

## Slip Sinker Tactics For Summer Walleyes by Mike Gofron

Classic slip-sinker rigging continues to be the best approach in the summertime, especially when fishing is difficult. Terminal tackle for a live bait rig usually includes a walking sinker threaded onto the line on top of a barrel swivel. Keep the sinker weight as light as possible, yet heavy enough to let you feel the weight along the bottom. Usually 1/4 to 1/2 ounce sinkers should be adequate for fishing.

From the opposite end of the swivel run a 2 to 4 foot snell of 6 to 8 pound test monofilament. Adjust the distance of your live-bait rig from the bottom according to water clarity. In stained water the fish will be tight to the bottom so the rig should run closer to the bottom. Just the opposite frequently holds true in clear water.

Live-bait rigs are effective for several reasons. One of those is that they allow an angler to present a bait to the walleyes in a very natural, life-like manner. The bare-bones rig is nothing more than a hook, snell and sinker. In some circumstances a colored bead can be added like a Stealth Rig, with an adjustable sinker or a spinner, or a float which makes the bait ride higher off the bottom.



I prefer to use the walking sinker in this case because it allows me the versatility of getting the live bait right in the face of suspended walleyes. A plain hook, or the new colored hooks are great, usually number 6 or number 8 finishes off the rig except for the bait.

Let the fish show you which form of live bait to use. A general rule of thumb is to use smaller minnows in the spring and larger minnows in the fall, with leeches and night-crawlers being most productive in the warmer months of summer. However, I've found that walleyes don't always adhere to the rules. I like to have a complete selection of bait in the boat with me whenever I go fishing. I've had plenty of experiences that saw mid-summer walleyes attacking minnows and early spring walleyes showing a preference to crawlers.



Walleyes often take minnows lightly, and will sometimes nibble at the tail of the night crawler like a small perch does. These slow biters have to be given time to get the bait into their mouths so that the hook can do its job.

That's the reason for the slip-sinker, it allows you to feed line to the fish. Most anglers use an open-face spinning reel for live bait rigging. They back-troll, with the bail open and the line caught under the index finger of their rod hand. When they feel a bite, they simultaneously point the rod tip back toward the fish and straighten their finger, allowing line to run freely off the spool. After anywhere from 3 to 30 seconds depending on how aggressive the fish are they reel up the slack line quickly until they feel the weight of the fish. They then snap the rod back with authority and hoist another walleye into the boat.

As much as I like to eat walleyes, I like to catch them even more. Walleyes are susceptible to a variety of lure presentations. They'll take jigs, crank-baits, in-line spinners, and plastic baits. But when the walleyes turn fussy, there's nothing I like better than a live-bait rig. Live-bait rigs will take walleyes when nothing else will at times, and they're easy to use.

This summer when the weather heats up and the fishing turns off select some slip-sinker rigs and hit the lakes you will be glad that you did.