are accompanied by descriptions that can only be decoded by veteran anglers. So how does a woman who's new to fly fishing figure out what will best suit her? Luckily, MNST's Women on the Fly is here to layout the pertinent information as it applies to North Shore steelheading and help you weed through some of the terminology you will encounter. We will also make some fly rod outfit (outfit consisting of fly rod, reel and fly line) recommendations so you have a starting point in your search!

Fly rod, reel and line weights-

The primary differentiating factors in fly rods are the weight, action and length (obviously you'll want to choose a fly rod made for freshwater applications). Most rod manufacturers make rods from 0-weight to 14-weight. The rod weight corresponds to the line weight it was designed to cast. Your line weight correlates to the size of fly you intend to cast. In order to choose which weight of fly line you'll need, you must first determine what fish species you'll be targeting. For example, 0-4-weight would be ideal for small trout and panfish while 5-weight to 8-weights work best for larger trout such as steelhead. In order for your fly rod outfit to be balanced, you want your rod, reel and line weights to all be the same. For instance, my 8-wt rod has an 8-wt reel spooled with 8-wt fly line.

For targeting steelhead, trout, and salmon on the North Shore, the most common rods used by anglers are 9-foot, moderate or moderate/fast action, 5, 6, 7 or 8-weight outfits. All work well, it's just a matter of angler preference and size of fish you are pursuing. Some folks prefer the lighter weights because smaller trout are more fun to catch on a 5-wt than an 8-wt while others may prefer an 8-wt if they plan on fishing larger flies or swinging streamers for steelhead. A good choice for someone new to steelheading would be a 7- 8 weight, moderate action fly rod. Anglers interested in brook trout or fall pink salmon, will a 5 or 6 weight fly rod a nice choice.

Fly Rod Action

For those just beginning to explore the world of fly rods, one of the first technical words that you'll come across and may be confused by, is *fly rod action*.

The action of a rod refers to where the rod has most flex.

The three standard actions:

Fast Action- Bends mostly at the tip, or upper 1/3rd of the rod

Medium or Moderate Action- Flex will be toward the mid-section of the rod

Slow Action- Bends into the butt-section (toward the handle) of the rod

Our recommendation for our fly fishing newbies would be to choose a moderate action for your first fly rod. Moderate action rods are very versatile and can be used for a variety of techniques and presentations. A critical advantage a moderate action offers to the inexperienced fly caster is the ability to feel the rod load and unload during your casts.

Here are some additional details on the three basic fly rod actions:

Fast Action-

- *Provides the most power for tighter loops and higher line speed enabling longer casts
- *A stout lower section of the rod means more fighting strength, aiding in landing large fish quickly
- *Can be difficult for beginners to cast
- *Not ideal for small stream fishing that requires short casts
- *Typically used by more seasoned fly anglers as it requires good timing and technique

Medium Action-

- *Versatile and well-suited for a wide variety of applications and presentations
- *Long casts can still be made easily despite not having as much line speed as a fast action
- *Good for short casts and roll casts on smaller streams
- *Good line control and accuracy
- *Ideal for beginners because they are forgiving and provide a good balance of stiffness and flex while the novice caster builds her skill and experience

