

BEGINNERS GUIDE TO COARSE FISHING



DDAS JUNIORS

Everything you need to
know to get started



INTRODUCTION

- Basic information to help you start fishing
- Choosing the right tackle
- Advice on starter set up
- How to decide what bait to use and how to look after it

Welcome to the Dorchester and District Angling Society's beginners guide to coarse fishing.

Throughout this booklet I will cover some of the basic information that will help new starters on their way to fishing more independently.

We will look at what to buy for your first rods and reels, how to choose and set up your equipment, which bait to use and how to look after it.

As you spend more time fishing, you will meet more experienced anglers most of whom will be more than happy to pass on their experience to younger anglers. They will all have their own ways of doing different things and it will be up to you to decide what works best for you.

This booklet is no different. It is just a collection of tips and thoughts gathered over the years.

I hope that it will be of help to you as you start your own fishing journey.

Graham Howard

Junior Secretary

Dorchester & District Angling Society

CONTENTS

Section One

**Guide to fishing with
a rod and reel**

Section Two

**Fishing with a pole
a beginners guide**

Section Three

**A beginners guide to
successful Carp
fishing**

Section Four

**A guide to fishing on
DDAS rivers**

**Fishing
is not
just a
sport.**

**It is a
way of
life.**

SECTION ONE



COARSE FISHING

- Selecting the right rod and reel
- What floats, weights, feeders and hooks to use
- Bait, accessories and other equipment

WHY DO WE FISH?

There are so many reasons to go fishing. The fresh air and the love of the outdoors. To be close to nature and experience things that would not see otherwise. Maybe you like to be out fishing with mates or meeting different people. Some anglers like to be alone with their fishing and actively seek solitude away from others. Maybe it's a thrill to be competing in matches or maybe it doesn't matter if you catch anything or not. We all have one thing in common. The love of the sport. Most anglers can remember their first fish. It's a special one and there will never be another. For some it comes early, before school age. For others it comes later through friends or family. Once you have been fishing and caught the bug, you might just be an angler for life. There is a therapy in fishing too. Angling has been scientifically proven to reduce stress, anxiety, and help ADHD. To calm a troubled soul and help mend a broken mind. Mental illness like depression and PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) have shown to be greatly eased during and after fishing. Whatever your reason for going, one of them has to be for the enjoyment of it. It has to be fun.

For me, the greatest part of fishing is the social side. Once you are an angler, you become one of a club of millions of people. All with one thing in common. Fishing. The people you meet on the lakes and rivers, may become friends and some will become friends for life.

HEALTH AND SAFETY WHEN FISHING.

For fishing to be fun, it has to be safe. There are things you can do to make fishing safe for you and for others. Obviously you will be fishing near water. Water doesn't have to be deep to be dangerous, particularly when it's cold. Be mindful of where the waters edge is at all times, even when your mind is on other things. The water itself can be harmful with diseases like 'Weils disease' which comes from rats, and there's usually plenty of those! Weils disease can be prevented by washing or cleaning your hands before you eat anything.

If you have to use medication, then make sure you have it with you or that you have taken it before you leave. Things like epilepsy and diabetes can be disastrous next to water. Always tell someone where you are going. You need to make sure that someone knows where you are just in case.

If you are new to DDAS juniors then the others will tell you that one of our unwritten rules is DON'T RUN! Running can cause tripping and accidents. Fishing tackle can get very expensive too and if you're running and tread on a rod or pole section, you won't be very popular.

In the sunshine, you might wear sunglasses. This is a good thing because your eyes are protected against flying hooks, floats, weights etc. Sunglasses are not always needed in poor light conditions, so wearing a hat is the next best thing. A peaked cap can help protect your face and help you concentrate better too. We all get caught up in trees and bushes from time to time and it's really frustrating. But the worst thing you can do is pull it free in a temper. Doing that is a recipe for a trip to a hospital. If you can always, and I mean always, get an adult to help you.

RULES TO FOLLOW WHEN YOU GO FISHING

Rules are there for all of us to follow and there's nothing clever about not doing so. As juniors, you won't need a rod licence until you turn 13. Rod licences are available from Post Offices or from the Environment Agency online and they are absolutely free. Over 16 and you'll have to pay as an adult, £30. Please follow the licence rules, unless you have a spare £2500 if you get caught without one. You have been warned. Fisheries and clubs have their own rules which you must make sure you are familiar with before you go fishing. Particularly if it's a venue you've not been to before. Club rules are laid out for you in the club book and must be followed at all times.

ANGLING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

As an angler you have a responsibility for yourself, the safety of those around you, the fish you catch and for the environment in which you are fishing. We can all play our part by picking any litter you may find, even if it isn't yours. Don't forget, litter isn't always left or dropped. It can blow away easily on windy days. Removing rubbish that you see, not only makes for pleasant surroundings, but gives wildlife a safe habitat in which to live. The worst litter to leave behind for so many reasons is fishing litter. Nothing will damage angling more than thoughtlessly discarded line, weights and, worst still, hooks. Pick it up and take it home. The same goes for unwanted bait. Take it home when you can.

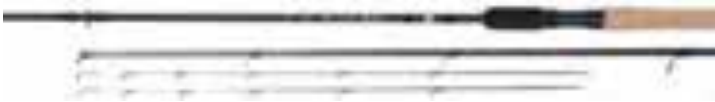
RODS AND REELS

I could write an entire book on it's own if I were to cover every kind of rod that is available, so I'm going to keep it simple as possible. There are really only two types of rod that you will need to consider and the first of those is a float rod.



FLOAT ROD -

For your first float rod, you won't really go far wrong by buying a Pellet Waggler rod. Usually between 10ft and 12ft long (3.0 to 3.6 metres), Pellet Waggler rods are designed for fishing shallow for Carp but, they are just soft enough to be usable for general coarse fishing. Personally I prefer the 11ft (3.3 metre) version but, for smaller anglers I would recommend a 10ft rod because they will be easier to handle.



FEEDER ROD -

Short and fairly powerful with a nice 'through' action and a sensitive tip. The tips have a brightly coloured section which is used to identify bites, because we don't use a float indicator. The standard length for a Feeder rod is around 10ft (3.0m) but again, for smaller anglers, I would recommend a 9ft (2.7m) rod. With the added weight of the feeder, longer rods can be a handful. But the shorter rod will make it easier and feel super light in smaller hands. Most Feeder rods come with a choice of tips like the one pictured which has a choice of two, a light and heavy tip. I would start with the lighter or softest one of the two. If your rod has three tips, go for the middle one. The reason for these options is because they are likely to be about a rating of 2ozs (50g). This is how

much weight it takes to bend the tip to 90 degrees called the 'Test Curve'. The test curve applies to all rods to rate how stiff or soft they are.



ROD PROTECTION -

Once you have bought your nice shiny new rods, you are going to want to look after them. The best way by far is to put them in a Ready Rod Holdall (Above). These made from a rigid material and some have pockets and Velcro straps that will hold your rods secure during transportation. Ready Rod Holdalls will take anything from one up to four or even six rods, depending on which one you get. The best thing about a Ready Rod Holdall is that you can take your rods assembled and ready to fish with floats, feeders and hooks, even bait, all attached and set up at home before your session. You can take all the time you need to get your rods perfectly right and make more time for fishing.

You don't have to pay the earth for a Ready Rod Bag either. They tend to start at around £35 and will be worth their weight in gold once you start filling them with expensive rods and reels.

So, you've got your nice sparkly new rods but, there's still something missing.

Reels.

Let's take a look at some reels in the next section.

WHICH REEL? -

Like rods, there are countless different types. But fortunately we only need to look at two sizes. Reels are graded from 1000 up to 14000. The reels that will be of most use to us at the start are, a 3000 size for float fishing and a 4000 size for the feeder.

3000 for the Float Rod because they are smaller, lighter and only hold about 100 metres of line. You won't be casting anywhere near as far with a float, so you will only need about 3 or 4lb breaking strain* line which is easy to sink and takes up less room on the spool.

4000 for the Feeder Rod as it is bigger to hold more line, around 8lb breaking strain*. Line doesn't need to be as light as for a float reel either. Most of the time you won't be actually holding it to fish with. Some Feeder reels have a slightly slower 'Gear Ratio' (which I will cover in the next section) and so generate more power when you turn the handle. Even empty, a feeder weighs much more than a float. So you will need some extra power to reel in with.

* Breaking Strain of line is rated by how much weight the line can lift before it snaps. It is important to know that the measurement is taken at the knot and not from the line itself. Knots weaken line no matter how carefully you tie them. Most decent lines are way under rated to give you a true rating of when it will break. In recent years, match anglers in particular, have become obsessed with line diameter. So much so that it sounds like a different language! 0.17 this and 0.07 that. Stick to breaking strains until you become more experienced.

Now we know what size of reel we need, we have another choice to make.

Front or Rear Drag?

The Drag or 'Clutch' is a system on the reel that controls the amount of line that can be pulled off by a large fish. Fishing line can handle much larger fish than its breaking strain rating, but only if it's helped by setting the drag so that the

spool turns on the reel before the line snaps.

Personally, I prefer a front drag reel for both sizes. I believe that front drag reels give a smoother pressure on the spool because the drag works on the spool itself rather than through the drive shaft inside the reel. I like to set my drag so the spool gently 'ticks' as I'm playing a fish. If the spool is turning when a fish lunges, then it gives a smoother release of line.

Rear Drag reels do have one advantage over Front Drag reels however in that, you have to completely undo the drag adjuster to get the spool offing drag. Rear Drags have a button on the spool that simply pops the spool off, leaving the drag settings undisturbed. Rear Drag reels have come a long way in recent years, but I'll stick with Front Drag for now.

I would recommend going to the upper limit of your budget, whatever that is, for both rods and reels. You can buy cheap items and they might work for you. But experience has shown me that quality comes at a price and paying a bit more pays off.

Personally, for rods I use Drennan, Daiwa, Maver and Preston Innovations. For reels, I generally look no further than Shimano or Daiwa, sometimes Preston. All of which have lasted for years and stood up to some real punishment too.

My rods and reels (Right), From the back, a 7ft Wandzee rod and Inertia reel from Preston, two Team Daiwa Feeder rods both with Shimano Aero reels and finally a Maver Powerlite Pellet Waggler Rod also with a Shimano Aero reel.





1. The FOOT. The part of the reel that is used to attach it to the rod handle.
2. The STEM. An angled leg that holds the reel in a balanced position and at a fixed distance from the rod.
3. The BODY. A water tight casing that holds the inner workings of the reel. Sometimes weighted to act as a counter balance to the rod.
4. The ROTOR. Usually a carefully designed and highly engineered part of the reel. Time and money is invested on the rotor because, when the reel is in use, it can spin at a tremendous speed. If the rotor has been poorly designed and is out of balance, the reel will wobble and shake making it horrible to use.
5. The SPOOL. There is a wide variety of spools from deep, long cast types, designed to hold hundreds of metres of line. To shallow match spools holding only 100 metres. Somewhere on the lower edge of the spool is a line clip, very useful for limiting the cast when you're fishing to an island, bushes or reeds etc.
6. The BAIL ARM. Opened to release the line on the cast, closed for reeling in. Also contains a line roller that stops line twisting and getting damaged in use.
7. The CLUTCH or DRAG. An adjustment for the pressure on the spool. The setting is dependent on the strength of line you're using and needs to be thought about carefully. Too tight and the line will snap. Too loose and you will have no control over where the fish goes.
8. The ANTI REVERSE. Turned on and the handle only turns one way, off and it's free to turn either way. But be warned, turning it off can lead to some tangles if you're not careful. I would advise, at the beginning, leave it on!
9. The HANDLE. How you make the reel work. Some reels have double handle for balance, but most have a single handle. The gears inside the reel are machined so that one turn of the handle will make the rotor turn from 3.5 to 6.1 times. This is called the 'Gear Ratio'. It will be marked like this **1:6.1**. So one turn of the handle makes the rotor turn 6.1 times. This is a fairly fast reel for float fishing. Feeder reels may be slightly slower to generate more power.

Other types of reel are;



FREE SPOOL REELS -
Mainly used for Carp or specimen fishing and have a small lever at the back of the stem or body. In the open position, the spool is allowed to spin freely which allows line to be taken by running fish. The free spool is closed by simply winding the reel handle or operating the lever by hand. This will lock the spool and re-engage the drag.



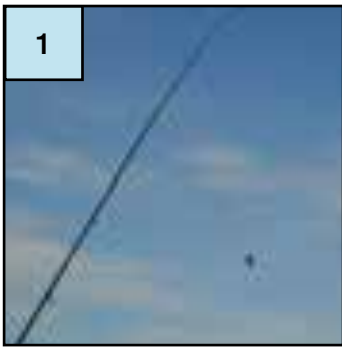
CLOSED FACE REELS -
Lovely to use on running water as there is no bail arm to operate, just a small pin inside the spool casing to pick the line up. Press the large button on the front to cast out and turn the handle to re-engage the pin and reel in. Not so often seen nowadays, but a joy to use particularly on rivers.



CENTRE PIN REELS -
Centre pin design comes from the mists of angling history. A purists reel that few anglers possess except for those that like to 'trot' on a river. Perfectly balanced and smooth running, the pull of the rivers current on float will be enough to slowly pull line from the reel.

EIGHT STEPS TO CASTING -

Before we look at rods and reels, let's look at the technique of casting. To start with, try to get it out of your mind that you need to cast a hundred metres or to that island or that tree. Spend some time doing lazy, soft casts that will help you practice your casting style. After all, if you cast a long way, you will spend more time reeling in than actually casting. People new to angling tend to rush at it and end up breaking line or even rods. Take your time, slow down and think about what you are doing. These eight steps to casting will help you to form a check list in your head that you will run through each time you cast out.



1. CHECK THE DROP - The distance between the weight and your rod tip should be about half a rod length
2. CHECK THE LINE - Give the line a pull to make it is free running and not jammed. This prevents breakages.
3. GATHER THE LINE - Pick up the line with your finger.
4. OPEN THE BAIL ARM - Open the bail arm with your free hand.



