

SECTION

5



INTERMEDIATE FISHING: TACKLE AND TECHNIQUES

You've mastered fishing with spin-casting gear. What's next? Plenty! You're ready to explore a wide variety of other gear, from spinning and bait-casting equipment, to fly rods that can cast the tiniest of flies. Master one or try them all. This chapter will help get you started.

COMPARING “SPIN-CASTING” TO “SPINNING” GEAR

While spin-casting gear is fine for catching smaller fish, many people like to learn how to use spinning gear, which is used to catch everything from little panfish to lunker pike.

Spinning reels are different from spin-casting reels in several ways:

- They are open-faced (no spool cover).
- They have a bail and line guide instead of a casting pushbutton.
- They mount under the rod (instead of on top).

Advantages of spinning reels compared to spin-casting reels:

- They typically have a better drag system.
- They hold more line.
- They make casting lightweight lures and baits easier.

Spinning rods are different from spin-casting rods in several ways:

- They have larger line guides mounted on the underside instead of the top of the rod.
- They have a much wider range of lengths and rod action (how flexible a rod is).

Disadvantages of spinning reels compared to spin-casting reels:

- They cost more.
- They sometimes have annoying line twist, requiring that you remove the line and respool the reel.



HOW TO USE SPINNING GEAR

Casting

1. Set your casting plug, lure or bait 6 to 12 inches from the rod tip.
2. Hold the line with your index finger and flip the bail over with your other hand.
3. Using your wrist and elbow, bring the rod straight over your shoulder to about the ten-o'clock position.
4. Move the rod forward to about the one-o'clock position and release your index finger from the line.

Troubleshooting spinning reel tangles

The biggest problem with spinning reels is tangles. Tangles form when line has been incorrectly put on the reel, or when reeling in loose line. Loose line twists into loops that form tangles. Don't try to untangle your line by casting when you see a loop in your line. This may seem to be the easiest solution, but will result in a worse tangle. Instead, open the bail and "strip" line off the reel until you pull the loop out. Then, close the bail and begin reeling in, keeping your line tight as you reel.

To prevent tangles, always tighten your line on the spool before reeling in. Do this by either manually closing the bail, or beginning to reel in just before the lure hits the water.

If your line keeps twisting, it's time to put new line on the reel.



Hold the line with your index finger as you get ready to cast.



Take care of any loops that form on your reel immediately.



CHOOSING THE RIGHT SPINNING ROD AND REEL

Walk through the fishing section of a store and you are surrounded by spinning rods and reels. Which you choose depends on the type of fish you want to catch and where you will be fishing. For example, you may use an ultra-light action rod and reel with four-pound test line for bluegill fishing. For big river channel catfish, you'll need a heavy action rod and reel with 15-pound test line. Fortunately, rod action, ideal line and lure sizes is written just above the rod handle. Use that information to choose the rod you need.

Matching the right rod with the right reel and line allows you to fish more effectively. Start out with a rod and reel combination that covers a wide range of fishing options. You can always add to your rod collection once you know what type of fishing you like.

- A medium action 6- to 6 ½-foot spinning rod is a good all-around starter rod.
- Match it with a reel that can hold 80 to 150 yards of 8-pound test monofilament.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING LINE TWIST WITH A SPINNING REEL

- Put the line on your reel correctly. Follow the instructions included in the line packaging.
- After making a cast, flip the bail over by hand instead of using the reel handle. Then, grab the line just above the reel and give it a slight tug before you start reeling. This will remove any loops before they start.
- For best casting, don't put too much line on your reel. Leave 1/8-inch of space from the edge of the reel's spool.

OTHER TYPES OF RODS AND REELS

The other main rod and reel types are bait-casting and fly fishing. They generally take a longer time to learn how to use than spin-casting and spinning gear. Since using these rods and reels are considered more advanced, we will only give a brief description here. There are plenty of websites and books that can provide you with more information on bait-casting and fly fishing.

