

Fishing – Level 3

Fishing - Beyond the Basics

You are now ready to move on and experience more of what fishing can be. The first step is to move from the smaller terminal tackle box you have your things in and move into a full tackle box and add things that may come in handy. I still use terminal tackle boxes when I fish for a particular fish or only use one type of fishing rod, so these purchases do not go to waste.

Tackle boxes:

These come in all shapes and sizes. Like we pointed you to terminal boxes for your initial tackle box, I once again will tell you to start out small and buy bigger only as the need arises. I currently have the same tackle box for the last 30 plus years. The box holds 2 terminal tackle boxes, one for bobber type fishing and the other for fly fishing. It has room for tools, extra line and a few heavier artificial lures that I use from time to time. I took the time when I was starting out fishing to learn what type of fishing I liked and I slowly built a tackle box to support that fishing. You do not need a huge tackle box to be successful. I feel I am successful and my tackle box is the size of a small tool kit that people have in the trunks of their cars.

Before you head out fishing, make sure that you are prepared with the right stuff once you're there.

Of course, the contents of your tackle box will vary, depending on the type of fish you plan to catch, but this is a typical tackle box for you to get started.

Tackle-Box Checklist

- Extra fishing line
- Bobbers
- Swivels, to keep fishing line from twisting
- Leaders
- Sinkers
- Different sizes of hooks (for different types of fish)
- Needle nose pliers, to help remove hooks out of fish
- Stringer, to hold all the fish you catch
- Sharp knife (such as a Swiss Army knife)
- Ruler/scale
- A small flashlight
- First-aid kit
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen

Swivels

We all use them at some point. Swivels are and have been a main part of the terminal tackle on almost any rig. Some anglers swear by them. Others swear at them. But they do serve a purpose.

There are three or four basic types of swivels, all of them designed for the specific purpose of preventing line twist. When a bait twirls in the water or a hooked fish spins, the swivel is there to turn (swivel) and allow the terminal tackle freedom to spin while keeping your line from twisting.

Barrel Swivel

This swivel is the least expensive and consequently often the one most anglers purchase. Unfortunately, they purchase this one for the wrong reason. As a true swivel, this one does not perform very well. The design is such that pressure on the swivel causes friction that often inhibits its ability to turn.

This one does serve a purpose, however. It is an excellent terminal point for attaching a leader to your line. If you plan to fish with a leader that is much heavier than your line, and line twist is not a major concern, this swivel is ideal.

Crane Swivel

This one is an offshoot of the barrel swivel design, but turns much more freely under heavy pressure conditions. This one is the all-around midrange swivel that can be used in most fishing situations.

It is designed with that same barrel in the middle, but the end eyes terminate inside the barrel instead of with an outside wrap. It costs slightly more than the barrel swivel, but it is worth the price in a twisting line situation.

Ball Bearing Swivel

These are the top of the line items that are specifically designed to provide anti-twisting qualities along with superior strength. They are actually built with internal ball bearings that allow the leader to twist freely under pressure. They are used more in the big gamefish and billfish arenas than anywhere else,

There are a number of varieties of ball bearing swivels that appear in appropriate price ranges. In every case, these swivels will test your wallet. Starting at about a dollar each for smaller ones, prices can climb to over five dollars for the larger sizes.

But, remember, you always “get what you pay for”. These swivels may be expensive, but they also provide the best service to the angler.

Snap Swivels

In each of the three basic types of swivels an option is provided – called the snap swivel. This is basically a swivel that has a snap attachment built in on one end. These are used to allow quick change outs or lures or leaders. Rather than cutting and retying, anglers simply unsnap and re-snap.

Anglers argue over the benefits of these snap swivels. Used directly at the lure connection some feel they take away from the natural look and feel of the lure (I am in that school of thought). Others argue that the snap allows them to change lures more quickly.

When used as the connection between line and leader, snap swivels work well. They are well suited for attaching a wire leader. When a fish is caught, the leader is unsnapped and a new one is snapped on in short order. Offshore trolling leaders are best connected using snap swivels.