5. CHECK BEHIND YOU! - It is important that you cast safely. Make sure you have a clear space to cast in.
6. POSITION THE ROD - Move the rod into the 'two o'clock' position with your free hand at the bottom of the handle.
7. TAKE AIM - Use your left hand to guide the direction of the cast and allow the weight to settle behind you.
8. CAST OUT - Push with your reel hand and pull with your handle hand. Practicing line release is key to a good cast.



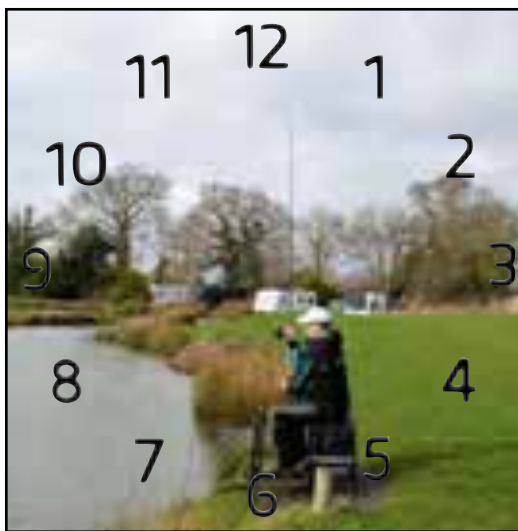
ROD READY - The rod is ready to cast at roughly the 1 to 2 o'clock position depending on the power you need to each your chosen fishing area.



ROD LOADED/RELEASE - The rod is now bent or 'loaded' and the cast has started. Pushing with the reel hand and pulling with the other. When you release the line will depend on how far you need to cast.



FOLLOW THROUGH - After you have released the line, the rod will naturally straighten out, propelling the weight forwards. Stop the rod at roughly 9 o'clock to allow the line to peel out easily.



LIFT TO CLIP - If you are using a line clip you will need to lift the rod to meet the line clip on the reel. As soon as you release the line, lift the rod quickly to roughly the 12 to 1 o'clock position and hold it there.



HITTING THE LINE CLIP - As soon as you hear and feel the line tighten, the weight will pull on the rod. You need to hold the rod with gentle hands and almost let the rod be pulled forward by the weight.



FOLLOW DOWN OR 'FEATHER' - Once the clip is hit, try to keep a tight line and slow the weight down so it lands in the water with a gentle 'plop' rather than a big splash. Feathering the cast like this is like putting the brakes on the weight. I try to bring the rod forward to which ever side I have my rod rest positioned.

PATIENCE - With all styles of casting, take your time in the beginning, be patient because the rewards in the long run will be much better than if you rush at it. I would rather take the time to get my casting accurate, than thrashing around just trying to get my bait in to the water.

UNDER ARM CAST - For short range casting close to you, a simple under arm swing to the spot you want to target.

POWER - More for float fishing this one. If you find yourself thrashing your rod to get your float to where you want it and making a huge swishing sound when you cast, then your float is too light and you need to fit a heavier one.

EFFORT - With the venues that we go to, there should never be a time where you have to really force a cast with power. Even Todber Manor that, in my mind has the longest distance to cover, does not require that much effort to reach your target.

Casting as much about balanced tackle as it is about technique.

FLOATS

Fishing floats come in an almost countless number of patterns, shapes & materials. To make life a little easier for ourselves, we will cover only the floats that may be useful to us on the fisheries we are likely to visit when are starting out. Fortunately for us, they can all be grouped into just one family. Wagglers.

Wagglers are so called because they are attached bottom end only, unlike other floats which are attached top and bottom and, therefore, wobble around on the line. Common types of material wagglers are made from include quills (mainly Peacock feathers), balsa for thicker tips, and plastic. Other more traditional materials to be found are, cork, Sarcandas reed & Porcupine quills. Largely unused these days, particularly the last one, as Porcupines are now protected.

Wagglers come in two types, loaded & unloaded. Meaning that loaded floats are manufactured with most of the weight it takes to set or 'Cock' them correctly is built in. Unloaded floats require all of the weight to be fixed to the line, eg: Split Shot.

It can be quite easy to have one or two of your favourite floats that seem to catch you everything but, by carefully selecting which float you use, you can really make a big difference.

Considerations like weather and light conditions, target species and your choice of bait all have an impact.

The first lesson to learn about floats is that they tell lies!

The information written on them, if at all, is sometimes far from accurate. The best way to see if you have an honest float is to test it at home first. With the wide use of Ready Rod Holdalls, setting up on the waters edge is largely unnecessary. You can take all the time you need at home to get your tackle set up perfect.

Personally, my starting point for Waggler fishing is a float of around 2AA for an

unloaded float or 1.2 to 1.5 grams for a loaded float. I can go lighter or heavier from there.

Sometimes the little things can make a big difference. Here are a couple of little things that are well worth knowing.



The first is a Silicone Float Adapter (Above Left). Made from silicone tubes with one end flattened and a hole drilled through it. Normally you would thread the line through the eye at the end of the float, but you thread it through the adapter instead and then push the float into the adapter. If you wish to change your float for whatever reason, you can do it easily because the line is not threaded through the float. I will only use these adapters for unloaded floats. For loaded floats I will use a rounded Snap or Link Swivel. It works the same way as an adapter but allows for more movement and lets the float 'fold' on the strike for less resistance.

VISION OVER PERFORMANCE

The whole point of a float is to indicate to the angler a bite from a fish below. If you have a lot of float sticking out of the water, will be able to see it much better but, the more float you have sticking out of the water, the more buoyant it is, and the harder it is to pull it under. Therefore, have as little of the float showing as you can, as long as you can still see it.

TYPES OF FLOATS

I mentioned at the beginning that we will cover the floats you may need to know about to start with.

Let's take a look at them.



STRAIGHT WAGGLER

A simple float that best suits a larger, heavier bait such as Sweetcorn, Meat or Worms. Because they have a thicker diameter, they can be fished over depth to lay line on or drag line over the bottom of the lake or river.



INSERT WAGGLER

Similar in design to that of a straight waggler only with a thinner piece of cane, quill, balsa or plastic glued into the top. On some floats the tips are removable to allow you to change the colour in different light conditions. The main advantage though is the increased sensitivity that a thinner tip provides. Perfect for those shy biting fish.



STEPPED WAGGLER

Wagglers with two or more inserts. As with the standard insert Waggler, each step makes the float a little bit more sensitive. Not that often seen these days but useful if you can find some. Used mainly for large, deep stillwaters.



BODIED STRAIGHT WAGGLER

A straight Waggler with a bulb or body made traditionally from cork, but lately from balsa or high density foam. The body sits below the surface making the float very stable in windy conditions.



BODIED INSERT WAGGLER

Combining all of the qualities of an insert float with that of a bodied Waggler.



LOADED VISI WAGGLER

All of the floats we have looked at are available as loaded floats, but one of the best I have found is the Visi Waggler. A long coloured bristle shows each of the dropper shots as it settles and will easily show bites on the drop.



PELLET WAGGLER

Short, thick, stumpy floats that are usually loaded. Much heavier than a standard Waggler, weighing in at anything from 3 to 12 grams. At the base of the float there may be a disc (which can sometimes be removed) or a raised ridge or ridges, which will make more of a splash to attract fish and also stop the float from diving too deep when it lands, therefore scaring shallow feeding fish.



