

# Walleye Fishing

## Quick Guide



TAKEMEFISHING.org

*Tailored Tackle*®  
Fishing Kits & Combos

# License & Registration

One of the most important items any angler needs before they go fishing is their fishing license. Each state has their own regulations and offers daily, short-term, or annual licenses. [TakeMeFishing.org](https://www.TakeMeFishing.org) has a great tool to find out where to buy a fishing license, the types of fishing licenses available, age requirements, fishing regulations and online purchasing.

## 1 Click the button below

GET YOUR FISHING LICENSE

## 2 Select your state

## 3 Review the best licensing options to fit your fishing needs

### LICENSE INFORMATION BY STATE

Alabama	Illinois	Montana	Rhode Island
Alaska	Indiana	Nebraska	South Carolina
Arizona	Iowa	Nevada	South Dakota
Arkansas	Kansas	New Hampshire	Tennessee
California	Kentucky	New Jersey	Texas
Colorado	Louisiana	New Mexico	Utah
Connecticut	Maine	New York	Vermont
Delaware	Maryland	North Carolina	Virginia
District Of Columbia	Massachusetts	North Dakota	Washington
Florida	Michigan	Ohio	West Virginia
Georgia	Minnesota	Oklahoma	Wisconsin
Hawaii	Mississippi	Oregon	Wyoming
Idaho	Missouri	Pennsylvania	

North Carolina  
North Dakota  
Ohio  
Oklahoma  
Oregon  
Pennsylvania

Virginia  
Washington  
West Virginia  
Wisconsin  
Wyoming



 **TAKEMEFISHING.org**

[Learn To Fish & Hunt](#) [Where To Fish & Hunt](#) [About TMs](#) [Get Licensed](#) 

[Home](#) [Washington](#) [Alaska](#) [Fishing License](#)

## Get a Washington Fishing License

Purchase a fishing license Washington, then spend a day fishing for crappie with the kids at Potholes Reservoir or testing us prods off of the docks at Lake Stevens. Fishing creates an opportunity to teach kids about how to follow rules and identify different types of fish, buy your license, read the fishing regulations, and take a lot fishing in Washington.

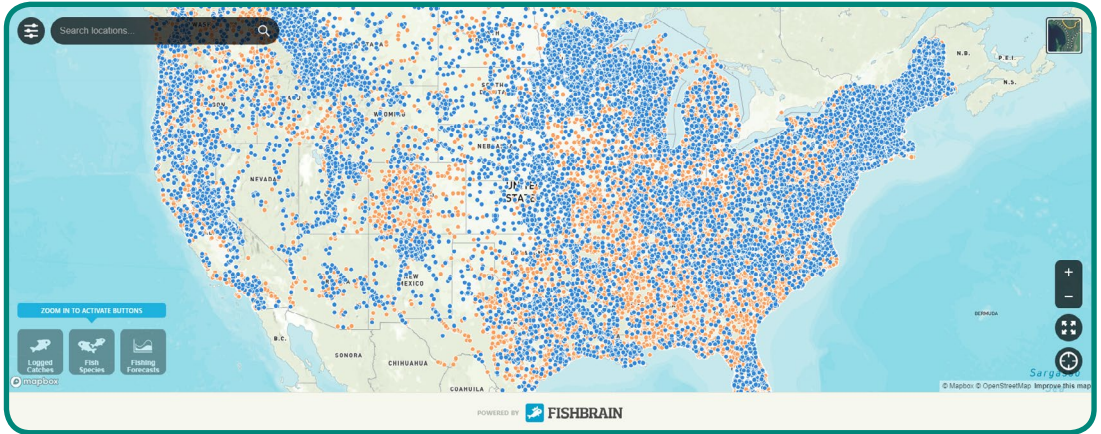
GET A WASHINGTON FISHING LICENSE



Your state's profile has links to resources where you can review the state **fishing regulations** and browse different types of **fishing licenses** available in your area. Many states allow you to purchase your license online and print out a temporary license to go fishing the same day. Remember to review the **age requirements** as children, seniors and veterans often receive discounts and unique opportunities for open fishing.

