



Salt Strong Fishing School Course

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Beginner Module

Finding fish (90/10 zone)

Ninety percent of the fish will be in 10 percent of the water.

Two main considerations:

Current flow

Structure - bridges, docks, or piers are a good source. Keep bait near the structure. Often more structure where have steeper ledges (i.e. where the 1 foot contour lines are closest together).

Easiest place to catch fish where there is current flow is bridges. Use live shrimp. Usually the best bridges are those out closer to the open ocean.

Need:

Half ounce weight for about 30 feet deep, less for more shallow. Let weight hit the bottom.

Weedless shrimp lure on a football head hook. Often catch smaller fish.

Cast up-current, let bump bottom, then lift and let settle back to bottom.

(Catch info from video) Pig fish, also called squirrel fish or sand perch - good to eat but make good bait, too. Good cooked whole.

Live shrimp - Most effective bait. Use J-hook. Pull tail off shrimp, Put hook point down into center of tail meat and bring out through underside of shrimp. Turn shrimp so the hook point can be embedded into the center of the shrimp body, hiding it inside the shrimp so cannot snag.

Use a bullet weight that slides on the line above the shrimp, so the shrimp can freeline. Can also use a larger egg sinker if fishing deep.

Ignore small nibbles and pecking of smaller fish worrying the bait. Wait for a decent thump on the line to indicate a larger fish has taken the bait, then set the hook.

Cast to pilings or fenders, let sink, and wait for bait to hit bottom. Let sit and if don't feel some pecking at bait in 10-15 seconds, might not be much structure down there. Move to a new spot.

Positioning

Info pertains to bridges and docks, easiest method to use.

The stronger the current flow the more likely that the fish are facing into the current flow. Want to present the bait from up-current so it flows down toward the fish.

Bridges:

Bridges are the best bet over docks unless the current is really ripping. Bridges are not good with very high current flow.

The best part of the bridge to fish is the fenders, but sometimes the pilings are good, too.

Live bait:

Anchor up-current from the structure and drop baits into the water and let the current carry them past the structure. Use enough weight to get the bait down to the bottom right next to the structure.

Must get the bait on the bottom next to the structure.

If fishing from shore or from the bridge the same applies.

If fishing from the bridge, cast up-current from the side of the bridge where the current is coming from so the bait drifts back toward the bridge structure. Then on the other side of the bridge just drop the bait down and let it be carried down-current to the structure on that side of the bridge.

Lures:

E.g. prawn junior with at least a 1/4 oz Hoss weedless football jig head, 1/2 oz if need to get deeper.

Must cast up-current and let the bait come down with the current. Best if cast from the current side of the bridge out into the current and let drift back toward the bridge. If fish from the down-current side of the bridge, back a bit away from the target structure so can cast a bit cross current under the bridge and then use rod to help bounce the bait along the structure as it floats along the fender/structure on the down-current side of the bridge.

Docks:

Usually less productive than bridges.

Switch to docks with less current flow when the current under bridges is too fast.

If in a boat or kayak using live bait, position up-current from the dock and fish down to the dock structure.

If in a boat or kayak using lures, position on the down-current side of the dock and cast up past or under dock so lure floats down-current.

Casting:

Swing (or overhand) cast - good for live/cut bait and can also be used for lures. Bring rod back over your shoulder slowly so is behind you and then just swing the rod and bait over your head to cast out. Release is important to practice so can get bait to go where you want it. Release point is variable depending on the action of the rod.

Don't want to be throwing rainbow or line drive casts.

In addition to getting the release right, always aim for a specific spot.

Also practice a side-arm cast from both sides.

Knots:

One knot can do it all. Use the uni knot to tie from braid to mono (double uni knot, 5X for mono, 10X for braid) or mono to swivel or hook (uni knot, 5X).

Rods/Reels

The rod is the most important component.

Spinning reel is the easiest to start with.

Need rod that uses 10-20 lb line and reel that has at least a 5 lb drag.

Lines:

Braid for main line

Mono for leader - usually 20 lb. Buy bulk spool. 16-30 inches long. Fluorocarbon is more expensive, has less abrasion resistance. It does have a slightly faster sink rate but not a really important difference.

Lures/hooks

How to rig a shrimp weedless:

Bullet weight (3/16 oz good for about 3-10 feet of water) free sliding on leader, with a J-hook at end of leader. If have deeper water or more current may need heavier, and if want a slower drop for sheepshead by pilings, may want to go to a 1/4" bullet weight.

Match the hook size to the size of the shrimp. For 4" shrimp use plain Eagle Claw size #1 plain shank vast plano all-purpose live bait J-hooks. For larger or smaller shrimp, go up or down a size or two. Do not use circle hooks for this type of rig because you are actively fishing. Circle hooks are for if you are just letting the bait sit and are not monitoring the rod, like when you have the rod in a rod holder. With the J-hook you have to set the hook, whereas circle hooks set themselves and if you set the hook, you actually decrease the chance of a hookup.

Rig shrimp either in the head or the tail, not in the middle.

Tear the shrimp tail off. Put hook point into the middle of the meat where tore off tail, bring point of hook out of underside of tail about 1/4" from torn off end of shrimp. Push the hook so the eye is up against the meat, then rotate the hook around so you can sink the hook point into the underside of the body, so it is embedded in the shrimp and not exposed. Want the hook point in the shrimp body so the point is just under the dorsal part of the tail shell.

Cast out the shrimp, let sink, ignore small taps of small fish nibbling at the shrimp that is too big for them to eat. Wait for the feel of a heavier weight pull before you set the hook.

Below is from the lesson page:

Note: Please use J-hooks only when you are actively fishing because the fish can get gut hooked if they have time to eat the bait. If you'll be setting rods in a holder and not actively fishing, make sure to use circle hooks.

Hook Size Tips:

When fishing with shrimp, it's important to select your hook sized based on the size of the shrimp that you're fishing with.

Here's a quick table to help make it easy:

Size 2 hook: Small shrimp – under 3 inches

Size 1 hook: Medium shrimp – 3 to 4 inches

Size 1/0 hook: Large shrimp – over 4 inches

Weight Size Tips:

Since most of the feeding activity happens on the bottom, it's very important to use enough weight to get your bait on the bottom. So make sure to use a weight that is able to easily get your bait down into the strike zone.

But it's smart to go as light as you can so that you can feel for strikes as good as possible.

Here are the situations where I use the following sized weights:

3/16 oz: Under 5 ft of water

1/4 oz: : 5 ft to 10 ft of water

2 x 3/16 oz: 10 to 20 ft of water

2 x 1/4 oz: 20+ ft of water

Community

Use to look for tips on areas you want to fish. Use filters to narrow down to a specific area and/or species.

Intermediate Module

Finding Fish (90/10)

Look for:

A = ambush points (most important item to look for). Look for docks, rocks, seagrass, potholes, mangroves/trees, depth changes/contours, oyster beds. Any kind of structure. Anything other than flat sand.

B = Birds and bait, especially near structure.

C = Current flow. Current brings food to the predator fish.

Use smart fishing spots app to locate ambush points.

Outside edges of grass flats is a great place to look for fish.

Points (on land or underwater) good.

Give a spot you have chosen 15 minutes or so and if no evidence of birds/bait or no fish, move on to another spot.

For river systems, use the 1 foot contour lines to find depth changes. Find structures (eg docks) that extend out into various levels of depth. Look for docks that extend out into deeper water. Look for deep zones, especially in winter where fish go to find warmer water.

In general, look for places with a lot of structure and variations in depth so no matter what time of year, you can figure out where the fish might be based on water temperature and where the bait is.

For marsh systems, need to play the tides. When deeper fish may push into the system deeper, but as the tide goes out they retreat and wait in deeper water, either because of water temperature or to wait for bait to wash out to them.

Positioning:

Shorelines of Bays:

Know current flow and wind direction. Want bait to go with the current, but if there isn't much current, which is common in these areas, wind is the most

important factor. Do not want to be casting into the wind. Always have the wind at your back as long as the current isn't super strong. Ideally cast with the wind and up-current (into the current) so your lure comes back to you with the current.

Open grass flats:

Excellent trout spot. Many flats don't have strong current, so once again the wind is most important. Start fishing upwind in the deeper water outside the flat. Don't know where the fish are located so start deep and let the wind move you toward the shallower parts of the flat.

Take note as drift over the flat where you are catching the most fish, be it in deeper, middle depth, or shallow areas. This will tell you what the trend is for where the fish are. Determine the depths and zones (in potholes or grass) where you are catching the most fish. Can then anchor and work those areas if you wish.

Move across the flat quickly at first to find the trend for where the fish are and then come back and move more slowly, concentrating on where the trend told you the fish are.

Rivers and Creeks:

In most cases, in rivers and creeks the current flow is more important than the wind. In heavy current flow, the fish face into the current and bait/lures should come down toward the fish, with the current. Bait/lures going against the current and coming from behind the fish that are facing upstream will often spook the fish.

Best is an outgoing tide where you can start fishing at the mouth of the river/creek and work your way up-current, fishing docks, points, etc. Are casting the lure over the fish so it comes back down-current to them.

Ideally when entering the river/creek, you will have the wind at your back. If have several rivers/creeks to choose from, pick the one where the wind will be from somewhere more or less behind you as you work your way in.

Basically, choose creeks where you can cast with the wind as much as possible and where your lure will be coming down-current toward the fish.

If wind is blowing down the river as you work your way in, don't fight the wind and cast into it. Choose a side of the river that looks the most promising and motor up the other side so you can fish the promising side by casting cross-wind/cross-current. The wind may belly your line but cast across and up-current and retrieve across the current.

Marsh systems:

Position yourself so you are casting with the wind and retrieving with the current.

Casting:

Use Dart Cast to deliver lure. Move your body as little as possible so you don't rock the boat and notify fish of your presence.

The Dart Cast loads the rod during the backswing. Use both hands to perform the cast... the reel hand to guide the rod and the other hand holds the bottom of the rod handle and uses leverage to speed the rod through the cast by pulling on the end of the rod.

DO NOT use a lure/hook combination that is heavier than that for which your rod is designed. This can damage the rod.

Knots:

For braided line to leader:

Use FG knot for braid to leader connection. It is 20% stronger than the double uni knot.