**STRAIGHT
WAGGLER**



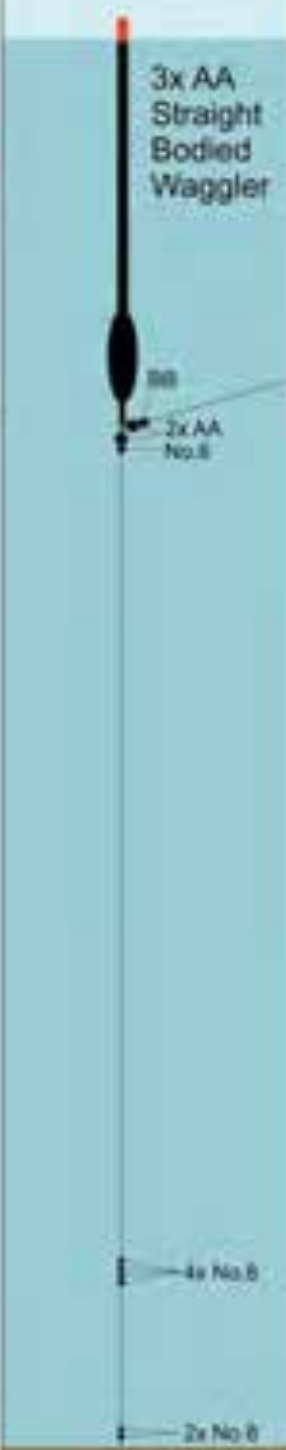
**INSERT
WAGGLER**



**VISI
WAGGLER**



**BODIED
STRAIGHT
WAGGLER**



**BODIED
INSERT
WAGGLER**



**'LAYING ON'
WITH A
STRAIGHT
WAGGLER**

**PELLET
WAGGLER**

3AA Straight Wagglers
fished 1 to 2ft
30 to 60cm
over depth

3 to 6 Gram
Pellet Wagglers

Quick
Release
Link Swivel

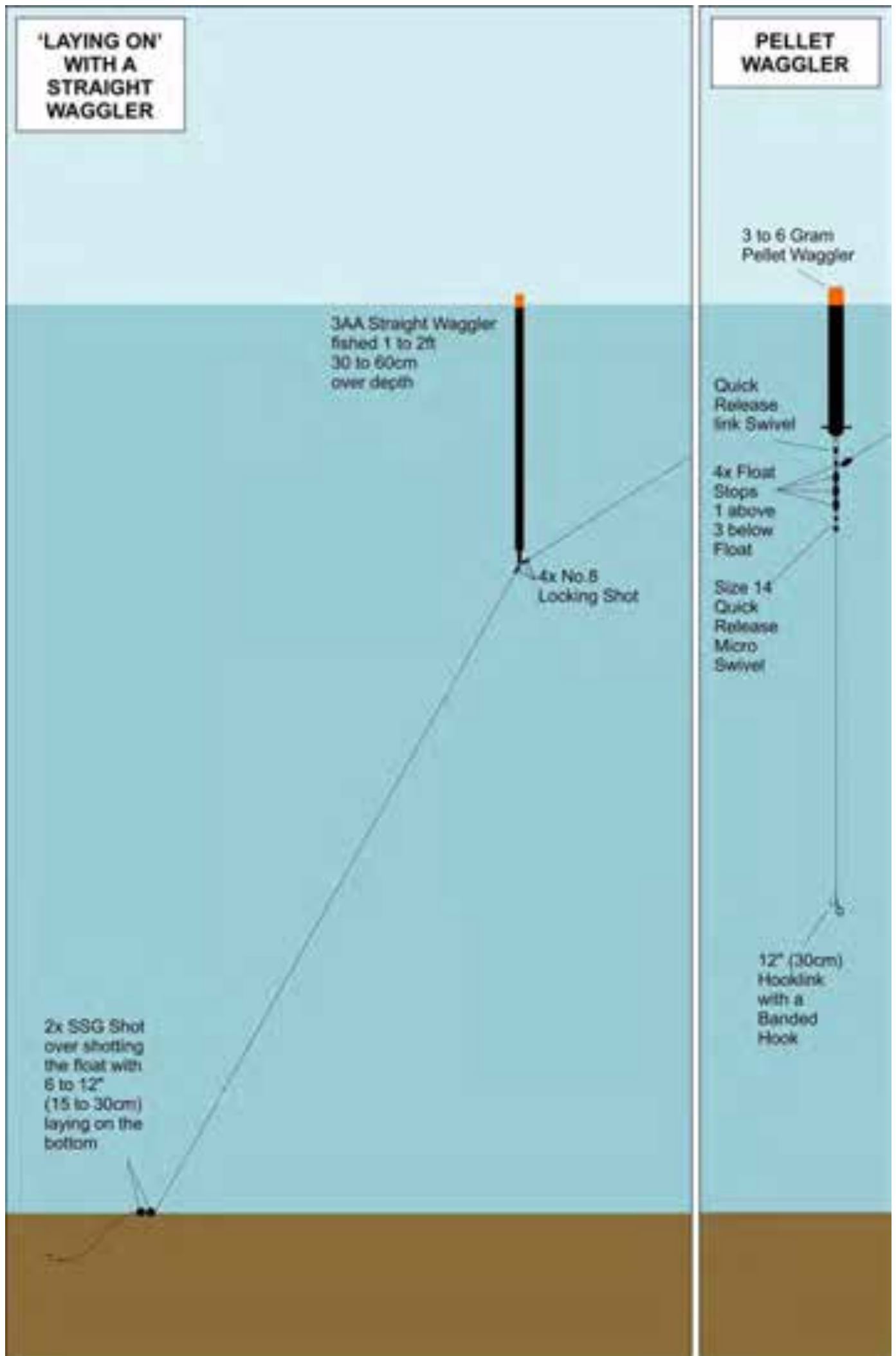
4x No.8
Locking Shot

4x Float
Stops
1 above
3 below
Float

Size 14
Quick
Release
Micro
Swivel

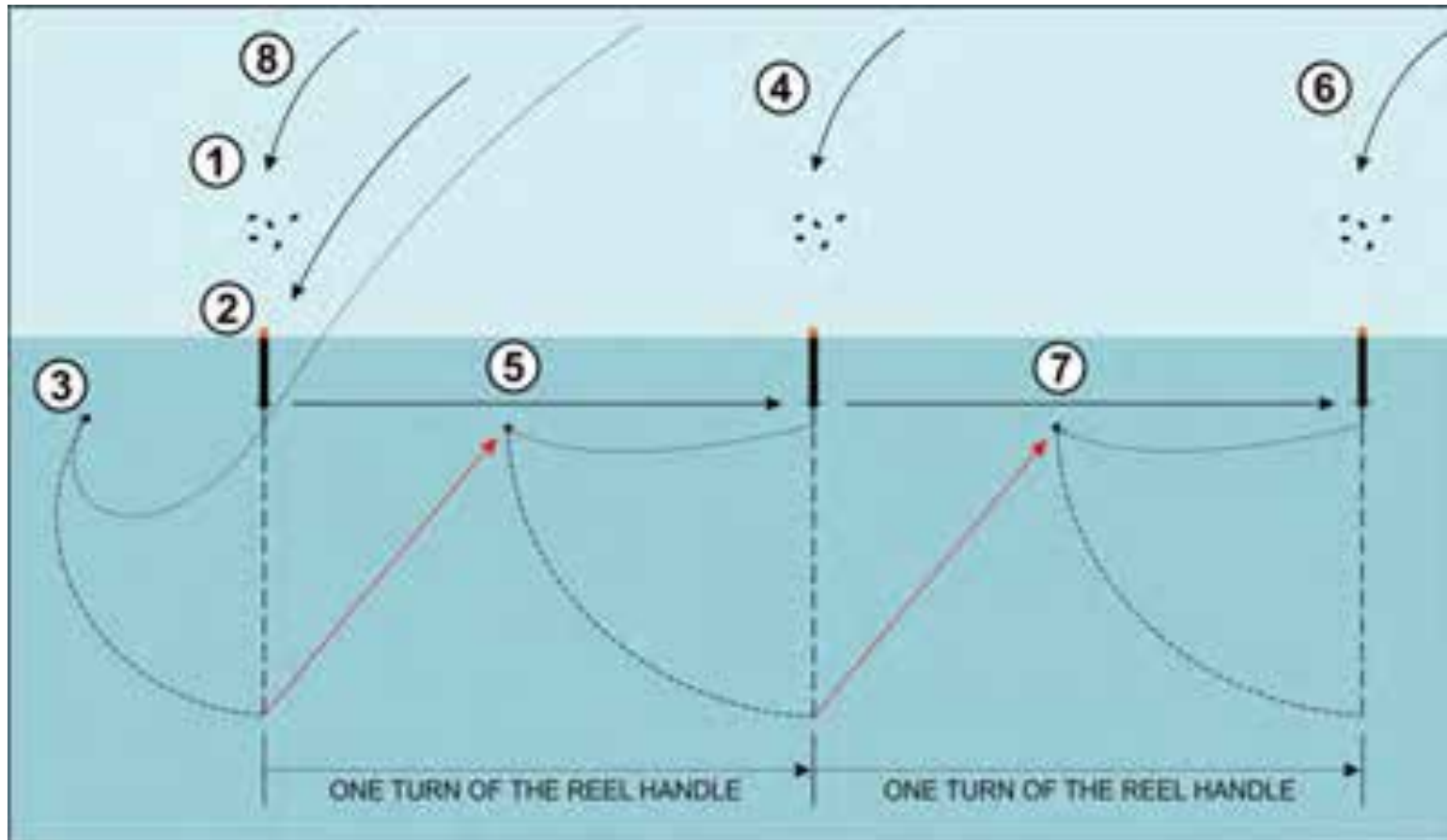
2x SSG Shot
over shooting
the float with
6 to 12"
(15 to 30cm)
laying on the
bottom

12" (30cm)
Hooklink
with a
Banded
Hook



FISHING THE PELLET WAGGLER - Pellet Wagglers is one of those methods that is quite seasonal and dependent on the fish. If you think the fish feeding shallow or you can start to pre-feed or 'Prime' the swim. If they aren't in the mood, the fish will let you know by ignoring the pellets or disappearing completely. However, if they are in the mood, they may start to splash and 'boil' in the area you are feeding. Keep firing pellets out until you're confident they are 'committed to the feed' and literally fighting each other for each one.

Be warned. When large carp are feeding like this, the bites can be instant and violent. You may not even see the float after it's hit the water, and the rod will be already bending. It is important to hold your rod or at least keep it very close to hand. Rods and reels can disappear in an instant!



Step 1. Fire out some pellets to the far side of the feed zone you have been feeding or priming.

Step 2. Cast out to where you just fed and click the bail arm over as soon as the float lands.

Step 3. The hookbait will start to slowly fall through the water, following the feed down.

Step 4. Keeping an eye on your float, put some more pellets in the catapult and fire them out one metre short of where the float is.

Step 5. Twitch the rod or turn the handle of the reel once, so the float moves into the new feed area, lifting the pellet and starting the falling process over again.

Step 6. Back to Step 4 and time to pick up the catapult again. Keep watching that float as you fire some more pellets, again, one metre short of the float.

Step 7. As before, twitch or wind your float into the new feed zone, again lifting the bait so it falls with the new feed introduced.

Step 8. Feed long again as you wind in to start the whole process over again.

From step one to eight should take less than one minute. It's busy. It's active and, if you get into a rhythm, can really be productive on the right day.

WEIGHTS & SPLIT SHOT

Split shot as we know it today originally came from shotgun cartridges. Anglers would carefully cut a slot into tiny lead balls and use them on the line for fishing. Using lead however wasn't as kind to birds and animals. It was banned some years ago because of lead poisoning. We do still use lead shots, but only in the smaller 'dust shot' sizes and large weights over 2ozs (50 grams).

The grading of split shot is a tricky to get your head around at first, but the more you think about and use shot, the easier it will seem. The three biggest main shot sizes are in letters from SSG, AA (or sometimes AAA, they are the same) and BB. The rest start at No.1 as the biggest and go 'down' to a No.13 as the smallest. So as the the numbers get bigger, the shots get smaller.

In the days of lead shot, the larger sizes were sometimes a real pain to use. If you squeezed them on too hard they would damage or even cut the line. If you wanted to move them, it could be disastrous. But now with more modern materials, shots can be squeezed on quite firmly and easily opened and moved with a thumb nail if need be. You still have to be a little bit careful how you do it but, the job is much safer nowadays.



The size of the shot is designed so that they can be converted down to smaller sizes. For example, one AA shot is

equivalent to two BB shots and so on. As you can see from the chart below, some of the numbers don't add up in conversion. But in the interest of a simple life, fractions of a gram really are not going to make that much difference. When you using pole floats with very fine bristles you will need to know your shot conversions in order to finely balance these delicate floats.

SHOT	WEIGHT	SHOT EQUIVALENT
SSG	1.6 g	2 x AA
AA or AAA	0.8 g	2 x BB
BB	0.4g	2 x No.4
No.4	0.2g	2 x No.6
No.6	0.1g	2 x No.8
No.8	0.06	2 x No.10
No.9	0.05	
No.10	0.04	2 x No.12
No.11	0.03	
No.12	0.02	2 x No.13
No.13	0.01	

The conversion chart works the same for both regular split shot and Stotz.

TOP TIP: When you using larger split shot, No.6 and above, try to keep the slots or splits facing in the same direction. Doing this will stop the line from spinning when you wind in and reduce line twist. It sounds fussy, but it works.



STOTZ -
Revolutionary weights that have really changed modern fishing for the better. With the rise of Commercial fisheries with much larger fish as the target, anglers were needing to step up their line diameters to cope. Normal split shot in the smaller sizes is fine until you use heavier line. They start to 'ping off' when a fish is being played and you find yourself constantly checking that everything is still where it should be.

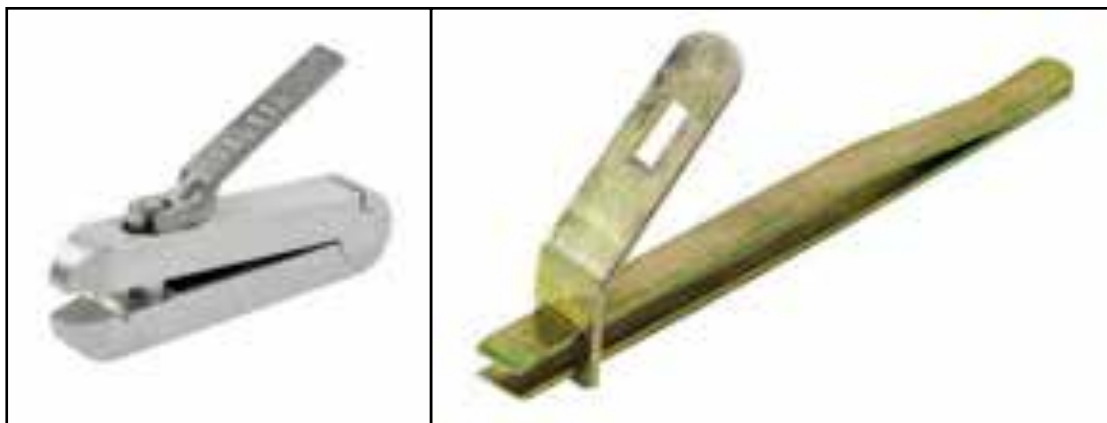
Because Stotz are a square shape, the slot in them is longer and deeper. They grip the line much better and stay put under stress. They do tend to slip up and down the line, but at least they're still on there. It only takes a second to move them back into position.

One other kind of weight are Styl leads. The forerunner to Stotz, longer, thinner and with a bizarre grading system. Probably seen as a bit old fashioned these days, although, to the experienced angler, especially canal match anglers, Styl leads may still play their part.



SAFETY WITH FISHING WEIGHTS -

Split shot, particularly those made of lead are not without risk however minimal. It is all too tempting to pop the shots between your teeth and bite them on onto the line. Something that has been done since fishing time began but I have to tell you, it isn't the best way to stay on the good side of your dentist. Not to mention the lead you will absorb over the years. It's much more advisable to use pliers to nip them on with. Special tools like the 'Stotter' pliers (Left) or the pinchers for Styl leads (Right)



LEDGERING -

You're more likely to hear it called fishing 'on the bomb' or 'straight lead' these days and mostly in the winter. Ledgering uses a fixed or running weight or 'bomb' that anchors the bait to the bottom and gives you something to tighten your tip to.



Traditionally Ledgering has been carried out by using either a large round lead with a hole through it (Drilled Bullet) or a lead weight called an Arlesey Bomb, a pear shaped

weight with a swivel cast in one end. Invented by legendary anglers Fred J Taylor and Richard Walker and first used at a Bedfordshire venue, Arlesey Lake.

Set up for Ledgering is very similar to feeder fishing, being either fished on a paternoster* or as a running lead. The ICS system mentioned in the feeder section comes back into play too, offering an inline option. The straight lead can be deadly all year round when fished with pellets for Carp and, when the going is really tough, in the cold winter months with bread.

It's not just lakes where Ledgering can score. Rivers lend themselves nicely to this method, with the current making the bait waft enticingly. A favourite Ledgering technique of river anglers is a very simple one. The main line and hooklink are attached to each other via a feeder bead. A loop of spare line is then simply folded over the main line and a series of SSG split shot are fixed to the spare line making a loop that will run on the line freely. The main advantage of doing this is so, if the weights become tangled on the bottom or in weed, they will just pull off the spare line loop and no tackle, or even a fish, is lost.

In recent years, Ledgering has seen the use of a pole fishing weight called an Olivette. A long, teardrop shaped weight with a hole drilled through it and either protective tube or rubber sleeve insert to protect the line. An Olivette is very streamlined and much lighter than most bombs. They offer little resistance on either the strike or to the fish when it picks up the bait. Often used in winter because of how light, delicate and sensitive they can make the rig.

*A Paternoster rig has been mentioned a previously and basically, it is a large loop or a spare piece of nylon tied into the main line to make a link or 'boom' to enable the fish to pull the line without pulling it through the weight itself. A lever action like this makes the rig far more sensitive. You can use a large figure of eight loop but, better knots are the Dropper Knot or the Surgeons Dropper Knot. You will find a diagram in the knots section for a guide to tying both of these Dropper knots.

TOP TIP: Many fisheries today, particularly commercial fisheries, have steeply sloped margins or edges. If you were to use a rounded weight for Ledgering, it may roll to the bottom of the slope and you won't be fishing where you think you are. Some 'bombs' are flattened or square, thus reducing the risk of rolling.

TOP TIP: When you're fishing with a quiver tip be it feeder or bomb, it's a good idea, where you can, to position the tip of your rod as close to the water as possible, especially if it's windy. Also, It is better to sink your line by putting the rod tip right under the water and gently pulling on the line with your fingers but there's a golden rule here. DO NOT MOVE THE FEEDER OR BOMB when sinking the line.

PLUMMETS -

It's funny how the smallest things can make the biggest difference. Nothing falls into that category better than a plummet. Lead weights with soft section underneath to allow you push your hook in to it without damage.

A Plummet can be your fingers on the end of the line, feeling all the bumps and dips on the bottom, finding rocks and stones, even telling you what is on the bottom like leaves, twigs or weed.

It is an advantage to have more than one size of plummet too. Heavy plummets give a good, positive reading, but they sink in soft mud and make light lines stretch giving false readings. Medium sized plummets won't stretch lines or sink in mud but you can't cast them on a Waggler because they're too heavy. Light plummets are better for casting and fine tuning light lines but, not as positive when 'feeling' the bottom of the lake or river.



The diagram on the right shows how we work our way towards knowing how deep the venue is.

The float on the left (a), is set too shallow. When it's cast into the lake, it disappears.

In the middle (b) is set too deep. The float will rise out of the water far too much.

The last float in each diagram (c) is set perfectly and sits exactly as you would be looking at it when you are fishing.

Note that the Waggler float has one of the larger AA shots removed. I do this to make it super buoyant and 'under shotted'. Doing this gives a good, positive reading on the float, especially when it's too deep or 'over depth'. Just remember to put the shot back on when you start fishing.

Once you're happy that you have found the depth, have a few casts around the area you plan to fish with a very light plummet, even an SSG shot pinched to the hook. Don't go too crazy with this bit because you'll frighten off all the fish you had wanted to catch! Just do enough so you get to know the shape of the bottom.