Bait-casting

A bait-casting reel mounts on top of the rod. Unlike spinning and spincast reels, the spool on a baitcast reel revolves during the cast and retrieve, reducing line twist. It takes time and practice to become good at bait-casting. Once you become skilled, you will be able to cast right on target, close to structure (page 24) where fish live. Many anglers consider bait-casters the best kind of gear for casting accuracy. Bait-casters can generally cast heavier lures or weights than other fishing gear. Their higher gear ratios allow you to wind in more line with each turn of the handle. Their disadvantages are that they cost more and are prone to backlashes, a type of tangle caused when the spool revolves faster than the line coming off the reel.



Fly fishing

Fly fishing is very different from other fishing gear. When fly fishing, the weight of the line is used to make the cast, not the weight of the lure. This allows you to cast very light artificial lures called flies that you could not cast with other fishing gear. Flies get their name because they often imitate insects. Most people think fly fishing is for fishing mountain streams, but it is also popular when fishing for sunfish or even bass in lakes and ponds.



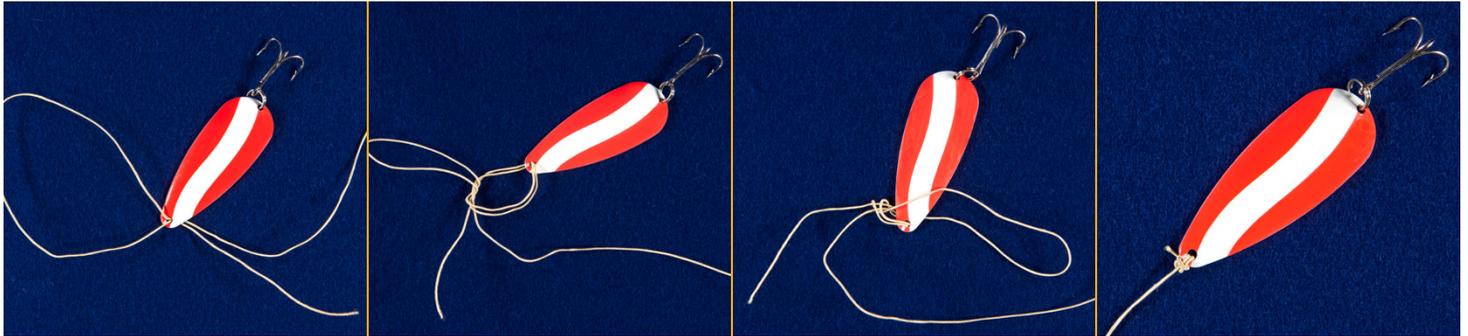
A mayfly spinner and the fly that imitates it.

BEYOND THE IMPROVED CLINCH KNOT

The improved clinch knot (page 20) is often the first knot anglers learn to tie. However, here are two other useful knots to know that will help keep fish on your line.

Palomar Knot

The palomar knot is a simple knot that is great for tying lures to your line. Stronger than the improved clinch knot, it is a good knot to use when using braided lines (see page 46). Braided line may break easily if you use a clinch knot. Try a palomar knot (or knot recommended by the manufacture) if using braid.



1. Double about 4 inches of line and pass it through the eye of the hook, swivel or lure.

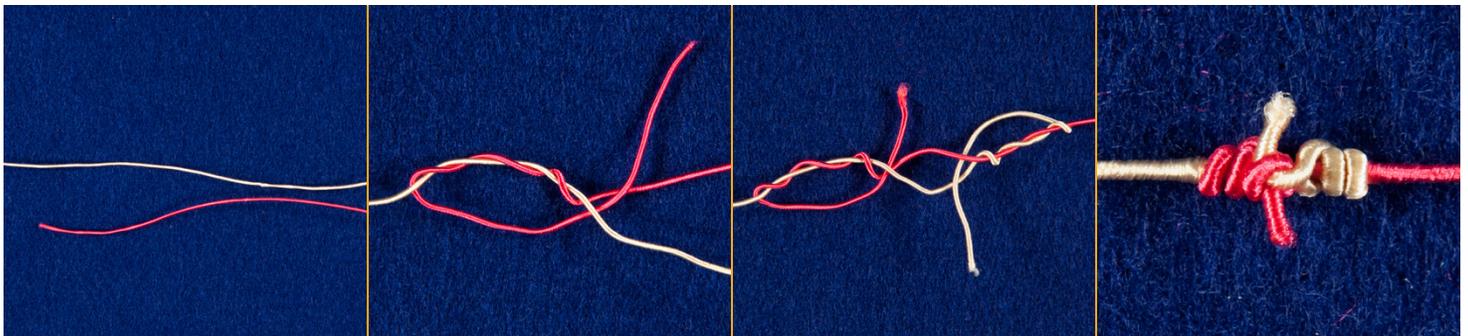
2. Let the hook, swivel or lure hang loose and tie an overhand knot in the doubled line. Avoid twisting the lines and don't tighten the knot.