To tie the FG knot, secure the rod somewhere where you can pull on the line coming from the rod tip to put tension on the braided line. Loop the end of the braided line around the pinkie finger of your right hand enough times to secure it to your finger.

Put tension on the line and lay the leader line over the tensioned braid line. Wrap a length of the end of the leader line (about 6 inches?) around once coming above the standing part of the leader. Straighten out the leader perpendicular to the braid. Repeat wrapping the leader around the braid but go under the standing part of the leader line. Keep doing this, wrapping around the braid above then below the standing part of the leader, keeping tension on the braid. Do 16 wraps of the leader around the braid (can do 20-22 if want but Luke now just does 16).

Once have the 16 wraps, uncoil the braid from your finger and, keeping everything tight, do a half hitch with the braid end around the braid and leader lines at the braid end of the knot. Once the first half hitch is tight, don't have to worry as much about keeping the line tight and do a second half hitch above the first (again around the braid and leader at the braid end of the knot).

This knot only works if the braid has dug grooves into the outer part of the leader, so once you have the two half hitches in place, wrap the braid three times around one hand and hold the leader in the other hand and pull tightly until all the wraps of the FG knot are tight. The end wrap at the leader end of the knot is the most important, so be sure it is also tight or the knot will fail.

Once the knot is tight, cut the leader end off close to the mainline braid. Put some tension on the line and put two or more half hitches of the braid tag end around the mainline braid above the knot, pull tight, and trim the braid tag end. (Can do simple one pass of the braid tag end through the loop half hitches which is what Luke does, or can do a single one pass half hitch and then a multiple wrap of the tag braid end several times through the loop before tightening.) These extra half hitches above the knot cover the tag end of the leader line and make the top of the knot smooth so it will pass smoothly through the rod guides.

An alternative that is not as strong as the FG knot, but is better than the double uni knot is the Crazy Alberto Knot. It is good for tying a thin line to a thick line.

To tie the Crazy Alberto knot, double over the leader line and pinch it to form a kink in the doubled over line.

Stick the braid tag end down through the kinked loop and wrap up and over 7 times. Keep all the resulting coils about the same distance apart and not overlapping.

Then, keeping the braid tag end tight, hold the leader end of the wraps and wrap the braid tag end 7 times back over the previous wraps (toward the kink end of the leader), trying to put the wraps between the previous wraps.

When these 7 wraps are in place, put the braid tag end back through the kinked loop so both the braid tag end and braid mainline go through the loop together.

Holding both strands of the leader loop in one hand and both strands of the braid in the other and tighten the knot down some. Once starts to come together, wet the line and really pull on both lines (tag ends together on each side) to tighten the knot. Once tight, let go of the tag ends of the leader and braid and pull hard on just the leader and braid mainline to finish tightening the knot.

Cut off both tag ends as close as can.

For leader to lure or jig to provide maximum motion of the lure:

Use the two-turn nonslip loop knot. To tie:

Take the leader and make an overhand knot in the leader, leaving about a 4 inch tag end. Pull the loop down to about the size you want the final loop to be.

Slip the lure on the tag end and slide up to the loop.

Put the leader tag end through the loop so the tag end and main leader lines both come out the loop together (both on the same side of the loop).

Be sure the loop is sized to the size you want it, then wrap the tag end around the main leader line twice. (In the video Luke says to do 3 times for leaders over 40 lb and 4 times for leaders under 40 lb, but in later info he said all he normally does is two loops.)

Feed the tag end back through the loop following the same way the lines came out of the loop and pull finger tight. Wet line and pull tighter, then let go of the tag end and cinch down the rest of the way.

Trim off the tag end. It should be pointing back toward the lure, not forward.

Rods/Reels:

The rod is much more important than the reel. It gives you the "feel" and power you need to cast and detect strikes. The reel just recovers the line and provides some drag.

Drag setting should be 20-30% of the weakest line strength (i.e., 2-3 pounds for a 10 pound braid line).

Generally need a heavier and lighter setup. The lighter is for fishing the flats where are not fishing up tight to structure, the heavier setup is for fishing close to structures such as docks, bridges, or reefs.

Light setup: 10 lb braid, 2500 reel, 7 1/2 foot medium power fast action rod

Heavier setup: 20 lb braid, 2500=3000 reel, 7 1/2 foot medium heavy fast action rod

Action of a rod:

When you pull on the line, the faster the action the more the bending occurs closer to the tip of the rod. Most of the bending in a fast action rod occurs in the 1/4 of the rod nearest the tip. A fast action is good for lures.

A moderate action rod where the rod flexes about half way down the length of the rod is good for live bait. Can use a moderately fast or fast action rod for live bait, but need to remember to cast live bait properly, not like a lure.

Power of a rod is how much force it takes to bend the rod. Generally the less the power, the farther down the blank will the rod bend.

Rods designate what size lines it should be capable of handling. Best not to go outside of the recommended upper line weights. Lower is ok, but over the top recommended weight might be detrimental to the rod. The weight specification is referring to the main braid on the reel.

Rod lure or bait weight rating is important. If go lower the rod may not perform well, but if you go over the weight rating it can damage or break the rod. The weight of the terminal tackle is the weight of the hook plus the weight of the soft plastic, or bait and other weight used at the end of the line. Even a 1/16 oz hook with a 3.5" plastic lure can weigh up to 1/4 ounce.

Rods with higher modulus gives better feel, but also can break more easily.

Daiwa BGMQ reel is excellent in 2500 or 3000 size for inshore rod or dock rod.

Daiwa Fuego 2500 is also good for inshore or docks. Either use appropriate line size.

Lines:

Mainline, use braid. Can cast farther and feel more lure action and fish response than monofilament.

Eight strand braid is best, better abrasion resistance than 4 strand and makes less noise/disturbance in the water that fish can detect.

Ten lb 8 strand J-braid is what Luke recommends for routine inshore fishing away from structure.

Can use 6 lb braid for sight fishing for better stealth.

Leader: Monofilament is better than fluorocarbon leader. Fluorocarbon is more brittle and once it is nicked or stretched, it rapidly loses strength. Mono is not degraded by stretching or minor nicks.

Twenty lb Ande mono is good for most inshore fish. Might go up to 30 lb (or a 30 lb 8" bite tippet using a blood knot to attach to the rest of the 20 lb leader) for snook.

Use loop knot to tie on lure. Loop knot is slightly weaker than the FG knot, so if get snagged and have to break off the lure, the line will break at the loop knot and will get back all of leader.

Lures/Hooks:

Need only 2 lures, the prawn USA junior and 3.5" 2.0 paddletail. If calm and clear, use prawn junior (no paddletail to cause vibrations and spook fish, just a nice silent glide). If murky water or if it is windy with churned up water, use the 2.0 paddletail.

Rig weedless on a weighted 3/0 1/8 oz hoss helix hook for shallow water.

If need to go deeper, use either a regular jighead or a hoss football jighead. Adjust size of jig weight so have just enough to get to the bottom so the jig can be bounced along the bottom with an up and down jiggling motion.

In winter fish are usually deep and need to get the bait down to them. The colder it is the slower the presentation needs to be.

If a lot of structure where you could get snags, best to use the weedless football jig rig vs the exposed hook type of jig.

Most versatile of the football jigs is the 1/4 oz. Works from about 3 feet to 8 feet deep. Use 1/2 oz for deeper than 8 feet.

If not fishing near structure, ie just trolling or buzzing over grass flats, use the regular jighead hook for good hookups. Best for prawn junior or 2.0 paddletail is the hoss round-eye jighead in size 2/0 with 1/4 oz weight for 3-8 foot depth. Use

3/16 or even 1/8 oz if fishing less than 3 feet. If going deeper use the 1/2 oz or larger.

Top two lure rigging mistakes when using soft plastics:

Just pushing the lure right up over the barbs is mistake #1. After threading the soft plastic onto the hook point and bringing it up to the hook keeper barbs, you need to rotate the soft plastic 90 degrees so that the barbs tear into the lateral sides of the bait as they go through it. Then when the plastic is all the way up to the hook head weight, rotate the soft plastic back 90 degrees to where it is in proper orientation to the hook. This ensures that there is untornd plastic material above each keeper barb. Do the reverse if want to take the plastic off, so the tears in the plastic are where it was torn before.

Weedless football jig: Need to fill the entire end of the hook and weight swivel area with the plastic so it takes the floppiness out of the jig head. To do this, when push the hook through the head of the jig, leave enough plastic (about 3/4") so it will completely cover the worm hook bend and push up all the way against the jig weight to secure it from wobbling. Not only does this stop the jig head from wobbling, but it puts more plastic around the hook so it will tear out much less easily.

By fixing the head of the football jig, the lure skips (under docks, etc.) much better than if left to wobble.

Use the depth chart on the next page as guide for selecting the right rigging options for each lure and depth range.