I can't stress enough how important it is to take your time with using a plummet. Use it to paint a picture in your mind of how the bottom is and where the features are. Little hollows, ledges, bumps, slopes and flat areas. It is much easier to find the depth using a pole because the pole tip is directly above the float, but with practice, you will be able to use your plummet like it is part of you and, in the right hands, it is a proper weapon in the battle of wits against the fish.



FEEDERS

Every bit as wide and varied as float fishing. Feeder fishing is one of the most popular methods today and is a great way to start learning about fishing.

So what is a feeder?

Well, a Swimfeeder, to give its full name, is a weighted bait holder that is cast in to the water along with a hook bait. There are dozens of variations of feeders to cover any situation you may encounter and countless more shapes and sizes.

Although there is a staggering variety of options available to you, I would suggest that a feeder of 15 to 30 grams is about right to start with. Which type of feeder is up to you but each has it's own uses and you will find that you will get better with some than others.

The type of pellets can make a big difference too. Some break down faster than others. If you really clever, you can mix the different pellets together to control how faster they 'melt' off the feeder. But we maybe getting a little bit ahead of ourselves here!!

TOP TIP: When fishing the feeder, the tip can indicate more than just bites. Look for 'liners' where fish are bumping into your line and causing a false bite. Usually this means either there are fish around your feeder or they between you and your feeder. So you may need to think about casting a bit closer to you next cast. Liners can be anything from a tremble, a slow pull or a sharp pluck on the tip. Only experience and time will help you decide which is a liner or a proper bite.



METHOD FEEDER - Inline (Running freely on the line) or Elasticated (Tied to the line or fixed), these flat bottomed feeders are, by far, the most common. With the weight of the feeder built into the frame at the bottom, Method feeders will always settle on the bottom the right way up. The ribs on the feeder are designed to hold the bait on until it is in position. The hookbait is on a very short hooklink and hidden within the feed.



COMBI FEEDER - Inline or elasticated and very similar to a Method feeder. A Combi feeder has higher sides than a Method feeder and no ribs. There are holes in the bottom of the frame to allow water to the soak into the feed to help release it. The high sides protect the bait from being 'blown off' on impact with the water making them good for long range casts and/or for deep water. However, the Combi feeder can be used anywhere.



PELLET FEEDER - The Pellet Feeder, as the name would suggest, is designed only for pellets. Fish can attack a Method or Combi feeder from virtually any angle. But with only one opening in a Pellet feeder, the fish are forced to feed at the end where the hook is. Gently push some soaked micro pellets and place the hookbait on top. Cover it with some more micros for the cast.



OPEN ENDED FEEDER - Probably the most commonly used feeder before the age of the Method feeder. Groundbait can be loaded from either end and baits like maggots, casters, hemp and sweetcorn, etc, can be used by using a plug of groundbait in either end and the particle bait in between. Happy in rivers as well as lakes.



CAGE FEEDER - Made from either wire or plastic, Cage feeders are exposed from every angle. Bait will be introduced to the water very quickly so they are good for baiting up or using at the start of your session. You can slow the release down by wrapping electricians tape round the middle to blank off some of the holes.



BLOCK END FEEDER - Mostly used on rivers and, like all feeders, come in lots of shapes and sizes. Block ends are designed only for particle baits and have a cap on either end. One of which is removable to load the bait. The bait is washed from the feeder by the flow or current in the river. Smaller versions can be used on stillwaters in the winter with maggots



DISTANCE FEEDER -
Basically a Cage feeder with a huge streamlined weight in front of the cage. Designed for large lakes or reservoirs at extreme distances.

Effective feeder fishing requires some special equipment too. It is mostly much easier to fish the feeder if you are not actually holding the rod. If you use a seat box, there are some attachments that fix to the legs, some of which are listed below.



An Extendable Feeder arm (Above) for the rod, and a short, angled arm (Below) at the back for the handle or butt.



BAIT UP or SPOD FEEDERS -
Designed only for baiting up, not for fishing with. Not really that heavy when they're empty but, because of their size, they require a proper rod to cast the biggest ones. Ranging from 20 to 40 grams, they are huge compared to a standard feeder (Left), and can put a serious amount of bait in at the start of your session, saving time. Be warned, you will need a much heavier rod to cast these out!



Both types of support arm will need a 'head' screwed on to them. For the front rest, I like to use an adjustable head with long 'side ears' (Left) to stop the rod from being ripped off the rest by a large fish and a slot to allow the line to run freely. For the butt rest (Centre and Right) you won't go far wrong by buying a gripper type of rest. Big fish, Carp in particular, have a habit of biting when you least expect it. Turn away for a second and the rods gone.... A gripper type rest will be like an extra pair of hands to help you hold on to precious equipment and keep your rod where it's supposed to be.



METHOD FEEDER MOULD -
Lay your hookbait in the centre of the mould, cover with soaked micro pellets or groundbait and press down gently with a thumb, cover again with more micro pellets and lay your feeder ribs onto the pellets. Now press that feeder in as hard as you can. Pop the whole lot out and you'll have perfect mound of pellets. Give them one more squeeze with your hand before you cast to your desired spot. Make sure when you buy your mould that you get one that will fit your feeders. You may need more than one size.



You will need at least two types of hooklinks for your feeder rigs, a banded hooklink and a Quickstop hooklink.

For a pellet hookbait
"Banded Method feeder hooklinks in a size 14 and/or 16" and for a soft hookbait **"Method Feeder hooklinks in a size 14 and/or 16 with a quickstop"**.

You will be asked what length you want, go for the 10cm or 4 inch size. Only a few companies make a 7.5cm (3 inch) hooklink, so the 10cm version is more widely available. Other feeders like the Open Ended, Cage, Block Ended & Distance feeders, use much longer hooklinks from 15cm (6 inches) up to 60cm (2ft) and beyond. Longer hooklinks are available now, but to start with, I would recommend sticking to Method type feeders.

INLINE OR ELASTICATED? - You need to be careful here. Elasticated feeders are great because the elastic in the stem of the feeder softens the pressure on the hook and the fish, but it is tied directly to the line or 'fixed'. Most fisheries have banned fixed feeders because, if the line snaps, the fish can be left tethered to a feeder and cause harm, damage or worse. Inline feeders run freely on the line eliminating the chance of tethering the fish. Having said all that, tackle company Guru do produce a safe design that will eject an elasticated feeder if necessary but, to start with, use inline feeders to make sure you stay within the rules.

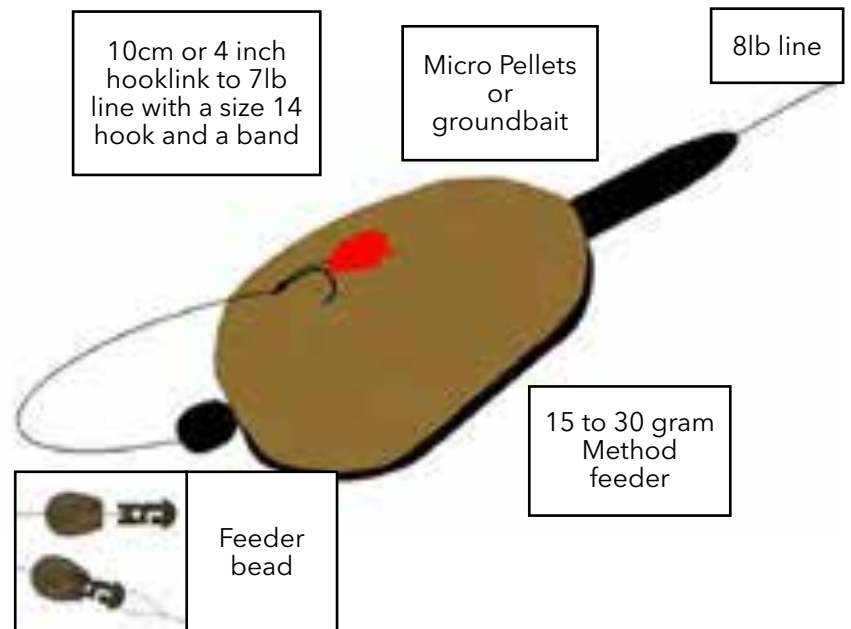


Diagram (Above) shows a basic set up for a method feeder. You will use exactly the same setup for Combi feeders and Pellet feeders. See below for Open, Cage, Block and Distance feeders.



PATERNOSTER - The feeder is attached to a large fixed loop so the only line that the fish can take depends how long the loop is, but it will be enough to register a good bite. (See knots section for diagrams)

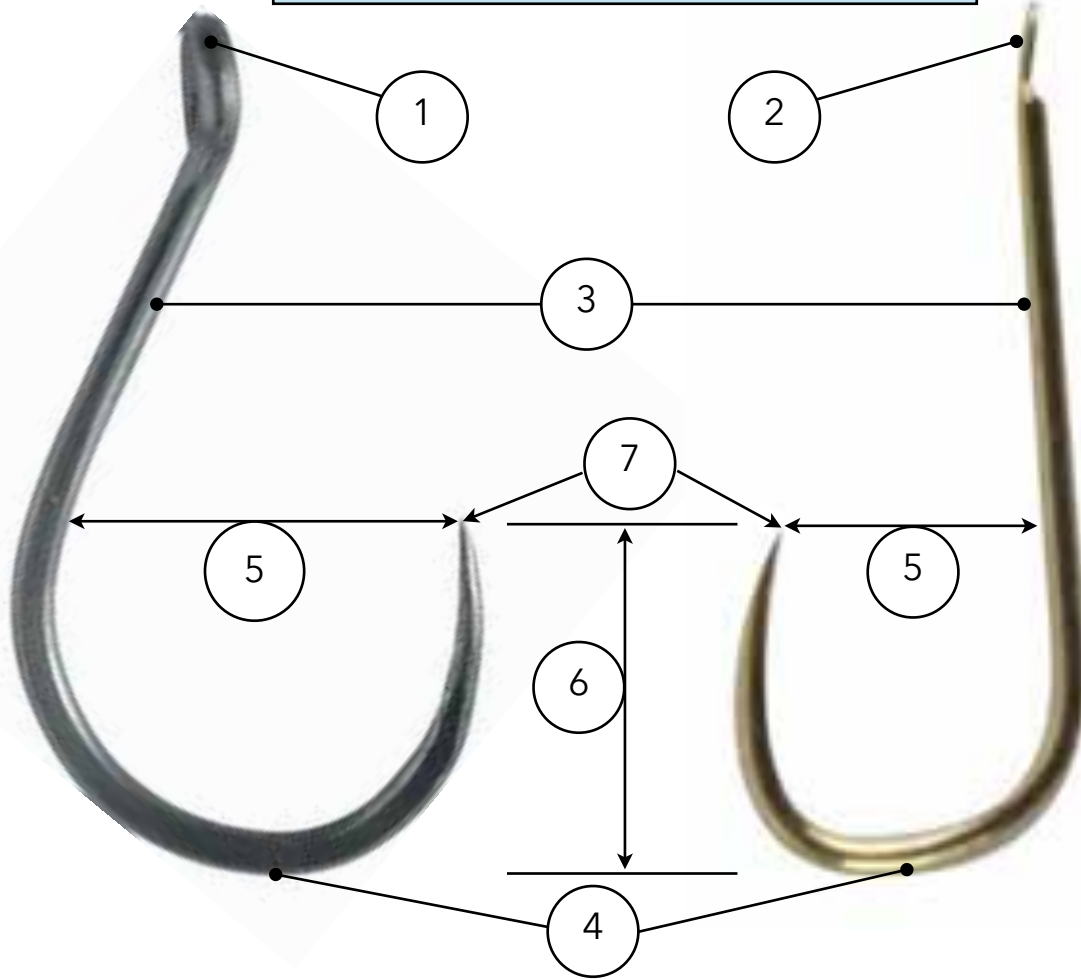


RUNNING FEEDER - The feeder is free to run on the line and sits against a feeder bead. This rig, unlike the semi fixed Paternoster, will rely on you to set the hook.



One handy little system that I would like you to know about is something called ICS from Preston Innovations. ICS or 'Inter Change System' means that, you can change feeders from say a Method feeder to a Combi feeder or Cage feeder, even a Ledger weight (see Ledgering section) without breaking down your tackle and starting again. The feeder bead, stem and tail rubber stay on the line, and you simply change the type or size of feeder you want to use.

HOOKS




Without one you're not going to catch much and, by now, you will have realised that there are certain hooks that you need to know about. But let's have a close look at what makes a coarse fishing hook first.


1. Eye
2. Spade
3. Shank
4. Bend
5. Gape
6. Throat
7. Point

BARBED or BARBLESS? - Another area that you need to be very aware of. Nearly ALL fisheries today insist on **BARBLESS HOOKS ONLY**. All DDAS waters are barbles. They are easier to use. Easier to get out of clothing and bodies. But most importantly, they are kinder to the fish and any animals that may pick one up. There are arguments for and against, but I won't go into that here. Fisheries have banned barbed hooks. You will be asked to leave and probably told never to come back if you get caught using one. Don't do it. Use barbles hooks.

HOOKS TO NYLON - There is a vast choice of hooks on the market and it is another subject to get lost in differing opinions. My advice to those starting out is, buy hooks to nylon. Ready tied for you and, mostly reliable on the whole. Hook tying is a tedious chore that eats time. If you're like me, you might be sad enough to actually enjoy it but, most people don't. Hooks to nylon really help new anglers to get started quickly. Here are some hooks to look out for.




Preston MCM-B. Brilliant hooks for the Method feeder with a bait band. Size 12 to 16. 10cm



Preston GPM-B. Replaces the old PR434 and is available in eyed or spade end. Nice hook for general soft or hard pellet fishing in summer. Size 18 and 16. 15cm.



Preston KKM-B. Replaces the old PR36. An excellent hook for bigger fish on feeder, waggler or pole. Size 12 to 16. 10 & 15cm.



Drennan Wide Gape Carp. A great hook for soft pellets with a very short shank so the hook is out of sight to wary fish. Sizes 16 to 20. 20cm.



Drennan Silverfish Maggot. A reliable hook for.....silverfish. With a maggots. Surprisingly. Sizes 16 to 20. 20cm.