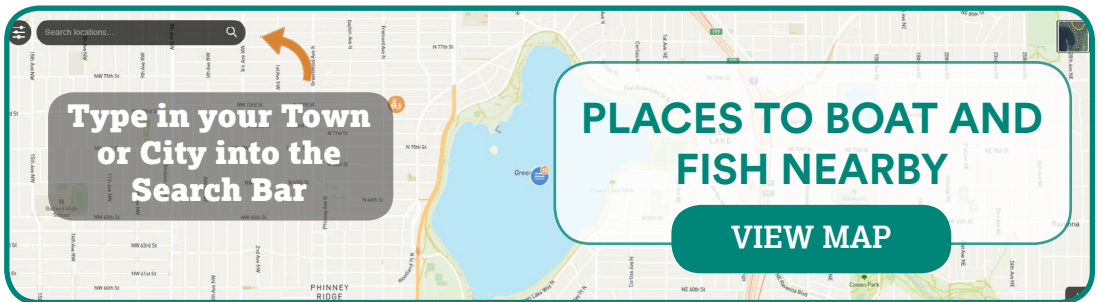
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# Places to Boat & Fish



Ready to get out on the water but not sure where to start?

Click the VIEW MAP below to find [Places to Fish and Boat](#) across the United States.



Body of Water to fish and boat on



Best Place to Fish and Boat with family-friendly amenities



Boat Ramp to launch your boat



Marinas, moorings and supplies



Bait Shop to buy fishing bait & lures



Fishing License Vendors



Charter & Boat rentals



Fishing Gear & equipment vendors



Fly Fishing shops.



Fish Refuge or Hatchery Facility

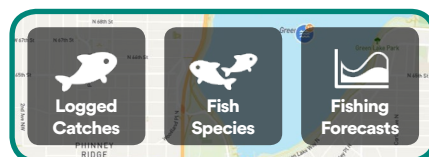


Multiple Places of Interest

Use this list of Key Symbols on the map to find places to fish, bait shops, and hot fishing bites!

Click on a blue Body of Water icon on a fishing spot near you to:

- Review Logged Catches
- View Photos of Fish Caught
- Filter Fish Species in the Area
- Read Fishing Forecasts
- Get Directions to that Location



# Lure Quick Sheet

## Deep Diving Crankbait



Target near shore structural transitions like drop offs and points (8-15 ft). Steadily retrieve & cover water. Add split shots for deeper depths.

### Casting

### Trolling

Troll over expansive, consistent structure like mudflats and mid-lake reefs. Use planar boards at 8-15 ft and weighted trolling rigs at 20+ ft.

## Neon Disc Worm Jig



Great for targeting river wall-eyes in back-water sloughs with submerged cover. Bump and thud against trees with this bright profile.

### Casting

### Drifting

Jig in large 3-5 ft swoops in stained water to call in walleye. More action drives the disc rings to vibrate, calling in walleye from afar.

## Grub Neon Tail Jig



Search for walleye in stained water along rocky shorelines, ideally around points and bends. Feel the rocks thump each time you drop.

### Casting

### Drifting

Drift through elevated mid-lake structures like humps and sunken islands. Bounce right off the bottom, pause often and twitch.

## Paddle Tail Swimbait



Swim 2-3 ft off the bottom near shore, stopping abruptly to let the shad fall to the bottom and pause. This motion mimics a wounded baitfish.

### Casting

### Drifting

Great for clear water lakes when baitfish are balling deep. Search for schools of bait in deeper basins, positioning your drift over them.



## Worm Spinners



Drift or slow troll (< 1 mph) along the edges of weed lines in the Fall, or along mudflats and reefs in the Summer. For shallow walleyes < 15 ft, use a walking weight to improve sensitivity. In depths > 15 ft, or in a heavy chop, weight your spinner with a bottom bouncer.

## Slip Bobber Rig



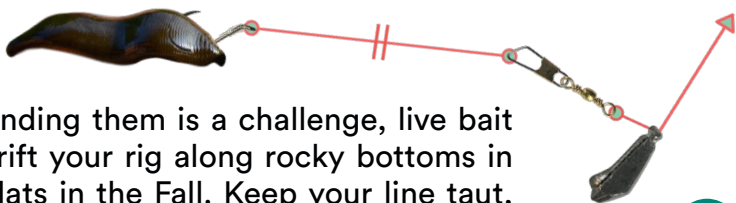
Set your depth by clipping on the depth finder and submerging your rig. Shift the tie up on your line until the bobber sinks 2-3 ft in the water. Bait your hook and cast out. Let the wind take your bobber ~30 yds away to cover distance. Any further and you will be set to the wrong depth. When you have a hit, let the fish take the bobber all the way down before setting the hook. Reset your depth and change your bait every 30 min, and after every catch. See step by step rigging instructions in the following section.