3. Pull the loop of line far enough to pass it over the hook, swivel or lure. Make sure the loop passes completely over the attachment point.

4. Holding the hook, swivel or lure, and the line, pull the knot tight. Clip excess line about 1/8-inch from the knot.

Blood Knot

The blood knot is used for tying two lines together. It is very popular with fly fishermen.



1. Overlap the ends of the two lines by about 6 inches.

2. Take the end of one line and make 3 turns around the other line, then place that end between the V formed by the two lines.

3. Repeat with the other line. Make sure to pass the end through the loop in the opposite direction of the first line.

4. Pull each end to begin to tighten the knot.

5. Moisten the knot, then tighten it completely and clip the ends close to the knot.

LINE TYPES

Picking fishing line used to be pretty simple. You had two choices: monofilament or Dacron. Today's angler has more line types to choose from. In addition to monofilament and Dacron, you can also choose fluorocarbon or braided line. Each type has advantages and disadvantages. When purchasing line, keep in mind that cheap lines often cast poorly, have poor knot strength, and wear rapidly. It's best not to skimp when purchasing line.

LINE TYPE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<p>Monofilament (Mono)</p> <p>Monofilament, or mono, line is basically a long strand of nylon. In general, the thicker the line, the stronger it is. Mono is still the most popular line used by anglers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inexpensive • Works well for most fishing situations • Has good knot strength • Easy to tie knots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absorbs water • Stretches • Doesn't biodegrade (break down in the environment)
<p>Fluorocarbon</p> <p>Fluorocarbon line is nearly invisible in water. This is a popular line for easily spooked fish or very clear water. It is often used as a leader when fly fishing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invisible in water • Low stretch • Sinks • Doesn't absorb water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive • Has strong memory (means it coils, forming loops which tangle easily) • Doesn't biodegrade
<p>Braided line</p> <p>Braided line is created by weaving (braiding) nylon or other man-made fibers into a single strand of line.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very strong • Smaller diameter than mono • Low stretch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive • Difficult to untangle • Requires special knots • Doesn't biodegrade • Can cut into cheap line guides and your hands • Easily seen by fish
<p>Dacron line</p> <p>Dacron line is mostly used on tip-ups for ice fishing with a monofilament or fluorocarbon leader.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't tangle as easily when coiled on the ice • Doesn't cut into your hands • Very strong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily seen by fish

When purchasing a reel that comes pre-spooled with line, it's best to put fresh line on the reel. Mono has a memory (stays in the shape it was stored in). If pre-spooled line has been on a reel for a while, it will curl easily and create tangles.



ARTIFICIAL LURES AND BAITS

Fishing with artificials can be fun and exciting. Artificials work by looking, smelling or moving like something a fish wants to eat. Your goal is to trick a fish into believing that the lure is alive or natural. For example, if you are using an imitation minnow, you want the lure to move like a wounded baitfish. In a school of baitfish, the wounded stand out and are targeted by predators—the bigger fish you want to catch.

TYPES OF ARTIFICIAL LURES AND BAITS



In-line Spinners

In-line spinners have a central shaft with an attached revolving blade. They work well for trout, black bass, pickerel, pike and muskellunge. Generally, they are cast out and retrieved at a steady speed fast enough to keep the blade spinning. Use a ball bearing swivel to avoid line twist.