GURU QM1 - Beautifully tied hooks on foam spools in choice of three options. Baitbands (Red), Bayonet (Blue) & Quickstop (Yellow). 15" (37.5cm) long making them ideal for fishing the Pellet Waggler. Sizes 12 to 16.



VARIATIONS OF READY TIED HOOKS - As if there wasn't enough choices to make already, there are four types of hooklinks to choose from depending on the type of hook you need. Straight hook for soft pellets and maggots. Banded for hard pellets. Bayonet for mini boilie baits and Quickstop for soft baits like meat and corn.



GURU F1 - Very fine but surprisingly strong hooks. Particularly useful in winter because of how light they are. Two varieties, Pellet and Maggot. Sizes 16 to 20. 15cm.

You don't have to go out and buy all of the hooks above, but some hooks are very specific in their use. As you progress along your fishing journey, you will collect a variety of items and, if you have some of these hooks amongst them, then you should be covered.

STORAGE -

The enemy of line is is sunshine. The enemy of hooks is water. If they are stored in either for too long, it will reduce performance and reliability. The best way to reduce this problem is to use hook boxes. Transfer your ready tied hooklinks to a hook box and they'll be safer there and you'll be super organised.



STRAIGHT HOOK



BANDED HOOK



BAYONET



QUICKSTOP

KNOTS

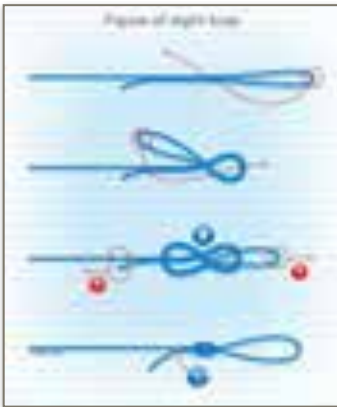
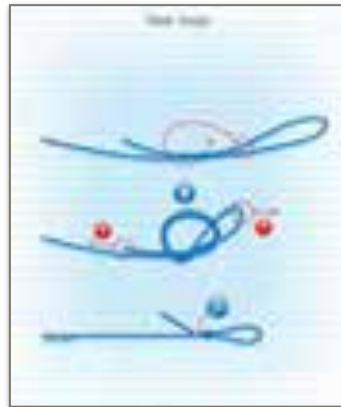
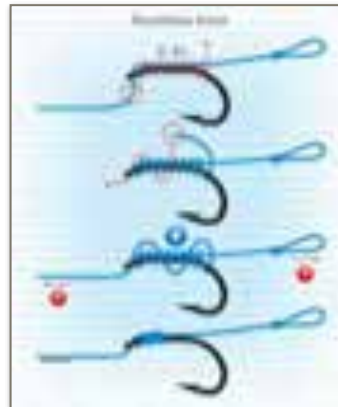


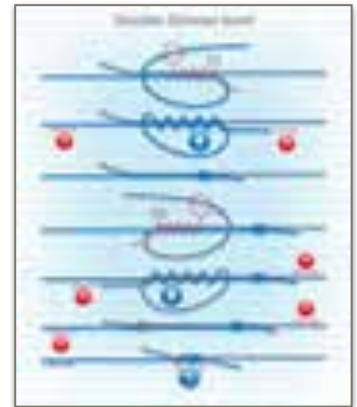
FIGURE OF EIGHT LOOP
Probably the most important knot to master first. From pole to feeder, everything needs a good loop.



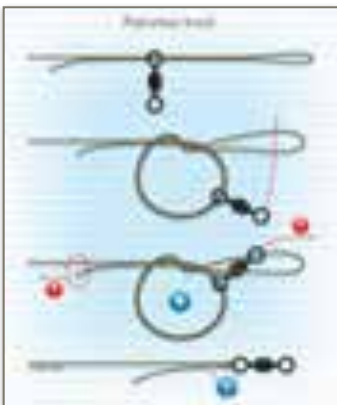
HAIR LOOP
An easier loop knot to tie, but not as strong. Perfect for tying pellet band, quick stops and hair rigs.



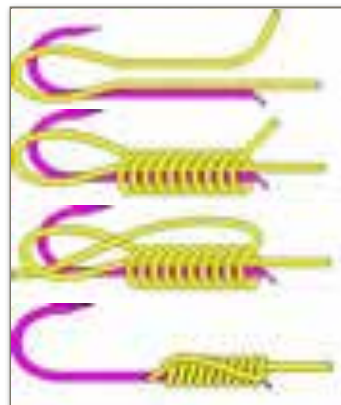
KNOTLESS KNOT
Revolutionary in design and has changed angling completely. A vital knot to know.



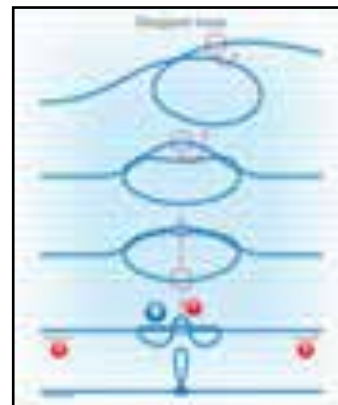
DOUBLE GRINNER
Used for tying two ends together securely. Great for extending pole rigs or reattaching line after breaks.



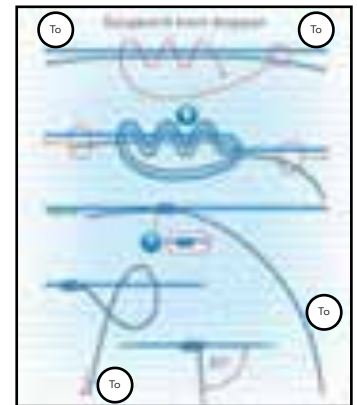
PALOMAR KNOT
Very strong and reliable. The best knot for large eyed hooks. Can be used with a swivels or rings.



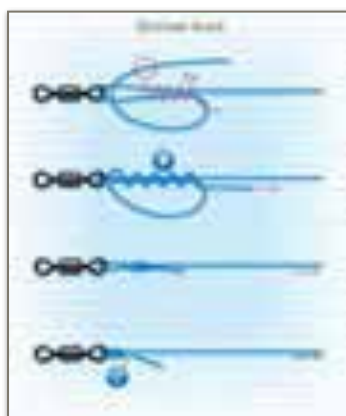
SPADE END KNOT
For spade end hooks and a real advantage if you can tie it by hand. But if you struggle, use a hook tier.



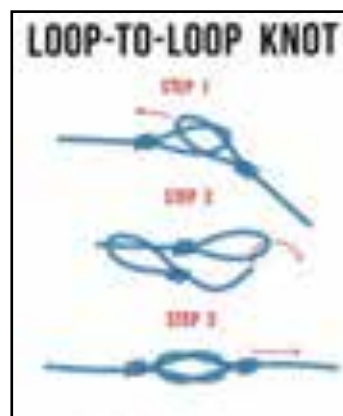
DROPPER KNOT
The first of my choices of knots to construct a paternoster rig for a feeder.



SURGEON'S DROPPER KNOT
The second paternoster knot best suited to a ledger set up with a row of SSG shots.



GRINNER KNOT
A very strong knot used for hooks and swivels.



LOOP TO LOOP KNOT
Simple but essential. The loop to loop knot is vital to anyone that uses ready tied hooklinks.

BAIT

This first bit is not what you MUST have in your bait bag. It is simply what I keep in mine. Everyone is different. I don't take bags of pellets with me, I put them in bait boxes. I use 1 pint, 2 pint & 3 pint boxes and will have spares for loose baits like sweetcorn and Luncheon meat. Quantities will be a minimum amount. Lets take a look.

- 1) Hard pellets in 2mm (2 pints), 4mm (2 pints), 6mm (1 pint/3 in summer) & 8mm (1 pint in winter/3 in summer*)
- 2) Expander pellets in 4mm & 6mm (a bag of each).
- 3) Method mix. At least half a bag.**
- 4) Feed groundbait . At least half a bag**
- 5) Sweetcorn. At least one large tin.
- 6) Luncheon meat. At least one tin, if allowed.
- 7) Hemp. One tin.
- 8) Banded Pellets. A selection of sizes and colours.
- 9) Paste. At least half a bag in warmer months.
- 10) Bread. A couple of slices, to a loaf, plus punch crumb.
- 11) Equipment. Pellet pump, bread punch box with punches, a fork, liquid additives, pellet strainer, method moulds.
- 12) Large mixing bowl, riddle & cover. (Not kept in bait bag)
- 13) Maggots. At least one pint. (Not shown)
*If a venue likes lots of bait, I'll take 5 pints or more.
** If you won't use a whole bag, then don't take it.



- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| a) 2mm Pellets | l) Banded Pellets |
| b) 4mm Pellets | m) Paste |
| c) 6mm Pellets | n) Bread |
| d) 8mm Pellets | o) Punch crumb |
| e) 4mm Expanders | p) Pellet pump |
| f) 6mm Expanders | q) Bread punch box |
| g) Method Mix | r) Fork for mixing |
| h) Feed Groundbait | s) Liquid additives |
| i) Sweetcorn | t) Pellet strainer |
| j) Luncheon Meat | u) Method moulds |
| k) Hemp | v) Large bowl + cover |



PELLETS -
Modern fishing revolves around pellets and the variety is staggering. Available in hundreds of different colours, sizes and flavours, they are also very versatile. They can be used dry, soaked or oiled. Dyed, flavoured, pumped and drilled. The list goes on and on. We'll try to touch on a few basics with the pellets that are most commonly used.

6mm -
The best size for really big bags of fish on a commercial fishery. Easily fired some distance with a catapult, they make a lovely 'rattling sound' as they hit the water which can drive Carp wild in the summer months. Can be used on a pole, as a hook bait on a method feeder or on a waggler. Particularly good hook bait on a pellet waggler float.



2mm or 'Micros' -
The most valuable pellet in an anglers bait bag. Usually used wetted or soaked in water to soften them and make them sink. They can be used for lose feed with a pole cup, can be made into tiny balls for throwing, cupping in with a pole or moulded around a method or pellet feeder.

8mm -
A big pellet that hits the water with a loud 'Plop' and can attract fish quickly and from some distance. Brilliant as a hook bait for larger fish, especially in the margins. Excellent hook bait for a method feeder and a good one to start your session with.



4mm -
A good all round pellet for a banded hook or fed loosely, these pellets are better wetted otherwise they can float. Place the pellets on a sieve or riddle and pour water over them. This 'flash soak' method is so only the outside is wetted and not soaked through. They can be used dry with a bait band for Roach or Bream when they're feeding well.

TOP TIP: Soaking times can vary. From 30 seconds for sticky but firm method feeder pellet to 2 minutes for a softer, lose feed pellet for use with a pole pot

TOP TIP: Pellets can be very filling sometimes and it's easy to over feed. There are a couple of old sayings that you will do well to remember. The first is 'You can put the feed in the lake, but you can't take it out again' and 'Feed little and often'. Both carry the same message and that is to be cautious at the beginning of a match or session and build your swim slowly. Count how many pellets you're feeding each time. 3 becomes 5 and 5 becomes 9. Pretty soon you've over done it and that's that for the day.



Soft Hook Pellets -
Commercially manufactured pellets that take all the effort out of preparing hook bait. They are easily hooked and are available in a variety of sizes, colours and flavours.



Banded Pellets -
These small, hard and sometimes colourful pellets are made from a similar mixture to boilies used in Carp fishing. As the name suggests, these are designed to be used with a bait band with all kinds of methods and come in floating (pop ups), semi-floating (wafers) and regular sinking varieties.

Expanders - Hard, light pellets that float and need soaking or pumping in order for them to be used as an effective hook bait. Even when thoroughly soaked, expanders can still float. But when they are hooked, the weight of the hook itself is enough make it slowly sink. Mainly for use on the pole. Sometimes used as a hook bait for a method feeder. Rarely used with a waggler but it is possible at close range. There are basically four sizes of expanders, 2mm for winter, 4 & 6mm most commonly used all year round and 8mm for summer time.

TOP TIP: Pellets can be tricky to get into bait bands sometimes. A job made easier by using a Pellet Bander to hold the band open while you pop the pellet in.



Maggots -

These little fellows have been used for fishing for a very, very long time. Bred from the Blue Bottle Fly, or 'Blow Fly', which lays its eggs on dead and rotting meat.

Fortunately for us, and our neighbours, maggots can readily be bought from local tackle shops or even on the internet in modern times. Maggots come in many colours, but the most popular are the natural white and dyed red colour. Bronze is also a favourite amongst river anglers. Every fish will take a maggot. Even the mighty Pike can't resist.

Caring for maggots is fairly easy, but will require negotiation for use of a fridge. Maggots **must** be kept cold, otherwise they will continue their journey to becoming a fly and turn to a chrysalis or caster. When you get your maggots home, it is a good idea to run them through a large sieve called a riddle, and into a bowl. You will be left with all the dead maggots, feathers, bones, old sawdust and casters. You can bin them all. The nice clean maggots will be in the bowl but, if you put them in the fridge like this, they will sweat and release an ammonia like smell which is just nasty. So what we do is sprinkle half a handful of maize meal flour over them and give them a shake with the lid on to cover every wriggler. If you're keeping them for a while, freshly sieved softwood sawdust will absorb all the nasty stuff better. Whatever you put on them, it will need changing every few days or whenever you notice them getting too wet. If you do all this, you should be able to keep maggots for a few weeks or maybe a month or two.

TOP TIP: sawdust will toughen the maggots and make them a bit more durable. Maize flour will soften them making them better for shy biting fish. However, a soft maggot will easily get chewed up or 'Ragged' by small hungry fish. Choose your maggots wisely.



Sweetcorn -

'Corn' is a bright yellow bait that fish can sometimes find it hard to resist. Sweet and juicy, it is highly digestible and therefore very attractive to fish. The bright colour makes it very easy to see even in the most cloudy water. Another plus point for corn is that it is quite a large bait and moderately tough. This makes it harder for smaller, nuisance fish to eat it and does tend to catch better sized targets. Most non predatory species will eat corn.