The quintessential walleye setup, jigging live bait along structural features catches fish. Hook on a leech near the sucker to a 1/8 oz jig, or a minnow by the nose to a 1/4 oz jig. Fish in 10-30 ft of water, bouncing these baits along the bottom. Let the jig hit the ground, lift back up and pause. Ideal for rocky, muddy, or sandy bottoms without snaggy weeds. You can pitch your jig by casting and retrieving. However, the most popular method is to drift your jig along the bottom. Start 6" off, lifting and dropping every 15 seconds.

## Live Bait Jigs

## Live Bait Rig



When walleye are too finicky for jigging and finding them is a challenge, live bait rigging is the answer. Drift your rig along rocky bottoms in the Spring and muddy flats in the Fall. Keep your line taut, feeling the bottom. Set the hook after 2-3 taps.

# Walleye Basics

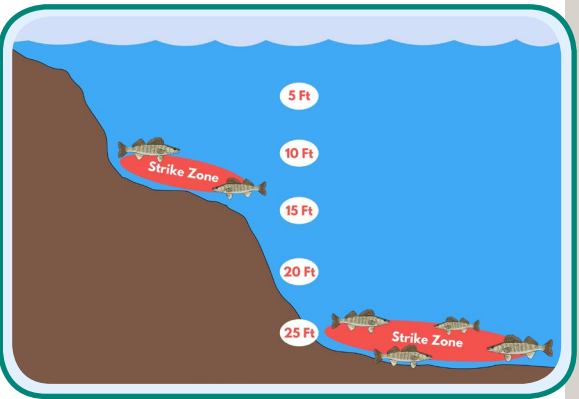
Walleye are a highly sought after species popular in the Midwest, Upper-Northeast, and Upper-Northwest. Emphasis on “Upper” locations - they like the cold. Walleye are known for their challenge as a sport-fish as well as their premium table fare.

## Depth

Walleyes are most commonly caught in the depth range of 13-20 ft, but their overall range is 7-30 ft. Their range is dependent on temperature, seasonally and daily. In the spring and fall, walleyes will frequent shallower areas, spending the majority of their time in 10-15 ft of water. Mornings and nights, when it is cooler, they will be in the higher end of the depth spectrum (10-12 ft). During day, they will typically be in the lower end of the spectrum (13-15 ft). Hot summer months cause walleye to push deeper (20-25 ft), moving lower towards 20 ft at night and 25 ft during the day. When summer cools down into Fall it is prime time to be targeting walleye. They are going to be ranging in depths between 15-20 ft and are feeding actively in preparation for winter.

## Strike Zone

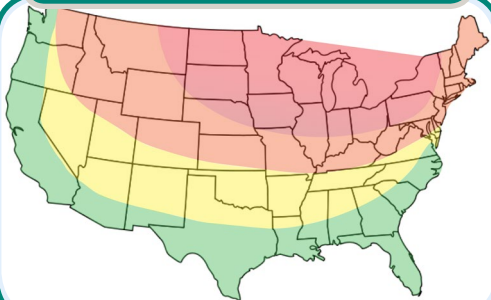
Walleye most often hug the bottom regardless of depth or location. Therefore, your bait needs to be presented 6 in - 2 ft off the bottom (“Strike Zone”). The challenge of walleye fishing is being able to present a lively bait within that Strike Zone while depth, structure and general conditions change.



## Seasonality

Walleyes, near the top of the food chain, respond to the effects caused by the bottom of the food chain. As available sunlight rises in Spring, plankton begin to activate, baitfish spree on the new food source, and the shock to the food supply drives walleye crazy. A similar effect takes place in Fall when the bottom of the food chain begins to regress, causing a flurry of consumption before winter. Fishing for walleye is hot whenever there are abrupt changes in the food supply. These changes occur in Spring & Fall.