Depth Guide For Matching Soft Plastics to Jigs/Hooks												
Product	Weights (oz)	The 2.0 (3.5 inch)	The Mulligan (4 inch)	The Bomber (5 inch)	The PC Tweaker	5" Slam Series Jerks	The Prawn USA OG	The Prawn USA Jr	Z-Man 3 & 4 Inch	Z-Man 5 Inch	Z-Man EZ-Shrimp	
Weedless Rigging Options	Hoss Helix Hooks	1/16 - (3/0 hk)	0-1 FT	0-1 FT	0-1 FT	0-2 FT	0-2 FT	0-2 FT	0-1 FT		0-1 FT	
		1/16 - (4/0 hk)									0-1 FT	
		1/8 - (3/0 hk)	1-2 FT	1-2 FT	1-2 FT	1-2 FT	1-2 FT		1-2 FT	0-2 FT		0-2 FT
		1/8 - (4/0 hk)		1-2 FT	1-2 FT		1-2 FT	1-2 FT			0-2 FT	
		3/16 - (3/0 hk)	2-3 FT	2-3 FT	2-3 FT	2-4 FT	2-4 FT		2-4 FT	2-3 FT	2-3 FT	2-3 FT
	3/16 - (4/0 hk)		2-3 FT	2-3 FT		2-4 FT	2-4 FT		2-3 FT	2-3 FT	2-3 FT	
	Hoss Weedless Football Jigheads	3/16 - (3/0 hk)	3-6 FT	3-6 FT		3-7 FT	3-7 FT		3-7 FT	3-6 FT		3-6 FT
		3/16 - (4/0 hk)		3-6 FT	3-6 FT		3-7 FT	3-7 FT			3-6 FT	
		1/4 - (3/0 hk)	4-8 FT	4-8 FT		5-10 FT	5-10 FT		5-10 FT	4-8 FT		4-8 FT
		1/4 - (4/0 hk)		4-8 FT	4-8 FT		5-10 FT	5-10 FT		4-8 FT		
		1/2 - (3/0 hk)	8-20 FT	8-20 FT		10-25 FT	10-25 FT		10-25 FT	8-20 FT		10-25 FT
		1/2 - (4/0 hk)		8-20 FT	8-20 FT		10-25 FT	10-25 FT		8-20 FT		
		3/4 - (5/0 hk)		12-30 FT	12-30 FT			20-50 FT		12-30 FT		
	Texas Eye	1 - (5/0 hk)		30-60 FT	30-60 FT			50-90 FT		30-60 FT		
		2 - (5/0 hk)		60-120 FT	60-120 FT			80-150 FT		60-120 FT		
		1/8							1-2 FT	1-2 FT	1-2 FT	
		3/16							2-3 FT	2-3 FT	2-4 FT	
		1/4							3-6 FT	3-6 FT	5-10 FT	
	Traditional Jig Heads	Hoss Round Eye Jigheads	3/8						4-8 FT	4-8 FT	4-8 FT	
			1/2						10-25 FT	10-25 FT	10-25 FT	
1/8 - (2/0 hk)			1-3 FT	1-3 FT	1-3 FT	2-4 FT	2-4 FT		2-4 FT	1-3 FT	1-3 FT	
1/8 - (3/0 hk)			1-3 FT	1-3 FT	1-3 FT	2-4 FT	2-4 FT	2-4 FT		1-3 FT	1-3 FT	
3/16 - (2/0 hk)			2-4 FT	2-4 FT	2-4 FT	3-7 FT	3-7 FT		3-7 FT	2-4 FT	2-4 FT	
3/16 - (3/0 hk)			2-4 FT	2-4 FT	2-4 FT	3-7 FT	3-7 FT	3-7 FT		2-4 FT	2-4 FT	
1/4 - (2/0 hk)			3-6 FT	3-6 FT	3-6 FT	5-10 FT	5-10 FT		5-10 FT	3-6 FT	3-6 FT	
1/4 - (4/0 hk)				3-6 FT	3-6 FT	5-10 FT	5-10 FT	5-10 FT		3-6 FT		
1/2 - (3/0 hk)			6-15 FT	6-15 FT	6-15 FT	10-20 FT	10-20 FT		10-25 FT	6-15 FT	6-15 FT	
1/2 - (4/0 hk)				6-15 FT	6-15 FT	10-20 FT	10-20 FT	10-25 FT		6-15 FT		
Hoss Football Jigs		3/4 - (3/0 hk)	12 - 30 FT	12 - 30 FT	12 - 30 FT	20 - 50 FT	20 - 50 FT		20 - 50 FT	12 - 30 FT	12 - 30 FT	12 - 30 FT
		3/4 - (4/0 hk)		12 - 30 FT	12 - 30 FT	20 - 50 FT	20 - 50 FT	20 - 50 FT		12 - 30 FT		
		1 - (4/0 hk)	30 - 60 FT	30 - 60 FT	30 - 60 FT	50 - 90 FT	50 - 90 FT		50 - 90 FT	30 - 60 FT	30 - 60 FT	30 - 60 FT
		1 - (5/0 hk)		30 - 60 FT	30 - 60 FT	50 - 90 FT	50 - 90 FT	50 - 90 FT		30 - 60 FT		
		1/8 - (2/0 hk)	1-3 FT	1-3 FT		2-4 FT			2-4 FT	2-4 FT		1-3 FT
		1/8 - (4/0 hk)			1-3 FT			2-4 FT		2-4 FT		
		1/4 - (2/0 hk)	3-6 FT	3-6 FT		5-10 FT	5-10 FT		5-10 FT	3-6 FT		3-6 FT
		1/4 - (4/0 hk)			3-6 FT			5-10 FT		3-6 FT		
		1/2 - (3/0 hk)	6-15 FT	6-15 FT		6-20 FT	6-20 FT		10-25 FT	6-15 FT		6-15 FT
		1/2 - (4/0 hk)			6-15 FT			10-25 FT		6-15 FT		
3/4 - (4/0 hk)		12 - 30 FT	12 - 30 FT	12 - 30 FT	12 - 30 FT	20-50 FT	20-50 FT	12 - 30 FT	12 - 30 FT	12 - 30 FT		
1 - (5/0 hk)			30 - 60 FT			50-90 FT		30 - 60 FT				

Note: These depth ranges will shift up if you're fishing areas with high current or if you're using heavier lines.

This is brought to you by the Salt Strong Insider Club which is best online fishing club for inshore fishermen who target redfish, seatrout, snook, and/or flounder. It's guaranteed to help you catch more fish while saving time & money. Go to www.SaltStrong.com to learn more.

Community:

Networking by region is very helpful. Check out what is happening in the area you are going to fish before each trip.

Advanced Module

Finding Fish (90/10)

Finding Spots in the Warmer Months

In spring or fall when the water is not too hot or cold, find areas with multiple forms of structure (oyster beds, seagrass, and islands with mangroves), plus has access to current flow, and hopefully baitfish. As the weather warms shade from mangroves or docks becomes more important, as does having deeper water nearby for fish to retreat to when the shallows get too warm.

Oyster beds hold sea life for food and are good protection for fish from dolphins.

In hot weather, if can find docks or other shaded structure in deeper water near oyster beds with current flow past them, or in/near a creek bed, fish will be congregated here. Have more dissolved oxygen in deeper, cooler moving water than in shallow hot water. Fish feel more comfortable and moving water brings food by them. Fish congregate in the shade, not out where it is sunny.

As the days get very hot, especially during the middle of the day, be sure to be fishing in the shade where fish are hanging out.

Use smart fishing spots. Apply the 1-foot contour line and the oyster bar layer to help find the right zones. Find docks that go out into the deepest water when it is really hot.

Last but not least, consider the wind. As the weather gets warmer and warmer, the wind also helps with current flow. Winds of 1-10+ mph pushes a lot of water around which increases water oxygen and helps mask the presence of the fisherman. In hot weather can predict where the fish will be based on current flow and wind direction. Smart fishing spots gives this information under the Tides and Weather button. Fish will be on the up current side of islands because it provides more oxygenated water and brings food to the fish, too. And they will be on the side of the island to which the wind is blowing, again increasing oxygen and food. These two factors need to be considered when predicting where the fish will be.

If there is good structure away from the wind and current, there may be fish there but they won't be the larger, smarter fish who will be in the optimal zones.

Finding Spots in the Colder Months

Find wind protection. The flatter, more undisturbed the water is the less it will be affected by the cold air above it and the warmer it will be. Waves and breaking waves on the windward side of islands and such pulls the cold air into the water and makes it colder.

The deeper the water the less it is affected by cold air above it and the warmer it will be. Look for areas that have a drop-off to deeper water. Fish can go deeper

overnight and as the sun warms the shallower water, they can move into the shallower areas to feed.

If a cloudy day, fish will usually hold in potholes and around structure in deeper water. If sunny, eventually they will move to structure in more shallow warmer water.

Fish usually cluster together and prefer to have structure around them.

Don't pay so much attention to smart spots. Look for areas that are overlooked by other anglers so the fish aren't pressured.

Use the 1 foot contour layer to find docks and such where there is shallow water that goes deep around the structure. After a cold front the fish will look for structure in deeper water.

In rivers and creeks, want to find structure that is near to deep water and has wind protection. If an area where water is cloudy, definitely use the structure add-ons (oyster bars, grass) and depth contour lines to locate desirable areas.

If a nice sunny day, as the water warms the fish may push up into creeks. If this is the case, look for shallows with good structure and deeper water and structure nearby.

For marsh systems, generally where creek mouths empty out into bigger bodies of water is where many fish will be. Again, find docks that protrude into deep water. Look for deep holes in the marsh system. As the tide takes the water out, the fish have to gravitate to these deeper areas.

Positioning:

Shorelines of Bays

Ideally want to be down current and upwind from targeted area want to fish. Are using the wind at one's back to increase casting distance and are bringing the lure back with the direction of the current flow (i.e. in the direction the fish are expecting their food to come to them).

If no wind, cast up current and retrieve with the current.

If there is a strong wind blowing the same direction as the current, usually in shallow flats the current is weaker and you should prioritize casting distance, so it is best to cast with the wind, ignoring the weaker current. If in a boat, let the wind drift you slowly and quietly over the area you want to fish.

Docks

Even on slow days there will always be fish around docks. They are generally more relaxed because there is the protective structure of the dock around them.

Also, fish are usually not pressured because not many people fish docks, primarily because it requires good casting ability.

When fishing docks, start with the first dock that is down current. That way you can skip up under the dock and retrieve your lure back with the current. Cover the different depth zones by starting with the more shoreward part of the dock and work your way out to the offshore end of the dock. In this way you can find out at what depth most of the fish are holding. Once you find that depth, you can apply it to all the other docks as you move up current.

If the current flow is too fast, you will need a trolling motor to help you work into the current flow and stay in position as you work each dock.

If the current is too much for a trolling motor, it is best to find some docks that have less current flow. You can always come back later to the docks where the current flow was too strong once the tidal flow moderates near the turning of the tides.

If you are fishing live bait, positioning is just the opposite. You want to position yourself up current from the dock, anchor, and let the current carry your bait down current to the dock. Ideally keep the live bait on the bottom near the pilings. The con to this is that once you catch the fish you will have to bring them back to the boat against the current, so you will need slightly stronger gear.

Rivers & creeks

Principles are the same, don't fight against whatever the strongest element is... current or wind. If the wind and current are both in the same direction, sometimes it is best to fish in a direction across both the wind and current and slightly upwind so your lure is still coming back somewhat down current. That way you don't have to cast directly into the wind but the lure is still coming down current in the direction that fish expect to see it coming.

Marsh systems

Again, the same general principles apply to marshes. Often there are so many turns and pockets of water that you can find places to fish that are to your advantage. However, if you get back into narrow channels. Sometimes you may have to punch into the wind, so practice your low casting technique. Can also switch to a spoon or such lure that penetrates the wind better.