Be aware of some issues with snap swivels. A silver or brass snap swivel that catches the sunlight and flashes while trolling can often result in a cut off line when the swivel is attacked by a marauding surface feeder. Use a black snap swivel and replace it when the finish gets damaged.

When choosing a snap swivel, I see two varieties on the market. One has a rounded snap that hooks back under a wire catch. The other has a straight side that angles down to the catch mechanism. The vertex of the angle is where the leader will ride. With the rounded snap, pressure can pull the rounded shape and will straighten the snap, usually causing the snap to fail and open. The angled snap can handle far more pressure without failing.

Choose Wisely

The bottom line with swivels is that you need to choose wisely. Barrel swivels work extremely well in certain circumstances – if you simply need a terminal point for leader and line.

Crane swivels are an economic choice for most of the everyday fishing applications. They work well under most conditions.

Ball bearing swivels are a must for offshore billfish and game fish situations. They are used inshore on smaller fish where the use of extremely light line demands the finest terminal tackle.

Snap swivels take their place as an application of the various swivels we discussed. Just make sure you pick the one that will serve your particular situation.

Steel Leaders

If you are fishing for fish that have sharp teeth, northern pike, walleye and musky for example, you need to have a line that cannot be easily bitten through. This has brought about the need for steel leader or line that is between 6” and 12” long that attaches to the lure and is then tied to the line on your fishing rod. The steel will be hard for these fish to bite through when you set the hook and try to bring them in. The length of steel leader is determined by the size fish you might catch. I have seen where 6” leaders were too short and the fish bit through the line above the leader. I usually use either a 10” or a 12” leader because of this.

The usage of the leader in the first place is because you are consciously fishing for this type of fish. So this brings up another point, targeting the type of fish.

Lures

Fishing with lures has many advantages:

- Lures are less messy than bait.
- Lures gut hook fewer fish (gut hooking is when the fish takes the hook deeply, or even completely swallows the hook).
- Lures allow you to cover more water, even from shore or a pier.
- You can target the species you are after more efficiently with lures.
- Lures are easy to change out.

As far as disadvantages go, they are mostly related to cost:

- Lures can be expensive compared to bait.
- Lures can be snagged on underwater obstacles or in trees, and the price of them makes it especially painful to lose.

There are 7 main types of lures: jigs, spinners, spoons, soft plastic baits, plugs, spinnerbaits, and flies. When you finish reading this, you will be able to recognize each of these lures on sight and have an idea of how to fish them (in fishing lingo this is called “Presentation.”)

Jigs



Of all lures, I would say that jigs are the most versatile. A jig can catch about every game fish there is, and are inexpensive to boot. They have a weighted lead head and come in every size and color and can be “dressed” (think of it like a tail or skirt) in feathers, hair, a soft plastic grub, or with the bait of your choice.

Presentation

Jig fishing takes a lot of concentration, unlike spinners, all the “action” (how a lure moves in the water) comes from you. If you don’t do anything the jig just sinks. The classic way to fish a jig is to cast it out, wait until it hits the bottom (you will know it has hit bottom when your line goes slack), then retrieve it in a series of hops. You make it hop by lifting the rod tip, lowering it, and retrieving your line. Try different speeds, big lifts, little hops, twitching until you find what works. Pay attention, though. Detecting the strike is the hardest thing about jigging.

Spinners



Spinners are a great beginner lure because they are so easy to use. They are essentially a metal shaft with spinning blade. The hook can be bare or dressed. Dragging a spinner through water causes the blade to spin. The spinning motion of the blade creates sound and vibration that can be picked up by fish. This makes spinners an excellent choice for stained or murky water.

Presentation

Simple as can be. Cast and retrieve, that’s it. As long as the blade is spinning, its working. You can try speeding up or slowing down your retrieve for variety.

Spoons



Spoons are curved metal lures. The first spoons were just that, spoons with the handle broken off. Today, spoons can be had (like all other lures) in any color and size. There is a spoon for every fishing situation. The shape of this lure gives it its distinctive action. Spoons move through water with a side-to-side wobble that simulates an injured baitfish, and game fish just *love* injured baitfish.