## Density of Walleye Population

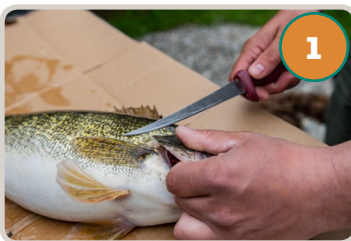


## Location

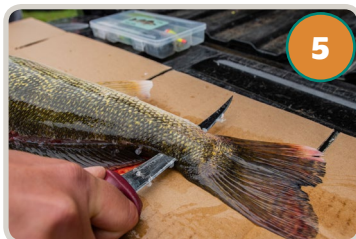
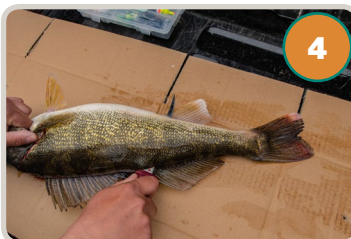
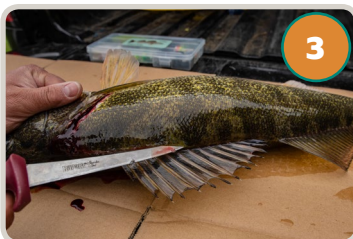
Finding structure is usually the key to targeting walleye. The three most common structural features are: shoreline points, mid-lake humps, expansive flats & reefs. Walleye typically like to position themselves according to structure features for ambush points and navigation. The rocky points are your primary location for Spring, deeper mid-lake humps in Summer, and insect breeding flats in the Fall.

# How To Fillet a Walleye

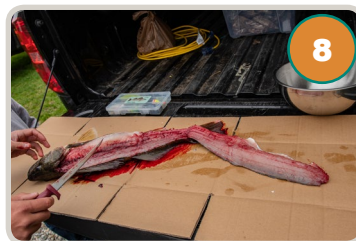
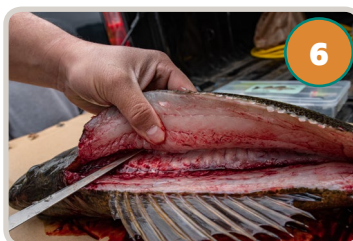
(1) Lay the Fish on its side so that the spines are facing you. (2) Locate the side fin and slice down from the side fin back towards the spine, deep enough to pass the meat.



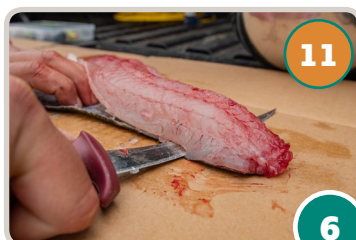
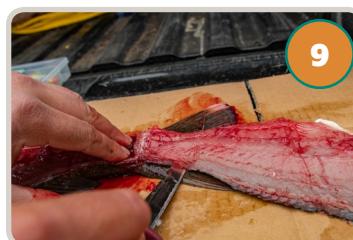
(3) Turn the knife horizontal and cut front to back, just above the spines. (4) About halfway back, poke the knife carefully through the fish and continue cutting towards the tail. (5) Apply pressure, slicing back forth against the spine until you reach the tail.



(6) Open up and carefully cut around the ribcage from the top to the bottom, in an arc towards the belly. (7) Cut in a straight line along the belly until you reach the tail. (8) Do not slice off the side of the fish yet. Flip it over, still attached to the tail.

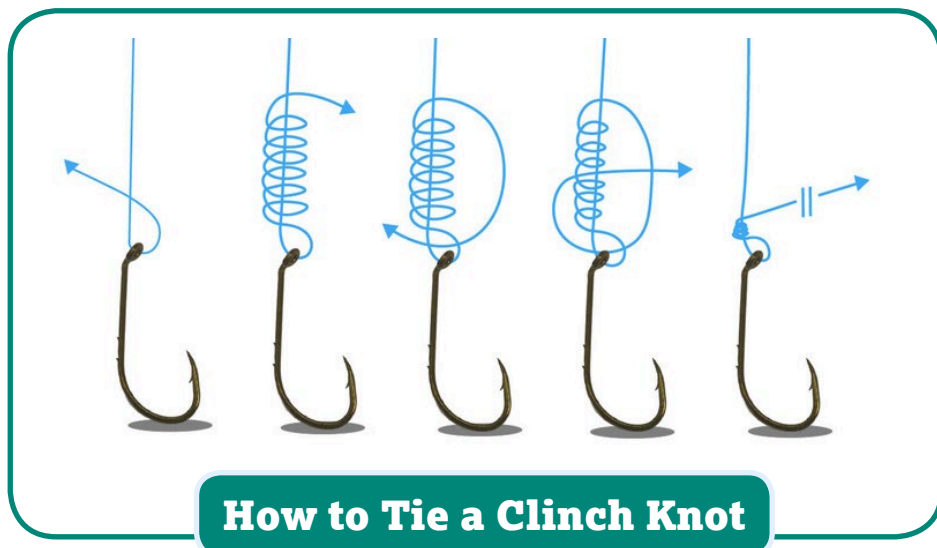


(9) Press the tail down with your fingers, slice down at the edge of the tail until you reach the skin. (10/11) Lay your knife flatly angled towards the skin, and carefully shave against the skin back and forth. After the fillet is removed, repeat on the opposite side.