Casting:

Being able to put the lure where you want it is crucial. Skip casting is an advanced technique to be able to deliver lures under structures such as mangroves and docks. Use weedless lures like a plastic on a hoss helix hook.

Use a cast that starts low and stays low. Do not use an overhead cast, you will just slam the lure into the surface of the water and it will not skip. A skip cast is about timing and keeping the rod low so the lure travels low over the water.

Need to practice and learn to skip cast from either side of your body. Most people prefer one side or the other, but sometimes you will need to be able to skip cast from your less preferred side.

Knots:

To catch larger, smarter fish need to use 5-6 pound braid for sight fishing spooky fish and a 10 lb leader.

Need to minimize the line size but still need the strength (abrasion resistance) where needed, so add a bite tippet before the lure. Usually use 20 lb bite tippet but for big snook or tarpon use 30 lb. For large tarpon and cobia on a reef, use 40 lb.

Bite tippet should be 6-8 inches long. Use blood knot to attach the thinner leader to the thicker bite tippet leader. Blood knot has a slim profile with no large protruding tag ends, so less apparent to fish and catches weeds less easily.

Blood knot

Cross the two lines. Wrap the thinner leader 5 times around the thicker leader and pass back through the resultant loop. Once through the loop, pinch that side of the knot and do the same on the other side for the thicker leader. Wrap thicker leader 4 times around the thinner leader, pass tag end through the loop. The two tag ends of the leader pieces should come out from the knot loop in opposite directions. Pull a bit tight to secure the tag ends in the loop, then wet the knot with saliva (one of the few knots that need this to be done, most don't) and pull on the two leader lines to cinch the knot tight. Two tag ends should be opposite each other. Clip the tag ends off close.

Use the non-slip loop knot to secure the lure to the end of the bite tippet. Just go around the leader 2 times when making the knot, more times is not necessary.

Braid to Leader: FG knot

Use the pinkie tension method to tie the leader to your braid main line. With tension on the braid, do 16 wraps of the leader line around the braid, alternating above and below where the leader line comes into the braid.

Once all the wraps are done, pinch the knot so you can hold it in place while you take the braid off your finger and use the braid tag end to form a half hitch around both lines. After this first half hitch is tight the knot is locked into place so you can let go of the knot and place another half hitch around both lines.

The next step is very important. The FG knot only works when the braid has dug into the leader material. Wrap braid around one hand and pull on both the leader and braid until the knot is tight all the way down to the leader end of the knot. If the last part of the knot on the leader end of the knot is not tight, the knot will fail, especially if you are casting the knot through the guides.

Once all the loops are properly dug in, cut off the leader tag end super close. With some tension on the braid line, put on two more half hitches to cover the end of the leader stub. Can do half hitches with multiple wraps around the braid before tightening if want. Just several half hitches works for Luke. Trim off the braid tag end close.

Can use the Crazy Alberto knot if you don't want to do the FG knot. However, the FG knot is 20-30% stronger than other knots you can use for the braid to leader connection.

Rods/Reels:

Should have at least 2 setups for inshore fishing

One for light tackle on open flats needs a 7' 6" medium power fast action tip rod, 2500 reel with light 10 lb braid.

For docks or reefs, need a 7' 6" medium heavy power fast action tip rod, 2500 or 3000 reel with 20 lb braid.

Don't need really high end reel. Daiwa BG is fine, or better but more expensive than the Daiwa BG-MQ. Spend money on a good rod over a more expensive reel.

If sight fishing, need the same setup as above for the open flats, but use 6 lb braid with 10 lb leader down to a 20 lb bite tippet. No good, though for fishing around structure, just in open flats fishing sight fishing for redfish.

Lines:

Use the thinnest line and top leader possible for each situation, with a stronger 6-8" bite tippet just before the lure.

Sight fishing setup: 6 lb braid, 10 lb leader, with short 20 lb bite tippet. It is crucial that you check the lighter lines regularly for any damage that might compromise any part of it.

For reef fishing: 20 lb braid, 20-30 lb top leader, with a 40 lb bite tippet (because of presence of large snook).

Use FG knot for braid to leader connection and blood knot for leader to bite tippet knot.

Question and answer:

Luke, I have been a member for several years. In the beginning you only recommended the FG knot for attachment to a leader of larger diameter than your braid. In this lesson for reef fishing you describe using 20 lb braid with 20-30 lb mono leader. In your sight fishing setup you describe using a 6 lb braid attached to a 10 lb mono upper leader. In both cases you still mention using the FG knot for attachment of braid to mono leader. Have you changed your mind over the last few years about the FG knot. If properly tied, do you now feel that it

is acceptable to use for smaller to larger, same size to same size, and larger to smaller lines?

Bill

Luke Simonds Reply:

Great question Bill! I still stand by the need to have the braid be thinner than the leader line when using the FG knot... this is to ensure that the braid can dig into the outer layer of the leader enough to lock it into place permanently.

Since braid is much thinner than mono/fluoro lines of equal strength rating, this allows for the connection of a 20 lb braid to a 20 lb leader to be ok with the FG knot (same for a 6 lb braid to a 10 lb leader).

In general, **I am a huge fan of the FG knot whenever connecting braid to mono/fluoro as long as the rated strength of the braid is not higher than the rated strength of the leader (even if the braid's diameter is still technically thinner) because the overall design of the FG knot is to protect the braid.**

Lures:

Lure list:

1. SMALL PADDLETAIL: THE 2.0

This is the best all-purpose paddletail on the market. It's 3.5 inch streamlined profile enables it to work great when rigged on a jig head for deep water as well as on a weighted hook for effectively covering the shallows. Also, this lure's body style even allows it to look great even without it's tail so you can pull the tail off if the baitfish are very small and or if you need to decrease the amount of vibration the lure is putting off.

Given how well this lure works along with how versatile it is, it's a must-have lure for inshore fishermen.

Seasons: works great across all seasons



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2. SMALL SHRIMP PROFILE: PRAWN USA JUNIOR

These shrimp are my #1 choice of all for fishing tight to structure like docks, rocks, bridges, reefs, etc. because it can be rigged weedless for the full depth spectrum (12 inches down to 60+ ft). It'll catch a wide variety of fish (big and small) with very little effort... just a basic bouncing motion along the bottom will catch a ton of fish.

This Junior edition of the Prawn USA lures can easily be rigged on weedless hooks and jigheads which makes them arguably the most versatile shrimp lure on the market.

Seasons: works great across all seasons

WHEN TO NOT USE THE PRAWN USA LURES (junior and large version)

This Power Prawn lure is at its best when fishing coastal areas with shrimp populations, so these lures get less effective when pushing up into inland creeks and rivers with lower salinity.

Also, this lure's core appeal is that it has great action in the water (similar to a bucktail jig) clearly looking like a shrimp (big benefit over bucktail jig) which is why it has a knack for catching very big fish.

Given that its motion and visual definition are its top attributes, this lure is best suited for clear to moderately clear water. If you're fishing in murky water zones, I'd recommend adding rattles and perhaps even using it under a popping cork so fish can feel it better. Otherwise, use a paddletail lure so that you'll have more vibration in the water.

Watch the mini-course for how to install battle-rattles in the body of the Prawn lures just behind the body cavity opening.



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3. MEDIUM PADDLETAIL: THE MULLIGAN

When fishing in areas with medium sized baitfish (4 to 5 inches), it's smart to have a mid-sized paddletail like The Mulligan because they cast much farther than the others due to their design (dimpled skin and bulky body). Also, these paddletails allow for much better skipping and they give off more vibration in the water enabling you to get it in front of more fish which all but guarantees you'll increase your catch rate.

These Mulligan lures were designed to be rigged on the weighted hooks and jig heads shown below to cover all depth ranges.

Seasons: Best in Spring, Summer, and Fall

WHEN NOT TO USE THE MULLIGAN

Just like all lures, there's not a single lure that's good for all situations. So I wanted to explain the situations where I do not recommend using the Mulligan lure.

Pufferfish Feeding Grounds

I am quick to change to a different lure or a different spot if the pufferfish are bad... They have extremely sharp mouths that can slice through all soft plastic lures making it an expensive outing. In that situation, I'll typically switch to a weedless spoon or some other hard lure that they can't ruin.

Very Small Baitfish

When the very small baitfish are in the area and the predators are dialed into them, a 4-inch bulky paddletail will often get ignored. In that instance, I switch to The 2.0 nub and tear its tail off to have a much smaller profile that the fish will be more inclined to eat.

Feeding Birds But No Baitfish

When I'm fishing an area with wading birds out in the water but not much baitfish activity, it's a safe assumption that the fish are feeding on crustaceans. So in that scenario, I am quick to switch over to a Power Prawn USA.

Calm & Clear Water

When the water is both calm and clear, the vibration of the Mulligan paddletail can be a bit too much for the fish to believe is coming from a natural baitfish. So in calm and clear conditions, I'll most often be using a more streamlined lure like the Power Prawn USA.



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4. BIG SHRIMP PROFILE: PRAWN USA ORIGINAL (OG)

There are some situations when shrimp are running and the inshore fish get totally fixated on them, so it's important to have some ready for action. The Prawn USA lure has risen to the top of the list for a big shrimp lure because it is super easy to rig and use while having an awesome strike-generating glide in the water.

This lure is 4.3 inches long, and it casts farther and skips better than any other shrimp lure I have tested while having great strike-generating action in the water. Best of all, it works great in all depth ranges since it's super easy to rig on a wide variety of weighted hooks and jig heads.

All you'll need are some packs of these shrimp lures along with whichever sized jig heads or weedless hook rigs based on the depth zones that you'll be fishing and you'll be catching a ton of quality fish when shrimp are the target prey.

Seasons: Best in Winter, Spring, & Summer

See above under Prawn Junior for same reasons not to use the larger shrimp imitation. Also, watch the mini-course for how to install battle-rattles in the body of the Prawn lures just behind the body cavity opening.



[Mini-Course](#)

5. DARTING LURE: THE POLK COUNTY TWEAKER

When the fish aren't feeding well on paddletails nor shrimp profiles, that's when it's time to pull out a darting lure to trigger reaction strikes from fish that simply can't help but to go after a prey that looks injured/scared.

These PC Tweaker lures do a great job at resembling both a scared shrimp as well as an injured baitfish from the quick darting motion that goes in all directions.