Spinnerbaits

Unlike in-line spinners, spinnerbait blades are attached to a safety pin-like arm above a weighted hook and rubber skirt. They work well for black bass, crappie, rock bass, pickerel, pike and muskellunge. Spinnerbaits are good for beginners because their single-hook design gets snagged less than multi-hook lures. The basic retrieve is to cast out and reel in at a steady pace. Other retrieve options that work are waking the bait (causing a wake) just under the surface, slow rolling it on the bottom, or adding occasional pauses while reeling back in.



Spoons

Spoons are essentially a piece of shiny metal shaped to flutter or wobble when reeled in. Most come with treble hooks and can easily get snagged in weeds. However, some are weedless models with a single hook and a weed guard designed to avoid snagging. These work great for pickerel and bass around heavy weed cover.

TYPES OF ARTIFICIAL LURES AND BAITS



Stick Bait or Jerk Bait

Minnow-shaped plugs are either called stick baits or jerk baits. These baits are designed to mimic baitfish and can either be cast out and retrieved at a steady pace, or with a repeating cycle of sharp jerks and pauses, hence the name jerk bait. These very popular baits work well for almost all species of fish.



Topwater Lures

As their name suggests, topwater lures are fished on the surface. They come in a variety of styles that either float (e.g. plastic frogs) or have to be retrieved to stay on the surface (e.g. buzz baits). They work by using propellers, metal lips, rubber legs, cup-shaped mouths, or anything else necessary to cause a commotion on the surface. Topwater lure fishing is probably the most exciting way to fish because you can see the explosive strikes. The trick to catching more fish is to hesitate slightly (less than a second) before setting the hook. This should help you hook more fish and not pull the lure away before the fish closes its mouth.



Jigs

Jigs are a single hook with either a lead or tungsten head molded onto it. Plain jig heads work well when tipped with a minnow or night crawler. Jigs are often dressed with hair, rubber skirts, or feathers. Plastic baits can also be added to jig heads. This works great for walleye and panfish. Bass anglers add trailers to the jigs they use. Plastic trailers are becoming more popular than traditional pork-rind trailers because they come in a wide variety of colors and styles and do not dry out.



Soft Plastics

Soft plastic baits come in a wide variety of shapes, sizes and colors. Most have appendages or tails that impart a lifelike action when retrieved. Some, such as plastic stick baits, are just a straight tapered piece of plastic. Many plastic baits have salt or scent added to attract fish. You can add soft plastics to a jig head, plain hook or rig them weedless. They work for almost all species of fish but are really popular for bass, panfish and walleye.

RIGGING WEEDLESS

A great way to fish a soft plastic bait is to rig it weedless. This allows you to fish in the weeds where fish live and reduce your chances of getting snagged. To make a weedless rig:

1. Thread the hook through the head of the bait for about ¼ of an inch.
2. Push the bait up to the eye of the hook.
3. Straighten out the bait and insert the hook through the bait, taking care to keep the bait straight.
4. Gently push the end of the hook into the bait just far enough to hide the hook point (skin hooked). For thinner plastic baits (e. g., plastic worms), the hook point can be embedded in the middle of the bait.



Skin hooked



Texas rigged

FISHING FROM A BOAT

Fishing from the bank is fun and productive, but fishing from a boat allows you more freedom. You can get to more of the places to fish we talked about in the Basic Fishing Tackle and Techniques chapter. This increases your chances of catching fish. The three basic ways to fish from a boat are to anchor, drift or troll.

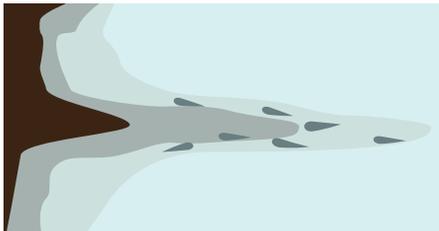
Anchor: By dropping an anchor, you can fish a spot thoroughly. It also makes it easier to make repeated casts to the same spot, and fishing conditions stay the same.

