

## Of The Outdoors

# How You Set A Hook Makes A Difference

**BY GARY HOWEY**  
Hartington, Neb.

If I've heard it once, I've heard it a hundred times, you know, the old cliché, "fishing is one jerk on the end of the line patiently waiting for a jerk on the other end of his line."

There is a bit of truth to that statement because, not jerking or setting the hook properly, will give us a lot of practice at setting the hook and not much actual catching, making us feel like jerks when we keep missing the fish.

It's an every day occurrence, we feel a tug or extra weight on the end of our line and we instantly jerk back, which at times works out well and other times doesn't!

There's a big difference as far as when and how to set the hook, depending



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on what you're fishing for, what action rod is and what type line your spooled up with.

Since it's fish we're after, lets look at it from their perspective.

He's just lying around on or near the bottom when along comes a tasty looking morsel, in this case a jig with a minnow. The fish slowly works his way over to our bait, flairs his gills, sucking the bait in, only to have it ripped out of the side of his mouth.

What went wrong, we had the fish where we wanted him, with his

mouth around our bait and all we had to do was to give it a jerk and we had him.

To begin with the best place to hook a fish is in the top of its mouth, in the bony part, not in the side where there's very little bone and a whole lot of soft skin.

When setting the hook, it's best to pull straight up, giving you a better chance at penetrating the top of the mouth. If you pull to the side you're more apt to pull the hook away from the fish or hook them in the soft tissue in the side of the mouth where it can easily shake or tear loose.

If we're using a Lindy live bait rig or jig and feel a fish pick it up, our best bet to get a good hook set is to:

- Reel up any slack line as we bring the rod down towards the water, which will eliminate any bow or slack in our line.

- With all the slack out of our line we want to feel if there is any resistance on the line, which hopeful-

ly will be the weight of the fish.

- Then bring the rod tip straight up not off to the side, forcing the hook into the top of the fish's mouth.

By reeling up the slack line, we're removing the bow or slack in our line, shortening the distance between the end of our rod and the hook, which allow us to drive our hook home with less effort and more power.

This is especially important when using monofilament line because mono has a tremendous amount of stretch. To set the hook using mono, not only do we have to use enough force to penetrate the hard, boney surface of the fish's mouth, we also have to pull hard enough to make up for the stretch in the line.

If we're using one of the super lines like Fireline and Spider Wire, it's a whole different story.

To get the inside scoop on these super lines and how to fish them different,

I talked with the folks at Berkley, the manufacturers of both Fireline and Spider Wire.

According to the experts at the plant in Spirit Lake, IA, "we're going to have to fish super lines much differently than we'd fish mono since super lines have no stretch."

If we'd fish Fireline or Spider Wire the same way we'd fish mono, we're going to end up pulling the bait away from or tear it out of the fish's mouth."

For walleye fishing, they recommend a rod with a fast, limber tip as this takes the place of the stretch in the mono, giving you a little give when you set the hook.

"When fishing for Bass, Pike and Muskie, we're going to want to go to a moderate action rod which not only gives us a little give when you set the hook into those hard hitting, hard charging fish. The heavier rod will have enough backbone to drive the hook home and be able to bring them to the boat."

This is especially true in current as you need to be quick with your hook set, but not so quick that you rip the bait from the fish."

If you're fishing super lines in shallow water, they suggest that we go with a Medium Light rod.

In medium depths a Medium rods will work well and when we're fishing water deeper than 25' he'd they recommend a Medium Heavy rod."

With super lines, basically, we want the rod do the hook setting for us.

What we need to remember in order to become a more consistent catcher and not just a jerker is to make sure once we feel a bite, that we take up all the slack line, bringing our rod tip straight up when we set the hook.

If we set the hook by pulling to the side, more times than not, we'll pull the bait away from the fish or tear the hook through the soft tissue on the side of the fish's mouth.

By keeping a tight line, we're going to detect more bites and by setting the hook by bringing our rod straight up, you won't believe how much your fish hooking ability will improve.

*Gary Howey, Hartington, Neb., is a former tournament fishermen, hunting and fishing guide and the producer/Host of the syndicated outdoor television series Outdoorsmen Adventures. You can contact him by E-mail at [outdoorsmenproductions@hartel.net](mailto:outdoorsmenproductions@hartel.net).*

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