And since these lures were designed to cast extremely far and skip very well, they are excellent at catching lots of fish on the days when everyone else is coming home with excuses about the fish having lock jaw.

Seasons: Best in Winter, Spring, & Summer

The only con of this lure is that it is not for beginners because it requires skill to get the right action in the water... if you're a beginner, you need to start out with The 2.0 paddletails because they are much easier to use.



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6. BIG PADDLETAIL: THE BOMBER

When fishing in areas with larger baitfish 5+ inches, it's smart to have a larger paddletail ready for action. Also, these larger paddletails can be extremely effective when fishing at night and/or in windy conditions because they cast farther and give off more vibration in the water enabling you to cover more water more easily while enabling the fish to more easily find your lure.

When fishing these conditions, the Slam Shady Bomber will typically outperform the smaller 2.0 and Mulligan profiles. Just like the others, they can be rigged on the weighted hooks and jig heads shown below to cover all depth ranges.

Seasons: Best in the Fall

Need a 7'6" medium to medium-heavy power, fast action rod to manage the heavier lure weight and to ensure good hook-setting ability. Go with 10 lb braid for open inshore fishing in the shallows and flats, but jump up to 20 lb braid, 30-40 lb leader, and 7'6" fast action medium-heavy to heavy power rod if fishing around docks and other structure. In this case you need more power to get large fish away from the structure.

WHEN TO NOT USE THE BOMBER

These Slam Series BOMBER lures are at their best when fishing expansive shallow areas with 5 inch+ baitfish because it casts a mile so you can to cover a lot of water with minimal effort.

Their big paddletail design puts off a lot of vibration in the water which enables these lures to attract fish by both sight and feel from a good distance.

The situation where this lure design is at its worse is when fishing smaller zones of structure in calm shallow water when you don't need to cover an expansive area...

In that situation, the Alabama Leprechaun jerk rigged on a weighted hook is the way to go.

Also, this BOMBER lure can be too big to use during periods where only small baitfish are in the area (winter and early spring)...

When fishing areas with smaller baitfish, you'll need to use a smaller paddletail like the Slam Shady 2.0.

STORING TIPS

Just like all soft plastics, it's important to not mix them with other brands when you're storing them.

Most importantly, do NOT store these SS Bombers with any lures made by ZMan (even the original Slam Shady lures due to them being made from Zman's Elaztech material).

This is because some materials have a chemical reaction when exposed to different materials from other soft plastics.

I personally recommend storing them in their packages they come in to make sure that there aren't any accidental touches against other soft plastics.

If you want to store them in a tackle tray, you of course can do that as long as they are isolated into their own section.

This material does not require that you keep it wet, so you can store it for long periods of time while rigged on your rod and you can even store them pre-rigged in your tackle tray as well.



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7. JERK SHAD: ALABAMA LEPRECHAUN

When fishing in calm, clear, and shallow water, the best lure is often going to be a soft plastic jerk shad rigged on a weighted hook because it has great action in the water and very little vibration to make sure that it won't spook off finicky fish.

These lures mimic both scared shrimp as well as small baitfish that live on the bottom, so the darker green color with some gold flash seems to be the color that works most often.

Need to retrieve with a twitch, twitch, pause motion which emulates a spooked shrimp or an injured baitfish. It is up to the angler to bring this lure to life.

Many small fish will peck at this lure, so don't strike at taps, only strike when feel the stronger thump and weight on the line after the thump of a larger fish.

Seasons: Best in Winter, Spring, & Summer. If pinfish or puffers tear off the tail, the lure will still work. It is then similar to a polk county tweaker lure. Keep these lures for when the baitfish are smaller, such as in winter when baitfish are smaller. Also, without the tail, this bait will skip better.

Rigged on a jig head for deeper fishing, use the same twitch, twitch, pause retrieve. On the drop during the pause is usually where fish will hit the lure. Cast out, let the lure drop to the bottom and start the twitch, twitch, pause retrieve.

Retrieve speed should be based on conditions. If the fish are very lethargic, such as in the morning during winter, go slow. As the water warms up, increase the speed of the retrieve. In the summer in the morning the fish are usually more aggressive because the water is cooler so you can retrieve faster, but as the water heats up, they will be less aggressive and need to slow down the retrieve and look for fish in shaded areas. Whatever the case, be aware and vary your speed of retrieve based on what you are finding that the fish want.

Best rod to use is 7'6" fast action medium heavy power rod because need to be able to feel the lure, and will be skipping under mangroves, over oysters, or around docks and need the power to set the weedless hook setup. Do not use a medium light rod for most plastic lures. Medium light is better for fishing with live or cut bait, but not for plastic lures. Use 10 lb braid for the flats, with about a 2 foot 20 lb leader (start with about 26" leader and replace it when it gets down to 16-18". Bump leader up to 30 lb if going after snook unless very calm and sunny when might drop back to 20-25 lb leader to help keep from spooking the snook.

WEIGHTED HOOKS: After testing a lot of weighted hooks over the years, my absolute **favorite for the Alabama Leprechaun lures is the 3/0 weighted Hoss Helix hook with the 1/8th oz weight** because its unique centering pin makes rigging very easy and it is the perfect size for this lure.

These lures have proven to be excellent at catching the big fish in high pressured shallows due to their unique color pattern combined with their excellent action in the water when rigged and retrieved properly. My favorite conditions for using them is when I'm fishing in the shallows with calm and/or clear water.



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8. WEEDLESS SPOON: JOHNSON SILVER MINNOW

Although soft plastic lures are amazingly good at catching redfish, snook, sea trout, & flounder, there are some situations where they simply can't be used so it's important to be ready for making a change when needed. A weedless spoon is typically the best choice if you're fishing in shallow areas with structure and you can't fish a soft plastic due to pufferfish biting off the tails. Also, these lures are great when fishing on windy days because they slice through the wind.

The best value weedless spoon we've found so far is the Johnson Silver Minnow.

Seasons: Best in Winter, Spring, & Summer

Vary the retrieve. As the lure is reeled in, you can just do a straight retrieve, but adding some twitches or rhythmically slightly moving the rod tip back and forth an inch or two may be more effective.

It may be better to tie the lure on with a snug knot instead of the loop knot that is usually used for lures. Do not use a snap swivel to attach the lure. If want to protect the line from twists, you can attach a small barrel swivel about 18 inches up the leader from the lure, but not right at the lure.

Gold lure is most popular and is generally considered for use in stained or dark water, whereas the silver is considered more for clear water.

One-fourth oz and one-half oz are the most popular sizes. If the predator fish are feeding on small baitfish, you'll likely have more luck with the 1/4 ounce. But if they're feeding on bigger baitfish, the 1/2 ounce might be the better bet.

The weed guard works great for repelling weeds from getting snagged by the hook, and it's curved shape allows it to erratically dart underwater, eliciting strikes from even the pickiest of fish.

The only con with this spoon is that it deteriorates from the saltwater pretty quickly if you don't spray it down after using it. Of course, the fix for that is to just wash it off with fresh water!

This lure will skip under mangroves, but it is an uncontrolled skip. Because of its shape, you never know exactly what direction it will go when it hits the water.



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9. TOPWATER PLUG: MOONWALKER

When fishing at night and during the twilight hours (as the sun is rising or setting) during the Spring, Summer, and Fall seasons, the topwater bite can be

extremely good... plus it's arguably the most fun lure of all to use because you see and hear the fish's powerful strikes at the surface.

The Moonwalker has been the best overall performing topwater plug that I've use so far... we tested a bunch of topwater plugs, and pulled in the pros from the best performers and put them into this one lure.

Seasons: Best in the Summer & Fall

In the summer, once you can see your shadow, the use a topwater is going to become less and less effective. On cloudy days in the early morning, the effectiveness may be extended a bit, but on more clear sunny days the bite usually ends quickly once the sun is up. Same goes for sunset. Usually about 30 minutes to an hour before sunset is when the bite may pick up. On a cloudy day, it might extend to an hour or two before sunset.

In the winter, sometimes mid day can be good for topwater as the sun has warmed the water and fish become more active. But generally no matter the time of year, topwaters are best in twilight hours and at night.

This is a walk-the-dog lure that goes back and forth in a different direction each time the line is twitched.

In most cases, keep the rod tip low to keep the line down out of any wind. Use short twitches (move rod tip 6-12 inches) and a slow line retrieve with occasional pauses in the retrieve. Can vary the retrieve speed to see which speed the fish prefer.

Can use a rod tip up retrieve when the wind is light (5-10 mph) and in the right direction to let the bow in the line carry your lure in the direction of the wind along a bank or over an oyster bar as you do the same retrieve as with rod tip down.

Do not set the hook by sight. Just do the same as with a subsurface lure. Only set the hook when you feel the weight of the fish on the line. Do not strike at splashes or visual strikes at the lure.

If you have smaller fish nipping at the lure but not able to take it, just continue your normal retrieve until a fish actually takes the lure and you feel the pull on the line. Then swivel with the rod to set the hook. Keep your rod tip wherever it was when you make the swivel motion. If it was down by the water to keep the line out of the wind, do not lift it up for the strike. Just pivot away from the fish to set the hook. Same if your rod tip was up, leave it there and pivot for the strike.

Can use either a spinning or baitcasting rod/reel setup. Use 10 lb braid with 30 lb mono leader with spinning setup and a 7'6" fast action medium to medium-heavy rod. Can use heavier braid with baitcasting without as much loss

of casting distance ability, so for around docks can use 30 lb or larger braid and 40-50 lb mono leader without compromise.

Attach the lure to the line with a nonslip loop knot. Do not use any swivel or other metal attachment (eg quick clip) on the nose of the lure. That extra weight will sink quickly and pull the line below the surface, which will increase the chance that the hooks will catch the line. Same goes for using fluorocarbon leader. Fluorocarbon sinks faster than mono so it will put the line down into the water more quickly which will increase the chance of the hooks snagging the line.



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10. DIVING PLUG: SKINNY LIPPER

The diving plug is my most recent addition to the “must-have” list of lures because it is great at covering lots of water with minimal effort without risk of junk fish messing up soft plastics.

This particular lure is my favorite of all because it stays within 2 ft of the surface making it great for power fishing in shallow structure zones with it can also become a great finesse lure if given a slow injured fish retrieve.

‘If you’re an advanced angler who fishes the shallows for redfish, sea trout, and/or snook, you’re going to love using this lure.