Hemp -

An oily seed bait sold in tins these days. No more smelly kitchens from boiling pints of the stuff for hours! Hemp is becoming slightly over looked in modern commercial fishing because of the fashionable pellet, but make no mistake, Hemp can still cut it with the big baits on its day. Holding fish in your swim whilst they root around looking for every last seed. You can use it on the hook but it's a bit fiddly and you will need very small hooks. Roach in particular are known for their love of Hemp.

TOP TIP: If you know that the bottom of the lake you are fishing is soft and muddy or silty, then feeding Hemp can be a fatal mistake. The fish will become so preoccupied with the Hemp that they won't touch anything else

TOP TIP: Keep all maggots dry and cover them if it rains. If you don't they will escape and you'll have maggots everywhere. Particularly Pinkies. They're not called 'Runners' for nothing!



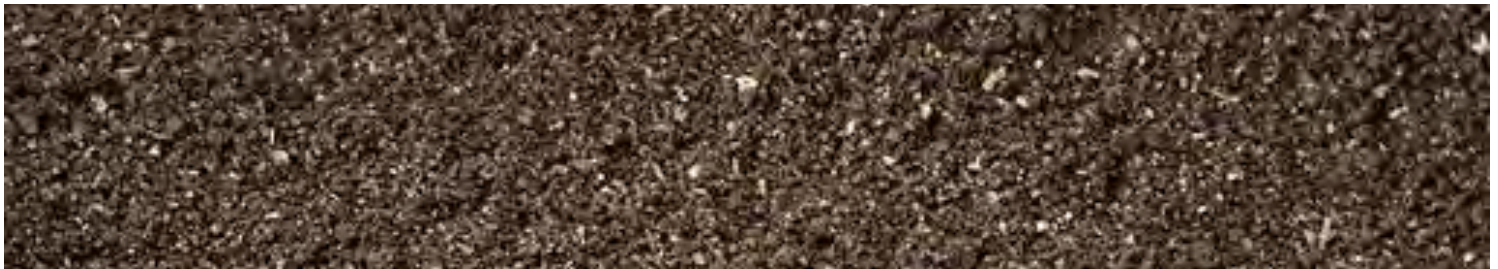
Luncheon Meat -
A tinned processed meat that Carp, Barbel and Tench love in particular. It's very easy to use, easy to cut, easy to dye and flavour. It even stays on the hook pretty well, better with a quick stop. BUT, there is a down side to meat. It can have a high level of fat in it and fish can't process fat that well. Also it can, if fed in large quantities, affect the long term health of the Fishery. For this reason meat is sometimes limited or even banned. There are commercially produced meats that have very low fat content but, of course, they're expensive. Try using Plumbrose or Tulip brands.



REMEMBER - Some of the baits we've looked at come in bags, containers or tins. Take all of your litter home with you and leave the lakes and waters as you would want find them. DDAS has a very strict policy on litter and the juniors are no exception.

TAKE ONLY PICTURES, LEAVE ONLY FOOT PRINTS.

TOP TIP: When you've cut your meat, put it in a bait strainer and run it under the hot water tap for a few minutes. This will dissolve the fat and wash it away leaving you with low fat meat and happier, healthier fish.



Groundbait -

If you find the world of pellets confusing, just wait until you start looking at groundbait. Go in to any decent tackle shop and you will be confronted with row upon row and bag after bag of fancy labelled groundbait all trying to sell themselves to you. So which one is best?

I regret to inform you that there is no answer to that question. But we can simplify what it is we are looking at.

In the most simple terms, there are just two types of groundbait available to you. Cereal based and Fishmeal based.

Cereal based -

This more traditional style of groundbait is centred around a breadcrumb mix. Ground cereals and coconut husk, along with a whole host of sometimes secret ingredients are used to make groundbait that will attract silverfish like Roach and Bream on more natural waters. Usually the target species is on the packaging to help give you an idea of what it's designed to attract.

Fishmeal based -

These relatively more modern groundbaits, in conjunction with pellets have taken over to a large degree from traditional mixes. That's not to say it makes the choice of which one easy, far from it in fact. But we can split them up in to smaller groups.

Method Mix -

Does exactly what it says on the bag. Designed to be sticky and heavier than other mixes, they feature binders that hold other baits like pellets or maggots, casters or corn, into the mix for added attraction. Again, on the bag you will read the words 'Method' and 'Mix'. Any of these will do the job. You will have plenty of choice!

Feed Mixes -

General Fishmeal groundbaits that can be used for attracting and holding fish in your swim in the same way as cereal groundbaits. Feed mixes can also be cut together with Method Mix to add attraction or colour to your feeder Mix

Crushed Expanders -

Crushed or Milled Expander pellet groundbaits are generally for cold water fish species such as Ide or F1 Carp. They can be tricky to mix properly due to the expander pellets they are made from.

Mixing groundbait properly is the key to a successful mix and the difference between a good and a bad session. The trick, once you have mixed the dry ingredients together thoroughly, is to add the water little by little until it will hold its shape with one gentle squeeze, but it should be turned easily back to crumb by rubbing it between the palms of your hands. Once it does this, you can leave it whilst you set up the rest of your gear. When you return to it the chances are it will have absorbed all the moisture and is a little on the dry side and will not hold its shape. You are going to need to rehydrate it a bit. The best way is with an atomiser or mist sprayer for indoor plants. Another way is to wet your hand and whisk your mix around. The water will transfer from your hand to the mix and bring it back to life.

If it passes the squeeze test, it's ready. You may have to repeat this during the session, especially if the weather is warm and/or windy. You can mix it up the night before you go out and store it in the fridge overnight. It is ok to do this but you will end up with a more dense, heavier mix that will not be as active. Perfect if you are targeting Bream or you want a non-fizzy or inert carpet of feed in your swim.

By far the best way to mix groundbait is with a drill and a whisk. Hands are good but a whisk is quicker if you use a lot.



TOP TIP: Maggots have a pointy end and a blunt end. The blunt end, if you look closely, has two little 'eyes' (a), (They're not eyes) and a little tab (b) above them. This little tab is where you want to try and knock the hook just through the skin as lightly as you can. This will keep the maggot alive and wriggling for as long as possible. If the maggot bursts when you hook it, use another one. If it keeps happening, change your hook because it's lost its sharpness.

DEAD MAGGOTS -

Dead maggots can be a great bait on commercials, particularly in the margins for large Carp. Good for use on soft or silty lakes because dead maggots can't crawl away. The best way to dispatch your maggots is in a freezer. Clean them off in the normal way but, instead of putting the maize in, place the cleaned maggots in to a freezer bag, preferably a zip-loc type. Zip the bag almost to the end but leave a gap. Roll the bag up starting with the maggots at the bottom to squeeze all the air out but don't crush them. Zip the bag closed and it's now ready for the freezer. Usually over night is enough to do the job. You can refreeze them but only once or twice or they go a horrible black colour. Keep your 'Deads' covered with water during the session to keep them cool and slow down the blackening effect.



PINKIES - The medium sized maggot and the larvae of the Green Bottle Fly. They are half the size of a normal maggot which makes them a great bait for the winter. Again, they come in many colours. The most popular is natural white (They naturally have a tinge of pink, hence the name, Pinkies!), red and a bright fluorescent pink. Caring for Pinkies is the same as maggots except you'll need a smaller meshed riddle and just saw dust, no maize.



SQUATTS - An absolute must have bait on canals, but not that often used on commercial fisheries. Ten times smaller than a maggot, Squatts are usually kept in dry, dark brown foundry sand

TOP TIP: If you're missing bites with maggots, try hooking it through the side. It could just fool the fish.

TOP TIP: Not often used these days but worth knowing all the same. Floating maggots will make the hook sink much slower for days when fish are being fussy. You'll need to cut the middle out of a maggot box lid big enough to get at the bait. Put enough water in the box just to cover the bottom. Take about a handful of maggots, put them in and clip the lid on. After a while they will float and they're ready.

Casters -

The chrysalis stage in the life of a Blow Fly where it will turn from a larvae to a fly. You can buy casters from shops or even online but, because of the work needed to create good casters, they tend to be expensive. However, casters can be a devastating bait on its day and can really make a difference. Most fish like to eat crunchy casters particularly Roach, Carp, Chub, Barbel and Bream and even big Perch. Whatever species you're after, casters tend to pick out better sized fish.

When you buy casters, they will come in a plastic bag with all the air squeezed out or in a vacuum sealed packet. In either case keep them cold in a fridge, not freezer, otherwise they'll be useless.

Ideally casters should be a light brown or chestnut red in colour. Too pale and they're not yet casters, too dark and they will float. To get perfect bought casters, you will need to go through them and pick out all the dead skins, pale and dark casters. You don't HAVE to but, if you're fussy about good bait, you will.



TOP TIP: To hook casters you will need a long shanked hook ideally. (Preston PR 412). Place the point of the hook at the blunt end of the caster, push the hook in and rotate the hook at the same time, threading the caster into the hook. Push the hook into the caster all the way and just pop the point out of the side. See diagram, right.



You can produce your own Casters at home, but to get useful bait, it takes time and a bit of dedication.

It takes roughly twice as many maggots to get the required amount of Casters. Which is why they can be expensive. So to get a pint of Casters, you'll need 2 pints of Maggots.

Ideally the maggots should be kept out of the fridge in pure softwood sawdust, riddled to get the bigger pieces out. You'll need the same quantity of dust as you have quantity of maggots. The sawdust needs to be kept slightly dampened with a plant sprayer. Just a couple of squirts every day. Renew the dust every two or three days.

I riddle off the dust and then let the maggots run through on their own into an empty container, keep the riddled off dust separate. In the beginning you'll just get 'white Casters' and dead maggots. I usually discard these until I get some brown ones and hardly any dead maggots.

Once they start turning they really go for it and you'll need to do repeat this at least three times a day.

You are looking for that perfect chestnut red colour. Any darker than this get thrown away. The whiter casters, some you can see in the main picture, I will separate and keep them out of the fridge to turn brown. All brown Casters, again like the picture, will be wrapped in a damp newspaper parcel, placed in a zip-loc bag and popped into a bait box. That then gets put in the fridge here they will keep for about 2 weeks or so. You need to open the parcel once a day for couple of minutes to let them breathe. Casters are still alive throughout all of this.

To turn enough bait for session should take about 10 days, so plan ahead if you want to try turning Casters for yourself.

WORMS -

Worms are just worms, aren't they? Well no actually. Even I had not realised that there are 14 different kinds of worms in the UK. I have a genuine love of worms and it was very tempting to go into detail about these little fellows, but I will just stick to the worms that will be useful to us as anglers.



DENDROBAENAS -

The most common worm used in fishing. It is a blue, pinky grey coloured worm that has pale yellow stripes around it and grows

to about 7cm long. Lives in deep woodland litter or organically rich garden soils. Can be used whole, halved, sectioned or chopped. The head of a 'Dendra' can be useful because it can simulate a caster on the hook and is much tougher than a caster to withstand attentions of smaller 'nuisance fish'. Commonly used as feed when chopped or minced with worm scissors. How much you chop worms can make a big difference to the fish you catch. Sometimes they like big bits, other times almost like a soup. Even the soil they come in can be used in the 'Choppy', making it form a dark cloud in the water to attract fish. Like a lot of fishing baits, how you use them will come in time with the more experience you gain.



LOBWORM -

A large, reddish coloured worm that lives happily in gardens. Called a night crawler in America because of its unusual habit of laying on the

surface at night, looking for a mate. 'Lobs' can grow to around 20 - 25cm and make a great bait for large fish especially predatory fish like Perch, Chub, Eels and Pike.

If nuisance fish like small Rudd and Roach are present and larger Carp or Bream are the target, hooking a 2 or 3cm piece of Lobworm head will stop most of the smaller fish from eating it because the bait will be just too big for their little, hungry mouths.

BRANDLINGS & REDWORMS -

Smaller, reddish brown coloured worms found in garden compost or manure. An excellent worm for smaller species or for including in groundbait for Roach and Bream. A little overlooked since the popularity of Dendrobaena worms but, on their day, are still very effective.



HOOKING WORMS -

Through the head is most common but, because of how slimy they can be and because you will be using barbless hooks (unless the fishery says otherwise), worms do tend to slide off the hook or even wrap themselves into a ball around the hook point, making you miss bites. There are couple of things we can do about that.



For most of my worm fishing, I will use a Quickstop on a hair. (See Left). Using a Quickstop needle (Right),

I will push the Quickstop into the head of the worm a little way and then withdraw the needle, trapping the worm on the Quickstop.

You can then choose to use the worm whole or, with scissors or a thumb nail, nip the worm off to the length you want it. It is a very effective way of hooking a worm and can take a fair amount of punishment from casting and from the fish.



TOP TIP: To stop your worm being quite so 'wriggly' and tangling around the hook, before you cast or ship out your pole, give them a couple of good slaps on the water to stun them. After all that they will, unsurprisingly, remain quite still in the water and won't be inclined to crawl into the mud and leaves on the bottom.

Bread -

Bread has had a bit of come back in recent years, particularly for winter Carp. When the water is clear and cold, bread is bright and highly visible. The slow fall of fluffy bread in front of a cold fish might just be enough to make it use the energy to eat it. However, it can be handy to have some bread with you in the warmer months too.

The most popular brand by far is WARBURTONS TOASTIE in the orange wrapper. Surely it doesn't matter does it? Well, yes, kind of. 'Warby Orange' is thicker and quite 'doughy'. Now there's lots of differing opinions on how to use bread. There really isn't a right way. You can use it straight from the packet, steam it, roll it, punch it, blend it, pinch it or float it. The most common way is to squash the slice gently with the back of your fingers, use a bread punch about 6 - 10 mm in size, and punch out a couple of 'discs' and put one on the hook to start with. I would suggest 8mm so you can go up or down in size depending on how the fish want it. Put the hook point in the centre of the disc and roll it round the bend until it is at the same level as the point. When it gets wet, it will swell and cover the hook nicely. It won't stay on the hook for ever and you will need to rebait often. It works better on the pole but, you can use it for waggler or feeder fishing but use a quick stop. Bread is very filling for us and fish alike. So when you're feeding it in crumb form, be VERY careful how much you put in. For 'punch crumb', put a few slices through a food blender, crusts and all, until it becomes fine bread crumbs. Run the crumb through a riddle to get the big, filling lumps out. If you want, go down to Pinkie riddle or even a flour sieve to get it really fine. Put it in an air tight bag (air squeezed out) in the fridge or freezer, depending on when you want to use it.