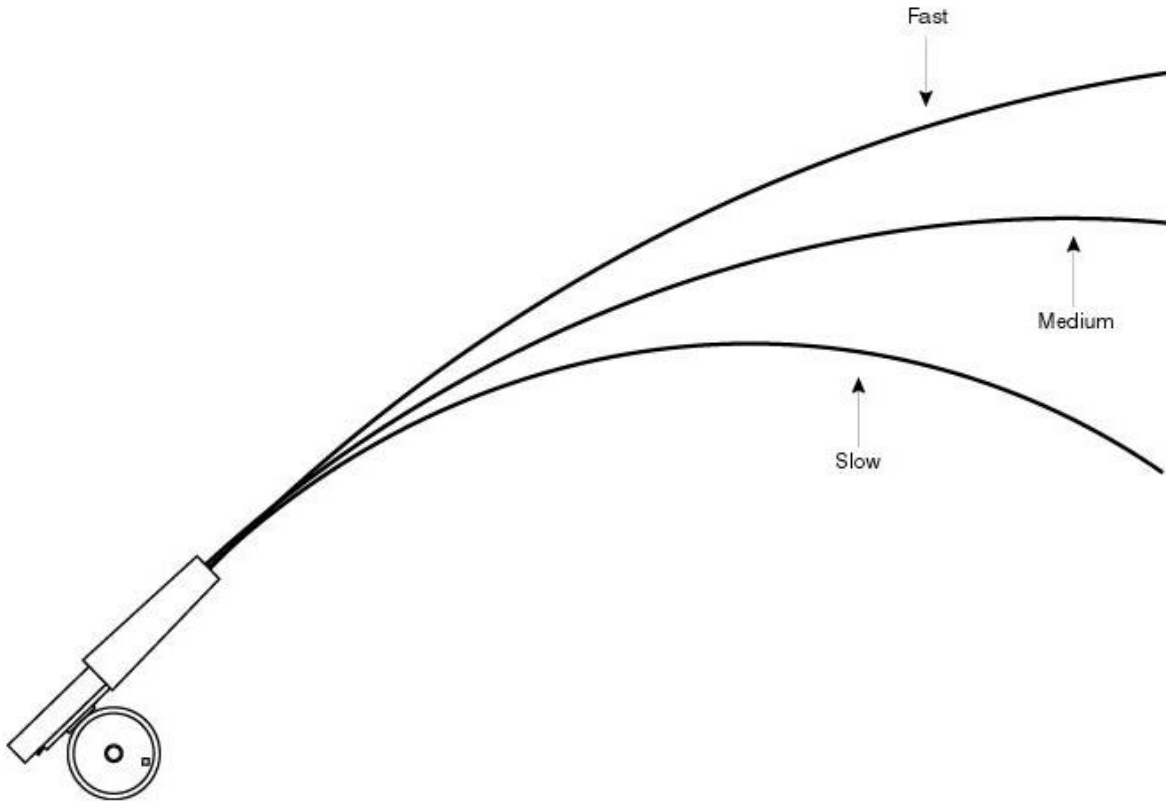
Slow Action-

- *Ideal for small stream fishing requiring short casts or repetitive roll casts
- *Great for delicate presentations to spooky fish
- *The extra flex of a slow action helps prevent line breakage when using light tippet/leader
- *Fun to catch small fish on because of the extra flex
- *Not designed for long distance casts
- *Poorly suited for windy conditions
- *Can be a good choice for inexperienced casters because the slow line speed allows for good line control which means better accuracy

Each rod action has its advantages and disadvantages just as every angler develops preferences as they progress, but a solid starting point for those in the market for their first fly rod would be a medium or

moderate action rod. Its versatility and proven performance make it our preferred rod action for new steelheaders!

Rod Actions



Most big brands have simplified things for new fly anglers by offering complete outfits. You get not only the rod and reel but the reel will come pre-spoiled with backing, fly line and leader so all you need to do is assemble the 2 or 4 piece rod blank, tie on a fly, crimp on a split shot and you're ready to rock! If you'd rather purchase a rod, reel and line separately, look to your local guide shop for guidance. If you let them know where you're planning to fish and the species you'll be targeting, they will be happy to help ensure you're outfitted for success.

A favorite brand of many staffers of Minnesota Steelheader is Temple Fork Outfitters. The rods in the TFO fly lineup have always performed well here on the North Shore and their warranty is top notch. In fact when time came to purchase equipment for our Women on the Fly program, we chose the Temple Fork Outfitters NXT 8/9-wt. combos that our clinic participants have enjoyed using. More information on the TFO NXT outfits can be found here: <https://tforods.com/nxt-fly-rods/>

A few other recommended outfits include:

Orvis Encounter Combo

Redington Topo Combo

Cabela's Synch Fly Combo

If you want to purchase your rod and reel separately, it's not necessary to get them both from the same brand. Many anglers have a preferred rod brand that differs from their favorite reel brand. The only thing to be sure of, as discussed, is matching the weight of the rod and reel.

Some of our recommended manufacturers of rods and reels:

Temple Fork Outfitters

Sage

Orvis

Redington

Cabelas

Hardy

Scott- Rods only

Fenwick- Rods only

Waterworks-Lamson- Reels only