# Rigging a Slip Bobber

1. Thread 2-3 ft of line through the slip-tie's tube and slide the tie off the tube. Pull the tube off the line, holding the tie in place.
2. Pull on both tag ends until the slip tie is lightly snug on your line.
3. Thread on a neon bead, this keeps your line from chaffing against the slip bobber. Then thread on your slip float, neon side first.
4. Push your bobber against the bead + tie, tighten the tie tight enough to stop the bobber but still loose enough to move up and down your line with finger pinched pressure. Clip the tag ends down to 1/2".
5. Tie on your hook with a clinch knot. (See Below)



6. Pinch on a 3/0 split shot sinker about 1-2 ft above the hook so your slip float stands straight in the water.
7. Push the slip tie up or down to set depth.
8. We recommend worms, minnows or leeches for bait.





# Working a Slip Bobber

## The Bait

Start with a smaller crappie or flathead minnow (2-3") hooked by the lips. If using a larger size minnow like a shiner minnow (3-4"), hook through the back body just before the tail. For leeches, hook right below their sucker. For nightcrawlers, halve them, hook the end 2-3 times over, balling it up, and then leave 1-2" of tail trailing at the cut end.

## The Presentation

Place the rig in the water and adjust the slip-tie up your line so that the distance is 1-2 ft above the bottom. This will allow you to cast the rig to the area at your desired depth (most often 13-20 ft depth) while also allowing your bait to present within the Strike Zone (6 in - 2 ft off the bottom). Slip bobbers allow the bait to present itself in a lively fashion. Let your bobber sit in the correct depth for 5-10 minutes. If no bite occurs, continue to cover more water, check your bait, check your depth and repeat.

## The Bite

Walleyes will often perform their notorious "tap-tap" before they commit to the bait. This will make the bobber go halfway under on tap #1, halfway to fully submerged on tap #2, and then a slow dive downwards on tap #3.

## The Hook Set

Once the bobber is diving downwards, allow the walleye to take your bait for 15 seconds. Reel in slowly, removing the slack from the line, but not so much so that you connect with the walleye immediately. Once taut, you need to set the hook by pulling on the taut line, raising your tip of the rod by about 3/4 of a foot from the current position towards your shoulder.



**Clip a depth-finder onto your hook to quickly set a slip bobber depth**

# Fishing with Jigs

Jigging bait for walleye is the second most versatile setup and often the most popular way to target walleye by seasoned veterans.

## The Setup

Remove the jig's eyelet paint covering the hole through which to thread your line. Do so by taking a similar sized jig and scraping the paint with the tip of its hook, removing the base layer of paint. Pushing through the eyelet with the hook, rotate the piercing hook back and forth. Pierce once more from the opposite side, rotating again to thoroughly clean. Tie your line directly to the eyelet of the jig. Use a 1/8 oz jig for smaller profile bait (2-3"), or a 1/4 oz jig for larger profile baits (3-5"). Fluorescent and bright colors are important at depths greater than 20 ft to call in walleye.



## The Bait

Start with a crappie or flathead minnow in the 2-3" range hooking through the lips (closer to the head). A comparable approach would be a leech about 2" when dry and about 3-4" when extended in water. If targeting larger walleyes, jigging a 3-5" golden shiner on a 1/4 oz jig is the correct approach. If live bait is unattainable or you prefer a more advanced approach, review the Artificial Plastics section.



Walleye lures and rigs featured in the Quick Guide can be found in the Tailored Tackle [Walleye Fishing Kit](#)

# Fishing with Jigs

## The Presentation

Similar to the slip bobber rig, your goal is to have the bait presented in a lively manner within the walleye Strike Zone. This zone is roughly 6 in to 2 ft off of the bottom (most often 13-20 Ft depth). If fishing from a boat, you will have more control on depth. Drop your jig until it hits bottom, reel your line in 1-2 cranks so you're right off the bottom. Lift the tip of your rod 1 ft then let the jig drop back down (jigging). Lift and drop every 5 to 10 seconds, keeping your line taught. Cover water with a trolling motor set at .5-.75 mph or allow your boat to drift with the wind and current. If you fishing from shore, dock or an anchored boat, cast your jig and bounce it along the bottom. Make sure to pause 10 seconds after each jig.