TOP TIP: Bread needs to flutter through the water to be most effective. That's why it works best with a pole. You can use very light floats that need almost no shot on the line, just two dust shots like a no. 12. You'll need fairly light hooks too. Preston's PR490 is a good option. Start with your bait 10cm off the bottom and adjust the depth until you find a fish that is willing to feed. You may have to do this several times and even for every fish in the cold winter.

Multiple discs of bread (Right) can be used on a ledger or bomb set up.



PASTE-

Like most baits, paste can crush everything else on its day. You may have noticed that, throughout this guide, there are many opinions about the same subject. Paste is no exception. You can use it like a dough mixture, really sloppy like porridge and everywhere in between. If you use it stiffer, you may be able to cast it with a rod and line. But most of the time paste will be used on the pole using special, long bristled pole floats and little or no shot on the line. Unlike normal pole rigs, when you set a Paste float up, have the float so the whole of the bristle is showing. The paste acts as the weight to shoot the float correctly. If the paste comes off you'll know because the float will come up in the water to where you set it without bait on. Plumbing the depth becomes critical with paste. You need to find a firm, flat area and set the depth as you want to see it during the session. (Around 5 to 10mm of the bristle showing, less if possible). Bites are notoriously hard to hit using paste. You'll get lots of dips and bobs, but the one you're looking for is that one really fast pull under that just keeps going. You will need to practice paste fishing lots and it will get frustrating. But keep at it. When you get it right, it really pays off and is so satisfying.

TOP TIP: when mixing paste, add the powder to water. Yes it's the reverse from groundbait. Mix it constantly with a fork as you sprinkle the powder in until it starts to bind together. How much powder you add depends on how soft or stiff you want it. Leave it slightly wet because, like groundbait, it will dry out a bit as it absorbs the water. Best mixes are Dynamite Swim Stim green or Bait Tech Special G.



TOP TIP: Paste is a very messy bait to use. Your gear can get covered in the stuff. If you do a lot of Paste fishing it can, if you're not careful, get into the joints of your pole and start to wear it out quicker. If you keep a pot of water on your side tray, you can quickly rinse your hands/fingers off before shipping your pole out.



USEFUL ACCESSORIES

A disgorger is something that you simply must take with you on every trip. Available in three basic sizes, you will need all three. See right for directions of use.



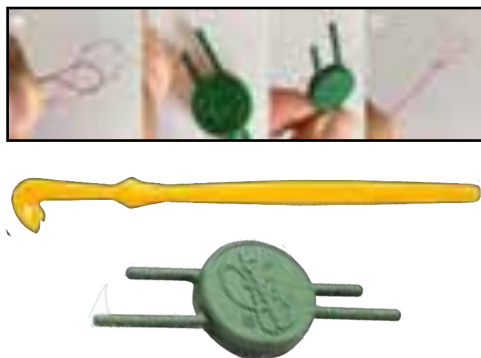
Keeping the line tight, put the line in the slot on the disgorger.

Slide the disgorger down the line until it meets the bend of the hook..

Still with a tight line, push the disgorged gently downwards taking care not the harm or damage the fish. Barbless hooks will nearly always come out fairly easily. If it doesn't, cut the line at the mouth of the fish. Better to give it half a chance to get rid of the hook itself, than killing it by trying too hard to get the hook out. Always put the fish first.

LOOP TYERS -

Not vital but it will help you to have one with you. Two types of loop tyers are available to you, the twisting type (Top) and the prong type (Bottom) which I prefer.



BLACK MARKER PEN -

Sometimes, when you're fishing, you look at the water and the only thing reflected is the sky. We call that 'White water'. The best colour to stand out against white is, of course, black. Most floats you buy are yellow, red or orange. So it's handy to have a black marker pen to colour your float with.



SCISSORS & CLIPPERS -

Handy to have for trimming tag ends of knots and clipping line ends for threading hooks, etc.



PELLET BANDER -

Tiny pellet bands can be fiddly to use, but this essential little gadget makes the job so much easier. Open the band by pressing the plunger, pop the bait inside the prongs and release the plunger and slip the whole lot off the ends.



Drennan baiting needle
Used for hook and loop tying

Hook needle
For pulling bait bands through bait

Quickstop needle
For pushing quickstops through bait

BAIT DRILL
For drilling holes in hard baits like pellets.

Gated needle
For bait, pole elastics and pretty much everything!

FLOAT PAINT -

Floats can get damaged with use or coloured with a permanent marker pen. So now it's chipped or black it's ruined right? No, we can bring floats back with float paint. A Tippex like fluid that dries very quickly and is perfect for changing float colours. You can even scrape it off with a thumb nail if you need to change the colour.



CATAPULTS -

Essential for getting bait to where you need it. By now you will have guessed that is a vast choice of catapults and I can only guide you from personal preference. You may end up with quite a collection of 'Cattys' for all kinds of situations but, for now, we will look at just three. In any of the categories, it is important to think about where you will need to place your bait. There is no point in over stressing a lightweight catty to fire beyond its capability. In the same way, it's no good caressing a powerful catty to drop bait at 8 metres. You need to find catapults that work for you so you feel comfortable using them.

LIGHT or POLE CATAPULT -

Very light weight elastics are fitted to pole Cattys because they only need to fire over a limited distance, usually only up to 16 metres. They have smaller pouches to put the bait in made from either mesh, stiffer silicone or plastic. The Guru version with orange elastic is my choice for this type of catty.



MEDIUM CATAPULT -

There really is only one choice of catapult in this section for me and that is my ever reliable Drennan Team England catty. I've used the pink elasticated Cattys for longer than I care to tell you and they rarely let me down. Now known as the 'WAGGLER RANGE' with the light elastic. If I only had to use one, this would be it.



LONG RANGE -

Again, I would advise a Drennan catapult in the same 'WAGGLER RANGE' as the medium catty but with the medium elastic. There are few venues that require very long range baiting but, if I am required to do so, this is the catty I reach for.



You won't need a groundbait catapult to begin with.

USING YOUR CATAPULT -

The first thing I will say is that, Catapults are not toys. They are dangerous things that can cause real damage if used irresponsibly.

Never try to aim the catapult by using it in front of your face. It's not a gun and if the elastic snaps, which it does from time to time, there's only one place it's going to hit and it's going to hurt too....



To fire bait out hold the catapult on its side (Above), this will enable you to fire out bait whilst holding a rod or pole. When pole fishing it's a tricky one handed affair and dependant on which hand you hold your pole. With your free hand, pick up the catty and grab a pinch of bait with the same hand. Like in the picture, grab the string on the pouch with your pole hand and drop in the bait and extend the catapult forward to stretch the elastic. Let go of the string. It's hard at first but with practice you will get better at it. Of course, with a rod, you can put it down to fire bait out. But I still do it the pole way when I'm using a Pellet Wagglers.

Always check your elastics before you go fishing. They will wear out at the frame and just above the pouch. If they look worn out, change them. Always carry spare elastics and a spare pouch too if you can.

For years I thought that a container for your catapults was unnecessary. How wrong was I? They stop your Cattys from tangling with everything and even make the elastic last longer. You can keep all your catty spares in there too.



NETS



KEEPNETS - There was a time when everyone used a keepnet, everywhere. But in more conservational times, keepnets are getting more controversial. There is no doubt that they can damage fish, especially Carp and with the dominance of Commercial fisheries today, keepnets are increasingly frowned upon. Indeed, on most of our own DDAS waters, keepnets are banned apart from in competitions. The material nets are made from now is vastly improved from the past and much kinder to the fish put in them. You have to be sensible though and I would personally recommend a net limit of 50lbs of anything. Keep a mental score of what you catch or use a clicker counter. Either way be mindful and think of the fish. To me there is nothing more distasteful than a net solid with Carp (On some venues up to 100lbs!) trapped in a net for hours. So do you need one? The answer to that is, it's up to you. Are you going to fish in competitions? If you are, then yes. If you're not fishing competitions and you're not bothered about seeing what you've caught, then no. The answers to both questions are dependent on fishery rules anyway.

TRANSPORTATION - Nice dry nets on the way to your session is fine. But you've had a great day and now



everything is wet and stinks. So will the car if you don't have a net bag. The best kind of bags are the modern 'EVA' bags (Above) which are huge, but water tight. They keep all the smell in too.

KHV - I almost need to write this section in capitals to make sure I get across how important this bit is. The **Koi Herpes Virus** is devastating to fish and fisheries alike. KHV is transferred by wet keepnets from fishery to fishery.

YOU MUST DRY YOUR KEEPNETS, KEEPNET BAGS, LANDING NETS, MATS, CRADLES & SLINGS, AFTER EVERY TRIP!

I hear some weak excuses about how anglers fish different fisheries from one day to the next and how can they dry them over night? It's a simple answer really.

If your fishing takes you to different venues over the weekend, make sure you have two or more sets of keepnets. It is irresponsible not to.

DDAS protects its fish stocks by not allowing keepnets on its waters but the same drying rule extends to landing nets, weigh slings and unhooking mats, cradles and bags. Anything that gets wet from the water, must be dried after.

There are no excuses.



LANDING NETS - Unlike keepnets, landing nets are vital pieces of equipment. Like most things, they come a mind blowing range of choices. From small 10" (250cm) match nets to enormous 60" (152cm) nets for catfish, and everything in between. You have to think about what you're likely to catch and what lives in the waters you are visiting. Fishery rules come in here again too. Some insist on a minimum size of landing net so check before you fish. To start with, if it's allowed, I would recommend a 22" or 55cm net. This will fit most things in it and is light enough for small anglers.

HANDLES - Again a big range of choices but, get one that you can handle easily. Longer handles are better but can be heavy unless you spend a fortune. A handle of around 2.7 metres is a good place to start. Put a net on it at the shop, wave it around outside and see how it feels.

UNHOOKING MATS - Again this is something that some fisheries mark as a requirement, but that will vary from venue to venue. By now you will have guessed that mats come in a bewildering range of choices from little more than a waste of time, to something that I can only dream of sleeping in one day.

Go for a deep foam mat or even a 'Beanbag' style of mat. It doesn't have to be huge, there are some quite compact mats around now that are acceptable.

The DDAS Juniors use a Guru mat pictured below. Part foam, part 'beans', it has been very handy and zips up quite small for the car.



WEIGHING FISH -

If you catch a nice fish, you're going to want know how much it weighs. I won't go into detail about scales or slings, because I don't know that much about them to be honest. Digital scales are quite cheap and you can use your landing net to weigh the fish in. DDAS Juniors use a proper match type weigh sling but you can buy slings that are simple mesh bags to full on floating affairs. The choice is yours.

However you weigh your catch, make sure it is safe, not too far off the ground and over a mat. Ensure all the fins are folded in too so they don't get damaged. If you are going to take a picture of it, make sure you are ready to do so. Hold the fish low and over mat so if you drop it, it won't get hurt. Keep it wet by pouring water on it and treat any injuries it may have with a fish safe antiseptic.

Any fish you catch is relying on you to look after them and to keep them safe. Regardless of their size, they are living creatures like you and me. They suffer stress and feel pain like we do.

The fish has given itself to you for your excitement, enjoyment and sport. The least you can do for it is to ensure that it is returned to the water with as little harm and stress as possible.

