

# ROD BUILDING

BY LARRY LEE

## Rod Building 103— What About Blank Actions?

All blanks have an action associated with them. Knowing what kind of fishing you are going to do helps greatly in determining blank requirements. For example, are you fishing lakes, large to small streams, or the ocean? Also, what size of fish are you trying to capture, a nice size trout or a billed fish that runs over 100 pounds?

Let's first define blank actions. There are 4 basic blank actions:

- extra fast (top 25% bends),
- fast (top 33% bends),
- medium or moderate (top 50% bends),
- and slow (entire blank from cork handle bends).

Extra-fast and fast blanks or rods are chosen to handle a slightly larger range of fly lines with flies. These actions are also selected for those requiring longer casts of over 50 feet for larger streams or lakes. Slow and medium actions of blanks or rods handle a shorter range of fly lines with flies. They are typically used for shorter, softer, and delicate casts of less than 50 feet in smaller streams, beaver ponds, or large aquariums. Blanks or rods should not be chosen for maximum casting distance if that is not the primary use. Selection should be made on how effective the rod will be for the majority of the fishing done with it (make it easier on yourself and enjoy). Remember one rod is not going to be effective in all types of fly fishing.

Rods get their actions from blank taper, blank wall thickness and density of material (graphite, fiber glass, composite, and binding materials) manufacturers use in constructing the blanks. Fast action rods are typically made with complex tapers and high-density materials, while slow rods are made

from simple tapers and less-density material.

Manufacturers often provide blank and rod specifications on websites or catalogs. Some manufacturers provide more information than others, but you can get a good gauge in examining the specifications and statistics of the blank or rod.

When you get a blank or rod in hand, you can judge the action by a simple test. When doing this test on a blank only, DO NOT put the blank in serious flex. You can get breakage at the joints of multiple piece rods by flexing the blank too much. When flexing a blank, you will need to determine the effective spine of each segment and align properly. Without doing this, you will not get an accurate rod flex. A discussion of locating the effective spine will be coming soon.

To conduct the test, hold the rod or blank parallel to the floor with eyes down or rod blank spine up and the butt end against your abdomen. You will then need to rotate the rod 90% in either direction. Then start a side-to-side tip motion, progressively increasing the tip motion until the whole rod flex is shown. When you observe the curvature of the rod and compare with the definitions above, you can get a good idea how the blank or rod reacts with increasing loads. When conducting this test on a built rod, the types of eyes (single foot, double foot, eye stiffness, eye sizes) and how they are tied on also changes the action somewhat.

There are many variables in trying to achieve that particular rod performance for the purpose you have in mind. By examining the blank or rod actions, the fly fisherman will have a better understanding of the rod characteristics, and why a rod responds in a particular way.

Questions or suggestions? Contact [Larry Lee](#) at (916) 962-0616.