## The Bite

Jigging is an aggressive presentation. Walleye will still take the bait through a classic "tap tap," but half the time the walleye will smoke the bait with a straight tug due to the lively presentation of jigging. Allow 2-3 bites for the walleye to take the bait on a tap. If the bite is a hard pull, do your best to keep the line taut, move your rod forward with the fish for a moment, then set the hook.



# Crankbaits

This is your searching mechanism. If you have the luxury of 2 rods it is good to have 1 set up with a crankbait and another with a slip bobber. If you are not sure where to start, you can cover a lot of water with a crank-



bait, then once you find fish, switch over to your slip bobber to key in. Cranks are also a good option if you are fishing from a shore or dock and would like to catch a walleye but are open to multiple species. This technique is most often used for bass and pike, so you are sure to get a mixed bag when casting crankbaits.



## The Setup

Tie a smaller snap swivel directly to your line, open the snap swivel and thread through the crankbait's split ring. Be sure to securely lock the snap back in place. While you can tie your line directly to the split ring, the snap swivel helps prevent your line from catching with treble hooks. Depending on the thickness of your line, a snap swivel lets the crankbait rattle and wobble more effectively.



# Crankbaits

## The Presentation

The most common crankbait technique is driving the lure down a few feet, then pausing to let the crank float back up (“cranking the bait”). This is best performed in shallow water during the evening when walleye move in close. The other approach is a slow and steady retrieve, keeping the crankbait near the Strike Zone as much as possible. You can get the crankbait deeper by adding 3-5 split shots up your line in 1 ft increments. Once you hit the bottom, steadily retrieve, knocking your lure against the ground. If you are fishing in 13-15 ft of water you can also troll the crankbait behind the boat with no additional trolling gear. Let your line out for about 50 ft behind the boat and troll at a pace of 1-1.5 mph. This method can be done from a kayak or paddle boat as 1 mph is a common paddling speed. Trolling at depths deeper than 15 ft requires more advanced trolling gear and methods.

## The Hook Set

With this aggressive approach, you should be setting your hook on the first sense of a bite. Either the walleye has clobbered it or hit the body of the crankbait. You want to do your best to secure the treble hooks in or around the walleye’s mouth. An immediate hook set is the most effective method for both bites. If you miss, crank down a few feet and pause for a re-strike.



# Live Bait Rig

This is a combo approach that allows you to cover a lot of water like jigging, but delivers the finesse presentation credited to the slip bobber approach. Unfortunately, this technique is best served on a boat. All other tactics discussed can be used from shore.

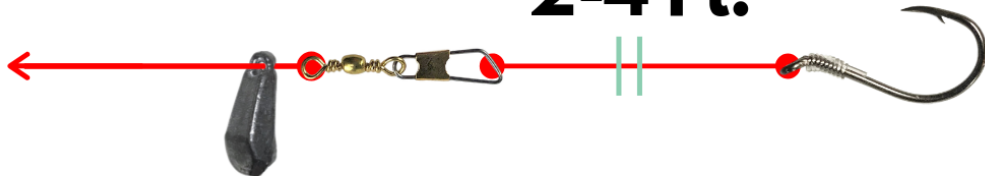
## The Setup

**Minnow Snell:** Thread your line through a 1/4 oz walking weight with the numbered side facing down, away from your rod tip so that the bent foot portion of the weight is arched downward. Tie your line to the barrel of a snap swivel. Open the snap swivel and thread it through the snell loop of a live bait rig.

**Worm Harness:** Snap your worm harness snell onto a 1/2 oz bottom bouncer designed specifically for dragging spinners along the bottom and spinning consistently in the strike zone.

## Minnow Snell

2-4 Ft.



## Bait Type

**Minnow Snell:** With a natural flash, the minnow snell is a monofilament leader with a single octopus hook #4. Most commonly rigged with a crappie or flathead minnow, thread the hook through the lips, enabling a lively presentation. This presentation is delivered by the bait itself, swimming 2-4 ft behind the walking weight dragged along the bottom.