Presentation

Some spoons are made to be cast, others to be trolled, and some even to be jigged. As a beginner you will most likely be using the most common type; the casting spoon. Casting spoons are easy to use. Like spinners, just cast and retrieve. You can vary your speed as long as it's wobbling. If the spoon begins to spin, slow down your retrieve. Add a split ring to the eye of the lure for better action.

Soft Plastic Baits



Soft plastic baits encompass a variety of different lures, mostly used for bass fishing. The classic soft plastic bait is the worm. These type of baits are created by pouring liquid plastic into a mold and adding dyes, metallic flakes, or even scent. They can resemble the natural forage of fish, like worms, crawfish, lizards or frogs, but some plastic baits don't resemble anything you might find in or out of the water; these are referred to as creature baits or "critters." The soft plastic bodies of these lures, encourage fish to hold on to them a little longer before they spit them out, giving the angler a better chance to set the hook.

Presentation

Presentation for soft plastic baits depends on the type of bait. For the classic worm, the most popular technique is the Texas Rig. To rig your worm this way, you use a bullet weight. Thread the bullet weight on the line above your hook, and then insert the hook through the top of the worm's head, then bury the barb into the body of the worm to make it "weedless" (meaning it will not get hung up on underwater foliage.) Now cast it into a likely fish holding area and let it fall to the bottom. Twitch your rod tip a few times. If you still don't have a bite, hop it back to you in short twitchy hops.



plastic worm (texas rigged)

Plugs



Plugs are constructed from hollow plastic or wood to resemble baitfish, frogs or other prey. They usually sport two or three treble hooks. These hard bodied lures can be fished at almost any depth, as some are made to float or dive or both. Depending on the design, a plug will wobble, rattle or gurgle. They come in all sizes, and most of them have some sort of plastic lip that allows them to dive when you pull them through the water. Different kind of plugs include: crank-baits, jerk-baits, surface plugs, floating/diving plugs, and poppers,

Presentation

One of the most effective (and one of the first plugs you should add to your tackle box) is the long, narrow minnow imitation in three to four inch length, the original is made by Rapala. It floats when it's not moving and dives shallowly when it's retrieved. Add a split ring to the eye if it doesn't have one. Cast it out and wait until the rings on the surface of the water dissipate, then retrieve it slowly or fast, stopping suddenly and maybe throwing in an occasional twitch.

Spinnerbaits/Buzzbaits



Spinnerbaits and buzzbaits are awkward looking lures, consisting of a safety-pin like wire attached to a lead head body. The body usually is dressed with a rubber skirt and the arm with one or two metallic blades like those seen on spinners.

Presentation

The most common way to fish a spinnerbait is what is called “Chuck-N-Wind,” simply cast it out and retrieve it at a moderate speed, keeping the lure at a depth between the surface and five feet. It is a popular technique because it is effective.

Flies



Flies are traditionally used with fly fishing equipment, but with the addition of a clear bubble float, spinning gear will cast flies too. Flies are very light lures that imitate insects in various stages of their life cycle, or other natural prey such as baitfish, leeches, hoppers or even mice and frogs. They are usually constructed of fur and feathers, though some patterns make use of new materials like foam and rubber.

Presentation

Dry flies are intended to float on the surface of the water, to this end they are dressed with some kind of floatation to aid in their buoyancy. Wet flies, like nymphs and streamers are designed to be fished below the surface of the water. Fly fishing is a difficult but rewarding area of the fishing universe.

Now that you know the basic lures and how they are used, you should have an easier time starting your own collection. Buy only a few at a time, and take the time to learn to fish them. If you know anyone that fishes the same water you do, ask them what kind of lures they like to use and what they recommend.

Fishing Level 3 Requirements:

- 1 – Identify and describe the 7 types of lures
- 2 – Describe the three different types of swivels
- 3 – What are 8 things that should be in your tackle box.