Seasons: Best in the Summer & Fall

Attach the lure with a nonslip loop knot to give it all the action it can have.

The diving of the lure makes it easier for redfish to eat the lure since they can catch bait under the surface more easily than something on the surface of the water.

Try various retrieves. Lure can work throughout the day. Just try different retrieves until you find what the fish want.

Three retrieves:

Topwater retrieve - Repeated small twitches like with a topwater plug, but do the twitches a bit slower. This allows the lure to dart under the surface and flutter back up to the surface. Twitching it just as it comes back to the surface makes the lure create a disturbance in the water surface that sounds like a mullet tail kick.

Jerk bait retrieve - If fish are more aggressive do the same thing but speed things up a bit. Do a twitch, twitch, pause retrieve so the lure doesn't come to the surface and works mostly subsurface (about 4-8 inches deep).

Control the depth of the lure by using the rod tip up or down. With tip up, lure stays more shallow, with it down it will run a few inches deeper.

Straight retrieve - Reeling steadily will make the lure run deeper yet (up to about one foot deep). Again rod tip up or down helps control how deep the lure runs.



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WEIGHTED HOOKS & JIGHEADS

Below is a listing of the top rigging options for the soft plastic lures that are shown in the Top 10 lures for advanced anglers.

It's crucial to get the rigging right when using soft plastics, so make sure to use the [Rigging Guide](#) to make sure that you're optimizing your results.

WEIGHTED HOOKS (FOR SOFT PLASTICS)

The use of weighted hooks for fishing the shallows will skyrocket results compared to using traditional worm hooks because they help make sure that the lure won't helicopter in the water and the added weight will increase casting distance.

The hooks we have liked best for many years are the TwistLock hooks made by Owner because they are their patented TwistLock keeper while having a variety of hook and weight sizes.

We created Hoss Helix hooks more recently in order to better fit our Power Prawn USA lures... these Hoss helix hooks use the same keeper as the TwistLocks, but the Hoss hooks have a wider gap and a thinner shank diameter to allow for better hooksets with the Power Prawn USA lures.

Note: These are generally best for covering depth zones down to 2.5 ft relative to jig heads.



[See Depth Selection Guide](#)

JIG HEADS (WEEDLESS): HOSS WEEDLESS FOOTBALLS

When fishing in more than a couple feet of water, it's crucial to be able to get your lure down to the strike zone. So having jig heads of various weights is a must for inshore fishermen.

And since redfish, seatrout, snook, flounder, and so many other species are ambush predators that hold near structure to feed, it's extremely helpful to be

able to use weedless lures to minimize time and money wasted by getting snagged on the bottom.

The best overall jig heads that we've found so far for rigging a wide assortment of lures (all listed above) weedless from depths ranging from 3 ft down to 100+ ft are the Hoss Weedless Football jigheads.



[See Depth Selection Guide](#)

JIG HEADS (TRADITIONAL): HOSS ROUND EYE

When fishing in more than a couple feet of water, it's crucial to be able to get your lure down to the strike zone. So having jig heads of various weights is a must for inshore fishermen.

The weedless jig heads listed above have an advantage when fishing tight to structure due having a low chance of getting snagged, but the traditional style jigheads have an advantage for open water and/or structure-free bottoms since they allow for a better hookup ratio.

The best overall jig heads that we've found so far for rigging a wide assortment of lures (all listed above) from the main depth ranges are the Hoss Round Eye jigheads.



[See Depth Selection Guide](#)

Community:

Networking can really increase your knowledge by learning from other anglers in your area.

Bonus:

Underwater Analysis

Excellent underwater camera footage of how fish swim and react to bait, how they strike, and why weedless lure/hook combos are important. Especially good to show why you should not strike at small bumps of your bait and why you need to wait until you feel the weight (good thump) of a true take by a larger fish before you strike.

Line Experiments

Luke tested casting distance variation between 10 and 20 lb braid. He found that he could cast 103 ft with the 20 lb and 130 ft with the 10 lb. An increase of about 25%.

Do you need to wet knots before cinching them down?

Sample size was small, so nothing definitive. One thing that was clear was that the range where knots broke was much narrower for dry cinched knots than for wet cinched knots, indicating that there is more variability in when a knot will break when the knot is cinched wet. Since many knots require their loops to tighten down consistently, which may be happening with a dry cinch, saliva may make the loops slip together unevenly, possibly weakening the knot.

FLUOROCARBON SALIVA TEST - The knot without saliva was 8% stronger on average than the knot with saliva.

MONOFILAMENT SALIVA TEST - The knots with and without saliva were essentially the same. Side Note: The knots tied with monofilament were much stronger than those tied with fluorocarbon!

BRAIDED LINE SALIVA TEST - The knot with saliva was 12% stronger on average than the knot without saliva.

Luke's Conclusion - Although it used to be necessary to use saliva when you cinch down a knot, that's not the case anymore. In fact, it might even be worse if you use saliva! I won't be using saliva with my knots anymore in hopes of getting a more consistent knot and not risking it be much weaker.

From a different test video (see below under: **IS YOUR OLD FISHING LINE FAILING YOU?**):

Using saliva to lubricate a knot in both new and old line weakens the knots. Cinching dry is the way to go. Results were worse (12% loss in strength) with the uniknot, probably because there are more turns in the knot. With the Orvis (nonslip loop knot) there are fewer turns of line in the knot so the strength loss was less (5%) when wet with saliva, but it was still weaker than when cinched dry.

Mono vs. Fluoro Abrasion Experiment

Mono has much better abrasion resistance than fluorocarbon.

FLUOROCARBON VS. MONOFILAMENT LINE STRESS TEST

Mono was not compromised by having been stretched near the braking point, even after 5 stresses. If anything, it got better, possibly due to having made knots in it stronger by tightening them down further. If using mono, you can keep using the leader even if it has been stressed until you see some damage to it from abrasion due to the fish's mouth or such.

Both fluorocarbon lines tested lost strength after being stressed, particularly if it was stressed near to the breaking point. So, if you use fluorocarbon leader and have gotten into a situation where your leader was stressed by fighting a big fish or due to pulling because the leader was snagged on structure, it is best to replace the leader even if it looks good.

BRAID VS. MONO CASTING DISTANCE EXPERIMENT [BOTH LIGHT & HEAVY LURES]

Braid was significantly better (30% more for braid) than mono as a main line when casting lighter lures (3/16 oz weight). With heavier lures (1/2 oz weight), the difference was not as great (7% farther with braid).

IS YOUR OLD FISHING LINE FAILING YOU?

Tip: Instead of a rubber band, a drink koozie can be used to help control leader line on a full-size spool of line used as leader.

Yes, if you store your leader material in a bag or on a boat where it is exposed to temperature and other variations in its environment, the line does weaken some (up to 5% loss of strength).

Using saliva to lubricate a knot in both new and old line weakens the knots. Cinching dry is the way to go. Results were worse (12% loss in strength) with the uniknot, probably because there are more turns in the knot. With the Orvis (non-slip loop knot) there are fewer turns of line in the knot so the strength loss was less (5%) when wet with saliva, but it was still weaker than when cinched dry.

Technology

Discusses Smart Fishing Spots Platform (App)

Catch, Photo, & Release Tips

5 ESSENTIAL PARTS OF THE FISH TO PROTECT

The following five parts of the fish are what we much focus our attention towards when handling a fish that is going to be released because if any of them get compromised, they'll have a hard time surviving after release.

1. GILLS

It is absolutely essential to make every effort to not touch or harm a fish's gills when handling it because harm done to these important tissues can result in a quick death for the fish because all fish rely on their gills to breathe.

THINGS TO DO

Use in-line circle hooks with fishing with live or cut bait because they are much less likely to gill or gut hook a fish.

When actively fishing (i.e. holding the rod in your hand and not using circle hooks), always be attentive to the rod when fishing so that to feel for strikes so that you can set the hook before it's too deep.

Make sure that you keep your fingers and tools from touching the gills when unhooking a fish.

THINGS TO NOT DO

Never hold a fish by the gills.

Never stick pliers (or fingers) in through the gills to access a deep hook... just cut the line because the hook will rust out.

Don't wait too long before setting the hook after feeling a bite.

2. SKIN

Although the fish's skin doesn't seem to get as much focus in terms of things to protect, it surely shouldn't be overlooked. Especially as more and more chemicals from stormwater runoff enters our fisheries because their skin is their core defense against harmful bacteria, parasites, and/or chemicals that are in the water. Any loss to their "slime" on the outer layer or to their scales can put them at risk of a slow death from getting infected or poisoned.

THINGS TO DO

Pre-wet everything that will touch the fish before it touches the fish (dip hands in water, splash water on deck of boat/kayak, dip landing net all the way into the water before netting the fish, etc.)

Make sure to have all needed items for holding, taking a picture, and unhooking a fish in close proximity so it's all easily and quickly accessible allowing for a smooth and quick release.

Use a fish grip to secure the head of the fish so that you can minimize the needed touch area of the fish (and so it doesn't slide around you or the boat if it continues fighting).

Note: If using a landing net, make sure it has a rubber lining on its netting (NO rope webbing).

THINGS TO NOT DO

NEVER use a cloth rag to grab a hold of the fish that is going to be released

Don't bring a fish that you're going to release in too quickly... better to spend more time reviving at the end than bringing an uncontrollable fish into a boat/kayak or onto the beach where it can lose lots of slime coating.

Don't rub a fish against dry clothing when taking a picture... get help from someone else if unable to hold the fish with just two hands or get in the water for a really cool pic.

3. JAW

A fish with an injured jaw will have a very tough time capturing its food. And although a fish with an injured jaw may very well swim away energetically when released, an injury to its jaw could result in the fish being unable to feed making it unable to survive.

THINGS TO DO

Use extreme care to not force the entire weight of a big fish by its jaw.

Take out hooks with the fish's body either in the water or securely resting on a wet surface on your boat/kayak/etc.

Use a fish grip to securely hold onto the jaw so your other hand can more easily be used to support its midsection.

THINGS TO NOT DO

Don't hold a big fish vertically by the jaw

NEVER torque the jaw in an effort to horizontally hold a fish by its jaw

Don't use barbed hooks (especially treble hooks) while catch and release fishing (push down barbs with pliers and replace treble hooks with single hooks on lures that come with treble hooks).