Drift: When drifting, you let the wind or current carry you along. The benefit of drifting is that you can fish a large area, putting your bait or lure in front of a lot of fish. Once you locate fish that are biting, you can anchor and fish the spot thoroughly. You can use an electric trolling motor or oars to simulate drifting.

Troll: Trolling is another popular method of fishing from a moving boat. Basic trolling is tossing out a lure behind the boat, letting out some line, and pulling the lure around with the boat. This allows you to cover a large area looking for fish that are biting.

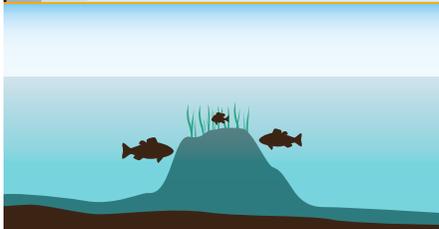
Where to fish from a boat

Boats give you the advantage of fishing shoreline (see page 24) and other structure not accessible from shore. Here are a few offshore places to try using a boat:



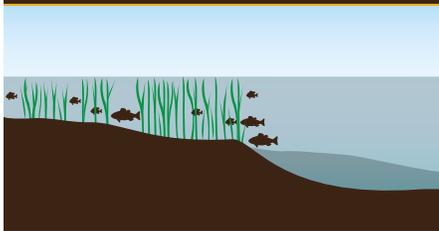
Points

While you can fish a point from shore, they often extend far offshore where you can only fish with a boat. Fish use points to travel from deep to shallow water where they feed. Try drifting over the point, fishing from deep to shallow water to find where fish are located.



Humps

Humps are a bump in the bottom of a lake and are sometimes called sunken islands. They often attract fish because they create a break in the bottom and rise from deep to shallow water. Use a good depth contour map or a depth finder to find humps.



Deep weed beds and edges

As mentioned earlier, weeds are structure. Deep weed beds and edges give fish a place to feed and hide. Feeding fish cruise the open-water side of a weed bed looking for food, so fish the edge first and work your way into the weed bed to find fish.



Boats don't have to be expensive. A kayak or canoe is an affordable option for getting you out on the water and can be easily transported on top of a car.

If you decide to fish from a boat, follow the advice on page 37 to "Stay safe and be considerate while afloat."

REFERENCES

Publications

- “Catch More Fish,” 1998, by Dick Sternberg.
- “Fishing Fundamentals,” by Wade Bourne (*In-Fisherman**)
- “The Art of Freshwater Fishing: A How-to Guide,” by Editors of Creative Publishing (*The Freshwater Angler**)

*Both *In-Fisherman* and *The Freshwater Angler* have a series of books on freshwater fishing.

Websites

- **NYSDEC – Fishing Skills**
www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/44809.html
- **Take Me Fishing – Fishing Techniques**
takemefishing.org/fishing/freshwater-fishing/fishing-techniques
- **Take Me Fishing – Fishing Knots**
takemefishing.org/fishing/fishopedia/bait-and-equipment/knots

Web Video

- **School of Outdoor Sports – Choosing and Using Artificial Lures**
learnoutdoorsports.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=94&Itemid=122

ACTIVITIES

Practice Casting a Spinning Rod and Reel Using a Casting Plug

Place targets (hula hoops, Frisbees, coffee cans, backyard bass, etc.) in an open area like your yard or a park. Then try to hit the targets using a spinning rod and reel. As your casting improves, keep trying to hit smaller and smaller targets. Remember, casting accurately is more important than casting far.

Use an Artificial Lure to Catch a Fish

Try using one of the artificial lures mentioned to catch a fish. Take a picture of yourself with your catch.

Catch a Fishing Grand Slam!

Catch four different species of fish on the same day. Want an extra challenge? Catch them all on artificial lures using techniques you learned in this chapter.

Enter a Fish for an Angler Achievement Award

If you catch a really big fish, enter it for an Angler Achievement Award. Visit www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7727.html for more information.