**Worm Harness:** This rig utilizes a blade and beads to add flash to a nightcrawler dragged along the bottom. Worm harness' have two #2 octopus hooks that fully stretch a nightcrawler without risking a missed bite. On the first hook nearest the blade, thread the head of the nightcrawler twice over to secure it. Allow the nightcrawler to stretch out and pierce it once halfway down.

# Live Bait Rig

## The Presentation

**Minnow Snell:** Drifting in appropriate conditions with wind and chop pushing your boat at around 0.5-1 mph is ideal for spinning rigs. A slow drift can also be manufactured by the lower settings of a trolling motor. The slower speed will allow you to cover water while also enabling the live minnow to naturally swim around and above the bottom's debris. Keep your line taut, feeling the walking weight against the floor of the bottom to ensure you are at the appropriate depth.

**Worm Harness:** In order for the blade to consistently spin for flash you will need to troll the bait with a trolling motor at 1-1.5 mph depending on conditions. Always maintain a speed that allows you to tick against the bottom with the bouncer. Keep your line taut, monitoring for taps that differentiate from bottom ticks.

## Worm Harness



## The Hook Set

Both rigs will have a similar bite and hook set. This takes advanced experience as it is often confusing and difficult to differentiate between the weight knocking and pulling against the bottom versus an actual walleye bite. The difference is subtle and called a tap. A tap is an abrupt vibration through the tip of your rod down to the line in your reel. While bottom debris simply thumps and pulls against your rod tip, a tap can be felt in your reel hand as it vibrates through the line.

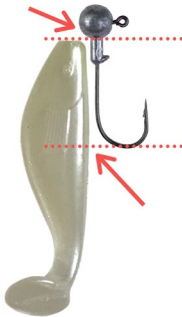
The first tap is often followed by a second tap, the “tap-tap”. When a tap occurs, wait until the second tap. Once the tension peaks, set the hook.

# Artificial Plastics

If you are a beginner, use live bait when targeting walleye. They are finicky and most often need a very finesse, realistic approach. However, we recommend artificial plastics for some common circumstances. Not everyone has immediate access to live bait. Furthermore, some bodies of water have a bountiful amount of distinct species that can pester your live bait approach. Sunfish and perch can often prevent any shot at a walleye. Lastly, some amazing bodies of water have robust walleye populations and utilizing soft plastics can help target the largest, most aggressive fish.

## The Setup

Plastics should be used with jig heads so you can deliver the lure into the Strike Zone. Apply smaller plastics (3-4") to a 1/8 oz jig. Apply larger plastics (4-5") to a 1/4 oz jig. Pierce the plastic from the base of the head, threading the body of the plastic until the head reaches the base of the jig. Lastly, pierce the hook back out through the plastic so that it lays horizontal with the jig head and the hook's gap is exposed. Tie directly to your monofilament or fluorocarbon line.



## The Presentation

To give the soft plastic lively action, you need to cast and retrieve the jig. Finding the correct cadence and speed is challenging. Try a variation of approaches while keeping the jig in the Strike Zone (6 in to 1 ft off the bottom). Let your bait down to the bottom, then with a slow and steady speed, retrieve it by ticking against the bottom. Alternatively, you can jig it in 1-3 ft bounces like a live bait. For this approach, lessen your pause time as swooping action requires less down time.



# Artificial Plastics

## The Hook Set

Soft plastics are used to target the more aggressively feeding fish. Set the hook immediately on big thumps and any double taps. If you get a hit and it doesn't stick, do not stop your previous cadence. The artificial will not look appealing if you stop because you are creating the lifelike action through jiggging and momentum. You will land more fish continuing the presentation even if you lose some after the first bite.



A medium power fast action rod is important for monitoring the subtle bites of Walleye. Start with a rod & reel rated for walleye fishing like the Tailored Tackle [Multispecies Combo](#).

## Landing & Handling

Walleye are a deeper fish species so handling with care is important. Only fish for walleye deeper than 40 ft if you are planning to keep your catch, otherwise they will likely not resuscitate. While netting your fish, keep them submerged, using the net as a corral. Remove the lure while the walleye is in the water. Try your best to only keep them out of the water for 30 seconds to take photos. Do not put your thumb or fingers in the walleye's mouth, they have razor sharp teeth. Hold them by the handle outside their gill or by cupping under their belly. To release, submerge with your right hand under the belly, using your left hand to sway their tail until they kick off on their own.