4. INTERNAL ORGANS

Fish are designed to thrive underwater in a mostly horizontal position, and their internal organs are set up to help them thrive in that same environment.

So the internal organs of some species can get compromised when they are held vertically when out of the water since they simply were not designed to withstand gravity in that position (especially the bigger/older fish).

THINGS TO DO

Take care to not hold fish in the air vertically.

Use two hands to pick up a large fish so that you can support its mid-section.

THINGS TO NOT DO

NEVER hold a large fish up in the air vertically by its jaw (it can harm both its jaw and internal organs)

Do not squeeze a fish with a lot of force in order to keep it securely held since that can cause damage to internal organs too.

5. EYES

Fish heavily rely on sight to feed and stay out of trouble, so we always need to be very mindful to not damage their eyes in any way.

THINGS TO DO

Take care to not allow anything sharp or rough to touch/scrape their eyes

THINGS TO NOT DO

NEVER hold a fish that is going to be released by its eye sockets

Fish Photos

Here are some general things to keep in mind when taking fish pics:

Make sure that you and/or your fish are facing into the sun/light so that all colors are as clear and bright as possible.

Have your friend check the background to include or exclude items as needed (secret fishing location, even horizon, etc.).

Take multiple pics in case any eyes were closed.

PHOTO TAKING TIPS IF FISHING ALONE

Now that cameras are so small and user-friendly, it's now fairly easy for you to be able to take excellent pictures of you with your catch without the help of anyone else. It just takes some planning.

First, get to learn what features your camera has for taking delayed pictures or video footage.

Note: If your camera takes crisp video, then you'll be able to pull the exact perfectly timed image from the video feed.

Secondly, plan what sort of angle you want to capture and then make sure to set up some way to safely hold your camera in the right spot so that it can capture the image without getting lost.

For example, here's the very basic setup that Tony Acevedo uses to take his awesome pictures while fishing alone from a kayak.



Tony's great pics are taken from just mounting his iPhone 6+ on a basic mount in front of his kayak while using its timer feature.

Finally, make sure to store your camera in an easily accessible location so that you can efficiently get it when the need arises.

Note: I recommend practicing a few times before going out on the water to make sure to get any bugs or inefficiencies out on dry land before it gets more difficult on the water.

CATCH, PHOTO, AND RELEASE FISHING EQUIPMENT

Here's a list of fishing equipment that can be extremely beneficial to catch and release fishing.

Fish grips – These tools grip on to a fishes jaw and do not let go until you want it to so that you can ensure the fish can't accidentally get dropped while also decreasing the amount of area that is needed to touch a fish.

Needle-Nose Pliers: These are essential to have while fishing because they allow you to efficiently unhook a fish even if it's hooked fairly deep and has a small mouth.

De-hooker: This is another essential tool that can help you more unhook a fish with minimal contact to the fish.

Waterproof phone case: Since phones these days have such nice cameras (amazingly nice in some instances), a waterproof phone case can help ensure that your camera doesn't get ruined by getting wet (I'm sad to report that I learned the importance of a good waterproof case hard way).

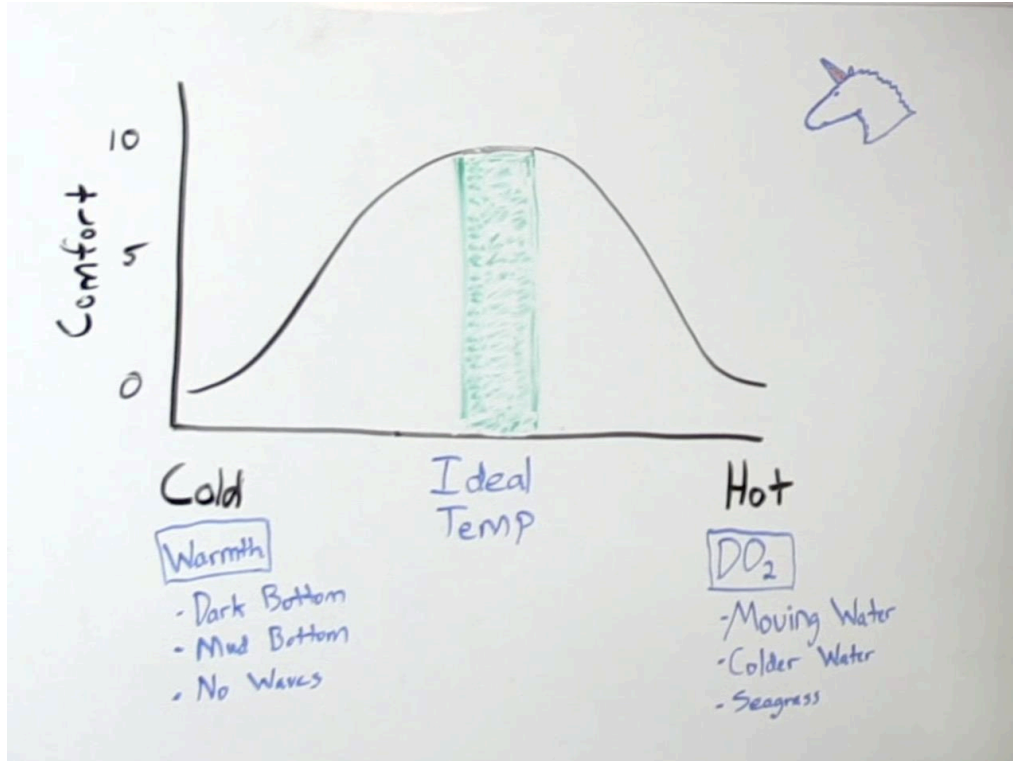
Camera Mount: If you fish along and want to get great pics of your catches, then it is wise to get a camera mount so that you can safely and efficiently take pictures of you and your catch. [Click here to see some awesome pictures that our kayak instructor Tony Acevedo has taken.](#)

Ventilation Device (offshore): If offshore fishing, make sure that you're ready to assist you fish with swim bladder issues back down to the bottom... [watch the video in this linked post to learn more about ventilation best practices.](#)

Best Water Temperature

Fish are cold blooded so they need to move to environments where they are comfortable. Therefore fishermen must anticipate where they need to go in order to locate the fish.

The green zone on the chart below is where fish seek to be and fishermen must find water zones that provide this zone for the fish in order to find and catch them.



In the winter under "Cold" is what fish are looking for... warmth. The three items under "warmth" help provide that warmth thereby increasing the fish's comfort. If you can find a combination of all three, dark colored muddy bottom with relatively calm water, which is usually due protection of that area from the wind, you will find somewhere fish will want to be in the winter.

In the summer under "Hot" is what fish are looking for... dissolved oxygen (DO₂) in the water. The conditions under "DO₂" provide better water oxygenation, therefore they increase the comfort of the fish. The hotter the water is, the less dissolved oxygen there will be in the water. Moving water contains more oxygen and is created by two main things, horizontal current flow and wave action that causes up and down movement of the water. Both will induce a greater amount of oxygen in the water. Stagnant water with little movement will be warmer with less oxygen in it and is not where the fish will be in the summer. Cooler water doesn't have to be a lot cooler but any decrease will be favorable to the fish. Cooler water is created by shade from structures such as docks and overhanging mangroves. Deeper water will also be cooler. Finally, seagrass not only provides structure in which predator fish can hide and hunt for prey, it also provides dissolved oxygen. Find as many of these 3 as you can to find fish.

When planning a trip, keep these factors in mind. For a trip in the summer when it will be hot, avoid the environments listed under "Cold." Look for those under "DO₂".

The take-home message is that there is no ideal water temperature you are looking for (hence the unicorn drawn in the upper right corner of the chart. The ideal temperature varies with the species of fish and the conditions available. Plus the temperature to the fish is a relative thing. If it is in water too cold for it, moving to water that is only slightly warmer still feels warmer to them and may make them relatively more comfortable so they may have an increased desire to eat. In winter the fish will look for the warmest water they can find and it is the job of the fisherman to try to anticipate where that might be based on the items described in the above chart.

Keep in mind your target fish. Some species are more tolerant of certain conditions, such as cold, so you must take this into account when trying to find the species you are after.

Also keep in mind that the farther out you are on either side of the bell curve, the more important it is to look for things that improve the environment of the fish you are after.

In the spring and fall when cold and heat aren't as much of a factor, you should focus more on finding structure, baitfish, birds, and other things such as tidal projections that are important to and indications of life in the waters you are fishing.

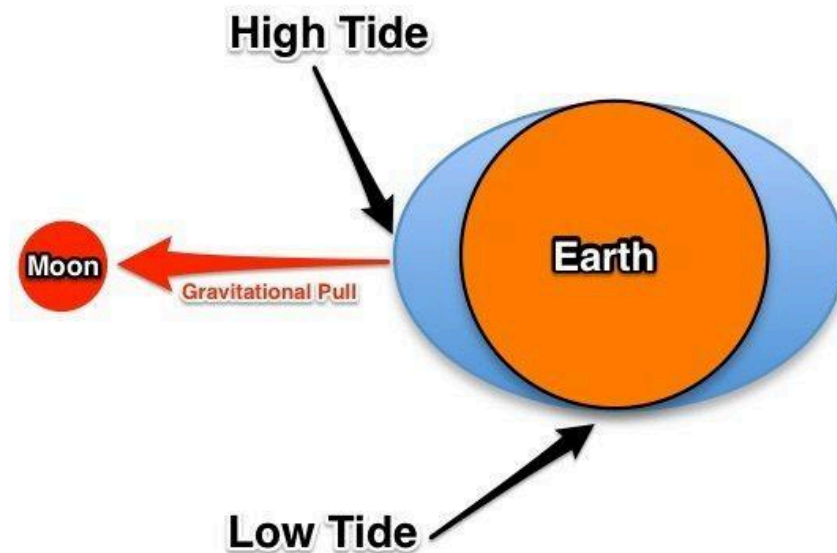
Understanding Tides & Currents

Of all the many variables that determine the feeding habits of redfish, snook, and trout, the most consistent and important variables for most regions is the moon's orbit around the Earth. This is because the gravitational pull from the moon is the primary factor that determines the tidal fluctuations of our waterways, which is the core driver of currents, and the reason why we should focus on currents is because that is what most often triggers the prime feeding times given that many predator fish rely on current to bring food to them.

The purpose of this post is to address 3 of the most important things to know about tides and currents so you'll be better able to consistently put yourself in the right place at the right time for maximum fish catching.

1. WHAT DRIVES TIDES/CURRENTS?

The gravitational pull of the Moon is by far the most significant driver of tides/currents. Water responds to the Moon's gravitational pull creating a bulge that follows the moon. And since Earth is constantly spinning, the side of Earth directly opposite from the moon has a bulge as well... aka – High Tide.



This is why you'll notice that there is always a strong low tide in the evenings of both a Full and New moon phase. This is because the moon is at its furthest point from being directly overhead or on the opposite side of your location on Earth at that point.

Since the Earth spins 360 degrees in a 24 hour period (while the moon only rotates around the Earth every 27.322 days), the parts of land directly touching the Oceans have two Highs and two Lows in a given day due to the bulge effect on the large bodies of water caused by the gravitational pull of the moon as shown in the above drawing.

To understand day to day differences, it's important to understand that the Earth must rotate an extra 12 degrees (which takes 50 minutes) for the moon to be directly over the same place as it was the day before. Since the Earth and Moon are moving in the same direction along their orbit around the Sun, this results in the tides arriving at the same location about 50 minutes later every day compared to the day prior.

Note: The gravitation pull of the Moon is by far the core driver of tides, but other factors such as wind, pressure changes, and recent rainfall can alter the normal tide and current levels/movements... see below.

WIND IMPACT TO TIDES/CURRENTS

Wind plays a stronger role in tides than I used to think. Wind on water causes friction that moves the top layer of water with it. This is hardly noticeable on small bodies of water, but constant wind on a huge body of water like the Atlantic Ocean or Gulf of Mexico will shift water to the point where the water levels will be affected.

For example, a constant wind of 10+ mph or more coming from the Northeast that we often get in FL will cause the water level along the Gulf coast of FL to be significantly lower than if no wind was present. The wind is moving the water away from the Gulf shore, therefore making outgoing currents stronger and last longer.

And when that NE wind finally slows down, the water levels get back to normal after a strong incoming current brings water back in (the opposite occurs if the wind comes from the West).

AIR PRESSURE IMPACT TO TIDES/CURRENTS

Air pressure can affect normal tide levels too. A low pressure system will cause the water level to go up while a high pressure system pushes the water level down.

Example: Hurricanes are very large low pressure systems and one of their most dangerous aspects to coastal communities is the tidal surge that it creates (especially on the side where the wind is blowing towards the shore).

Another example of this is seen in the ultra low water levels that our FL Gulf coast has after winter cold fronts (which are high pressure systems) come through bringing their strong winds from the North East. Both the pressure and the wind combines to push water out of the inland waterways.

RECENT RAINFALL IMPACT TO TIDES/CURRENTS

After periods of intense rain, the coastal waterways often have higher water levels due to the water from inland areas draining out towards the Ocean/Gulf. This is less and less noticeable as you go from inland creeks out towards the Ocean/Gulf.

2. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TIDE AND CURRENT

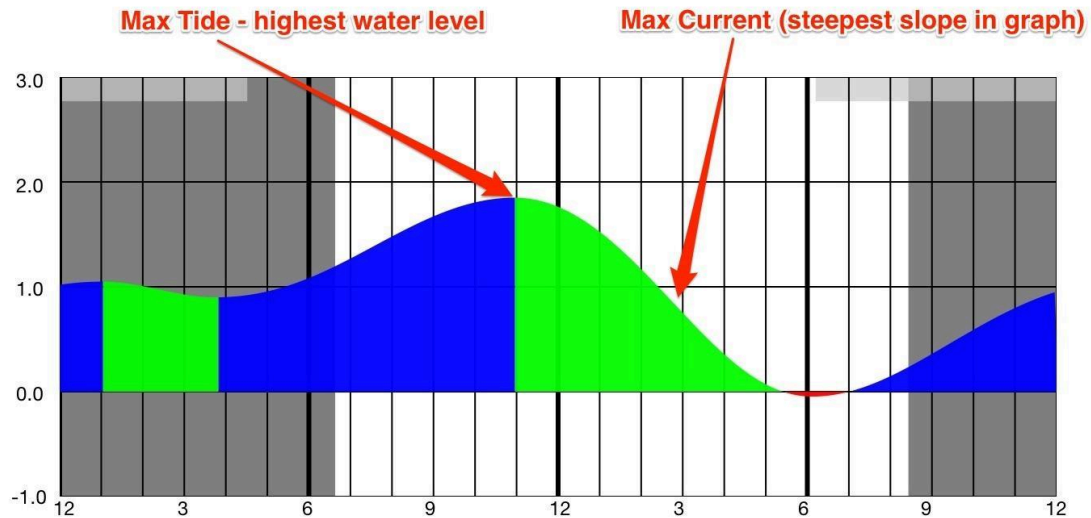
Many people believe that tides and currents are the same thing, when the truth is that they are very different. Here are their official definitions:

- Tide: The regular upward and downward movement of the level of the ocean that is caused by the pull of the sun and the Moon on the Earth
- Current: The continuous movement of water in the same direction

So **Tide** is the measure of **vertical** movement of water...

And **Current** is the measure of the **horizontal** movement of water.

The tide graph below shows how to determine both of them. Current movement is at its peak slightly after the time when the tide levels change most quickly (as seen by the slope of a tide graph).



TIDES – QUICK FACTS

Atlantic and Pacific Oceans have diurnal tides, two high tides and two low tides of similar heights every day

- This means that tides/currents from day to day are easy to predict because they are typically very similar in level, just delayed by about 50 minutes each day.

The Gulf of Mexico region has semi-diurnal tides... the tide peaks, valleys, and durations are not consistent from day to day.

- This means that tides/currents from day to day are more difficult to predict on the Gulf coast because they fluctuate in height and timing every day.

TIDAL MOVEMENT DOES NOT ALWAYS MATCH CURRENT MOVEMENT

I used to believe that an outgoing current always meant that the water level was going down (and visa versa). But that is not always the case.

For instance, when a large inland body of water is fed by a relatively small inlet/pass, the change in current is always lagging the change of tide because it's impossible for enough water to flow through the inlet/pass fast enough to keep up with the changing water level of the Ocean/Gulf.

The current is slack in an inlet/pass only when the water level of the two bodies of water it connects is equal. This often occurs well after the official max or min tide levels of the Ocean/Gulf.

I personally learned this lesson when wade fishing a flat at the north-west end of Sebastian Inlet, which is a narrow inlet on the east coast of FL that connects the Atlantic (huge body of water that is directly impacted by the gravitational pulls of the moon/sun) to the Indian River, which is a good sized body of water (forming

part of the massive Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway) that is only impacted by tidal fluctuations by the Atlantic via the water flow through Sebastian Inlet.

Normally, just being a narrow inlet or pass isn't a big deal. However, in this instance there are no other inlets within ~20 miles north or south of this one so it's literally the only place for water to move in and out of the Indian River at this point.

As the ocean level goes up due to the Earth's gravitational pull from the Moon and Sun, the current is incredibly strong through Sebastian Inlet in an effort to get the water level of the very large Indian River system to keep up.

What I never thought of was the fact that there is a significant delay in the timing of max/min tidal levels in the river since it's literally impossible for enough water to flow through the narrow inlet to lift the massive Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway system to the same highs/lows of the ocean.

Note: This is similar to a sand timer made of two larger areas with a small opening between the two for sand to pass through over an extended time before it fully moves from one side to the other.

How I Finally Realized The Current Delay

It was a cold February morning and my plan was to fish a flat that required wading through a fairly shallow channel (the shallowness depends on tide levels). When arriving, I saw that the current was going out so I assumed that my tide table was wrong and waded across the cut which was about thigh deep thinking that it would only get more shallow as the water moved out of the river into the ocean. However, after a couple hours of fishing, that same cut was over waste deep so I had to get completely soaked in cold water to get back to my car. I was completely baffled as to how the water level rose while the current was going out the entire time.

Why Does This Matter?

Passes and inlets are often best to fish right before and after the current switches... the ~30 min before and after slack current is when I catch a vast majority of snook and redfish in passes/inlets.

So knowing that there is a lag time from the current change to the change of the tide can help you more effectively plan your trip so you're in the right area at the right time.

How Long of a Delay Between the Turn of Tide vs. Current in Inlets/Passes?

Every inlet/pass is different. Wind, recent rainfall, and barometric pressure changes all impact the timing.

What is consistent is that the passes/inlets (like Sebastian Inlet) that connect the Ocean to a large body of inland water have the largest lag times between when the tide level changes and when the current changes.

A much wider inlet/pass (like Boca Grande) with other passes nearby allow for the lag time to be much smaller. For example, the lag time at Sebastian is typically around 2.5 hours at tidal high/low. While Boca Grande's lag time is often around an hour.

HOW TO DETERMINE THE BEST TIME TO CATCH FISH

My overall recommendation is to fish whenever you can without fretting about the fish biting or not based on tides because there's always something to be caught on all phases of the tide/current. It is best just to simply get out there.

But if you have only a limited amount of time to be able to fish and want to plan it around the "textbook" time to fish, then here are some things to consider.

TWILIGHT TRUMPS TIDES

The hour before and after the sun comes up and goes down will almost always trigger a good bite, so I like to try to plan my trips around one or the other any chance I get.

Ideally, I'd like to see some good current happening at twilight, but I'd still rather fish a bad tide at twilight than a good tide in the middle of the day.

PREDATOR FISH PREFER CURRENT

Predator fish often rely upon the current to bring their food to them. Many shrimp, crabs, and small bait fish often flow with the current, so predator fish like snook, redfish, and trout often sit in a single spot and wait for food to come into the range of sight/smell/feel when in areas with strong current.

But too much current can be a bad thing as it's tiring for fish to fight it and it's difficult to fish quickly moving water due to the drag on the line. Therefore, it's best to target inlets/passes with fast water (defined simply as water that would be hard for you or I to swim against) at the turns of the tide.

It is best to target flats and mangrove lines during the peak current phase of the tides.

CONCLUSION

It is extremely important for an angler to have a solid understanding of the core drivers of tides and currents.

This knowledge will help ensure you don't get surprised by fluctuating water levels so you can safely explore new areas. And it also can significantly help you put yourself into the right place at the right time more frequently.