FISH SPECIES & ANATOMY

BARBEL, *barbus barbus*



COMMON or BRONZE BREAM, *abramis brama*



ROACH, *rutilus rutilus*



TENCH, *tinca tinca*



GUDGEON, *gobio gobio*



RUDD, *scardinius erythrophthalmus*



EEL, *anguilla anguilla*



CHUB, *leuciscus cephalus*



CRUCIAN CARP, *carassius carassius*



LEATHER CARP, *cyprinus carpio*



PIKE, *Esox Lucius*



MIRROR CARP, *cyprinus carpio*



COMMON CARP, *cyprinus carpio*



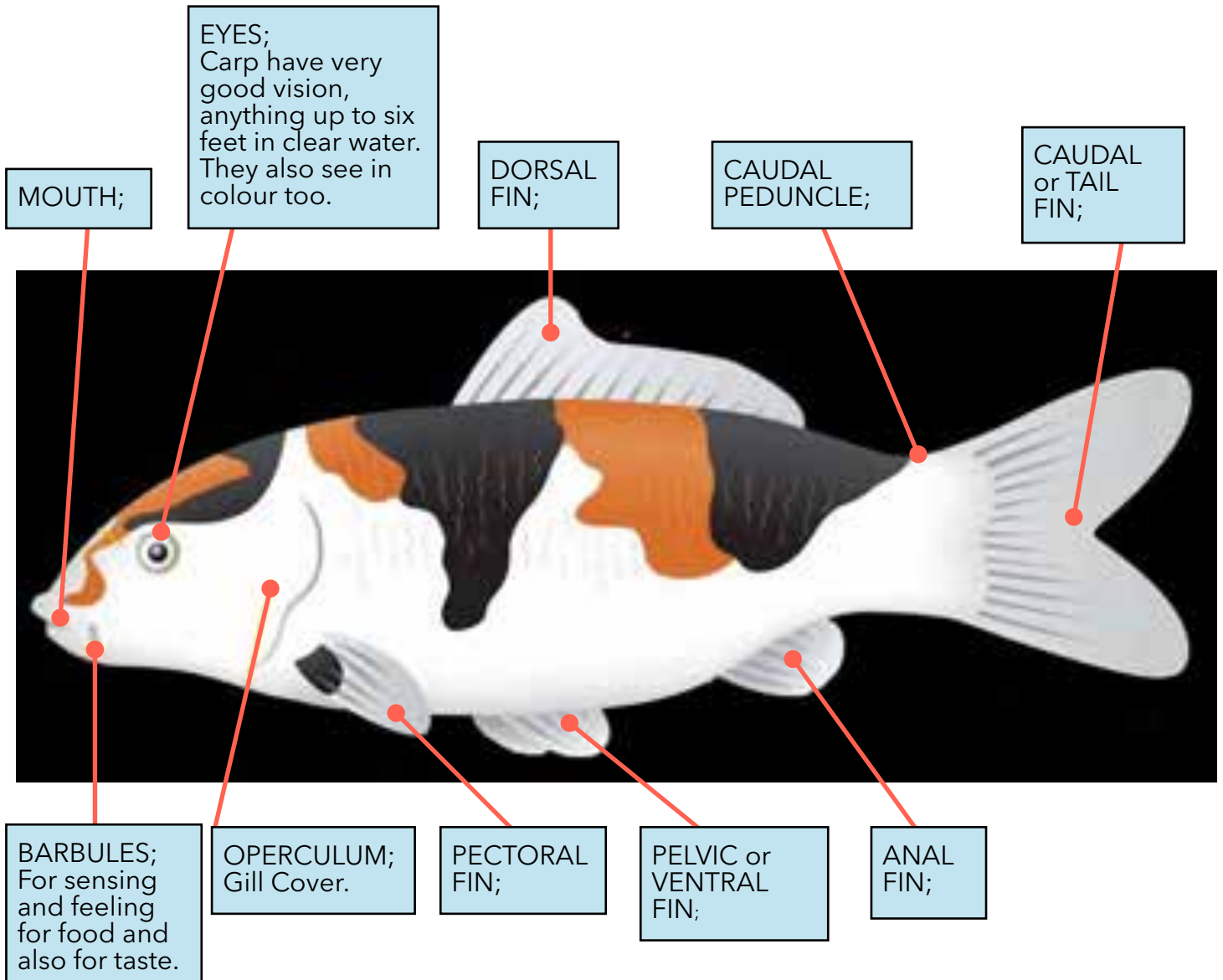
PERCH, *perca fluviatilis*



The only fish missing from here are a **F1 Carp**, almost identical to a Common Carp only, smaller and with just two tiny barbules around the mouth instead of four. Engineered hybrid of Common and Crucian Carp.
Grass Carp, long, slender and fully scaled with no barbules.

EXTERNAL

Not shown in this picture is the all important Lateral Line. It starts behind the Operculum (Gill Cover) and continues along the length of the fishes body to the tail. It is full of sensors to feel vibration and sense movement. So sensitive in fact that it can pick up footsteps and even voices of anglers through the water.



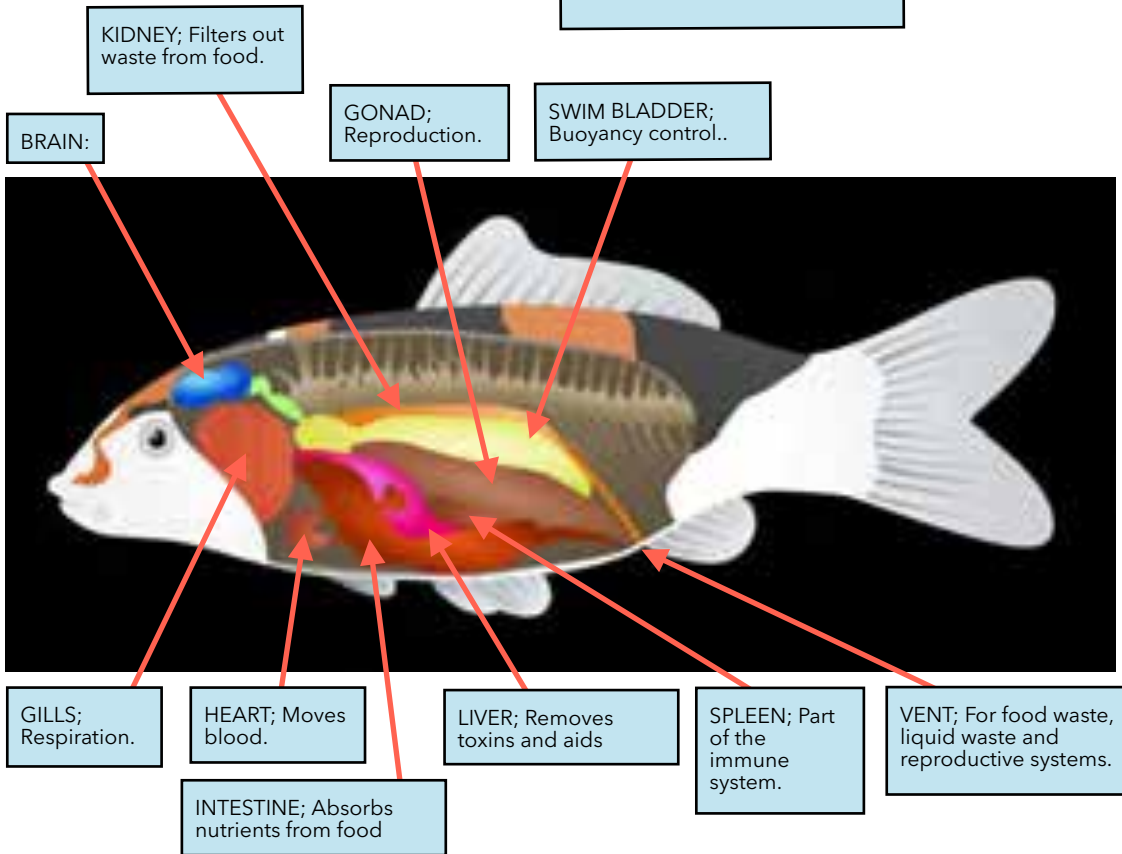
These images are from a Koi Carp site and they show beautifully the internal and external anatomy of a Carp.

Most Coarse fish will be very similar to the Carp. There will be some minor differences in the positioning of internal organs due to the wonderfully varied shapes and sizes fish come in.


Incidentally, if you're wondering why this family of fish are called Coarse fish and why we go 'Coarse' fishing. It is because the scales on these fish (with the notable exception of Tench and Grayling) are much larger or 'coarser' in older language. Hence the name, Coarse fish.

Every family has an odd member or two. Eels and Catfish are two such members. Even so, there will still be similarities.

INTERNAL

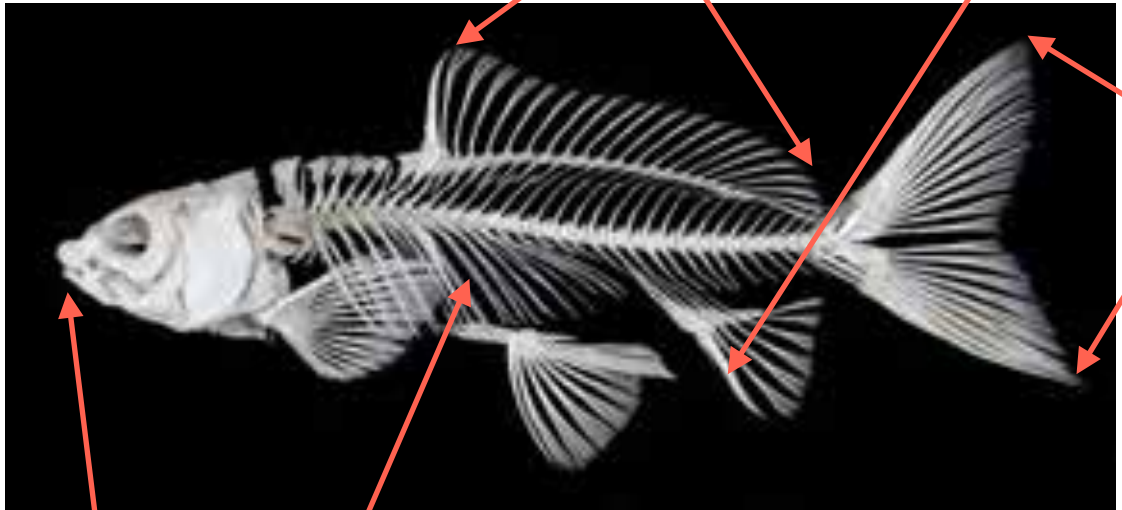


HOLDING FISH -
 We have to hold fish to get the hooks out. Some people love fishing, but not holding fish. You will see people wrapping fish dry rags or towels. Now I can't begin to tell you how wrong that is!
 Fish covered with a slime or 'mucus' that protects the fish from parasites and diseases. Take this away and the fish is open to anything. If you must use a cloth, make sure it is soaking wet first. This will help reduce mucus loss.
 We all like a picture or two but, handle fish as little as possible. **ALWAYS** use a padded mat. Keep your hands and the fish wet at all times. Look after it because it is your responsibility.

 Carp have hard spines on their fins which have back facing teeth or 'serrations'. These are the fishes defence system. These can and will get caught in your nets for time to time. Check your net because they can get stuck.

The Dorsal fin is used for stability in the water. Fish like this Carp have one long fin, but it will vary in size and shape from species to species.

As with the Dorsal Spine, the Anal Spine is armed with tiny, back curving teeth or 'serrations' to act as a form of defence.



The Caudal or Tail fin is used, primarily, for forward motion. Usually, if the tail is broad and wide like this carp, it is typical for slow moving fish. The smaller and more pointy fins are more usually owned by faster predatory fish like Perch, Pike and Zander.



Fish like Carp, Bream, Gudgeon and Barbel are bottom or 'Bethnic' feeders. They can extend their mouths outwards to vacuum up food particles. The scientific name for this type of mouth is a 'Sub-terminal' or 'Inferior' mouth shape.

The large rib cage contains the very long intestine or digestive tract. Carp have no stomach, so the intestine absorbs nutrients from food.

PHARYNGEAL TEETH -
 (pronounced - Fah-rin-gee-al)
 Most Coarse fish have no external teeth. So they crunch up hard pieces of food with teeth in their throat or Pharyngeal teeth. Fish like Carp and Chub in particular have very large teeth so be careful what you stick down there. By the way, if you're told that putting your thumb in the mouth of a Carp calms it down, don't, because it's a myth!
 To be fair you would have to put your thumb a long way in before you got to any teeth. But the pictures above show teeth from a Carp (Left) and a Chub (Right). I don't want my digits anywhere near them either!

SECTION TWO



FISHING WITH A POLE A BEGINNERS GUIDE

What to look for when buying a pole, elastics, floats and all the other accessories you will need to think about for Pole fishing.

What is

POLE FISHING?

- Why use a pole?
- Which one for a beginner?
- Which elastic?
- Which floats and why?
- What else will you need
- Top tips to help you

Pole fishing used to be reserved only for forward thinking match anglers, probably those that have been to Europe and seen the anglers using them there.

Pole fishing is not for everyone and many people do not get on with a pole. But in the right hands they can be extremely accurate and a very effective method of catching fish.

A pole is a series of tubes that either push together to build the pole or slide inside each other and extend like a telescope.

Poles these days will almost always be made from Carbon Fibre and are available in many different lengths. From 1 or 2 metre whips, right up to 16 metre super poles costing thousands of pounds.

In this section of the booklet, we will cover what to look for in your first pole, how to make it ready to fish with, what floats to think about, when to use them and what other accessories you will need to use a pole effectively.

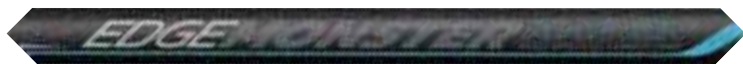
As usual the range of choice is bewildering but, in the next few pages, we'll try to make sense of it all.

WHY USE A POLE?

Some will say that is a very good question. They can be long, awkward, clumsy, heavy and tiresome to use. Of course, any long pole will feel heavy in small hands, so you have to use it at a length that you are happy with. Poles are a bit like shoes, one size does not fit everyone. A pole that works for one, may not work another. You have to try a few out and see how they feel in your hands. When you have found one you like and you can afford it, then you may have found a pole that is for you. You can plumb the depth and feed super accurately using cups and pots that attach to your pole. You can fish in areas that you can not always get to easily with a rod and reel. You can use much lighter tackle with a pole too.

WHICH ONE SHOULD I BUY AS MY FIRST POLE?

As I mentioned in the introduction, unless you have a huge bank account, there is no point in buying anything super expensive. It WILL get damaged. It WILL get broken. There's no sound worse than that of expensive splintering carbon. Unless you own a tackle shop.



You won't really go far wrong by buying a Margin Pole to start with. They are strong and pretty tough, so they will take a knock or two in novice hands. They are comparatively cheaper too, ranging from around £50 to £150. Of course there are more expensive Margin Poles that push to £700 or £800. I would only consider these if I already had or had planned to get, a longer match or carp pole that will have matching tip sections or 'Top Kits'. When looking for a pole of any kind, the 'package' that accompanies the pole is important. Having at least one spare top kit can be a big help when you are fishing. Four Top Kits are even better. The pole doesn't have to have four Top Kits when you buy it, just make sure that you can buy spares for it if you need or want to. More of that later.

DO I NEED ANYTHING ELSE?

Oh yes... Let us assume that you have spent a cool £150 on a pole like the one pictured. What next? Well, you'll need elastics and fittings first. Lets take a look at that next.

ELASTICS are fitted inside the Top Kit or the end two sections. It absorbs the runs and lunges of a fish similar to how a rod and reel works. You will have realised by now that there is a huge range of choice on most things to do with fishing. Basically there two types of elastic, solid and hollow.

SOLID elastics are much thinner and lighter. Used mainly for small fish rated from 1 through to 8. I will fit solid elastics in for the winter when fishing is harder and I use finer, lighter tackle., or where target species are smaller. Many people use heavier solid elastics in the summer for controlling big fish on very heavy tackle. Solid elastics 'Power up' much more quickly, meaning they reach the end of their stretch before a hollow will. Because of this you can really put some power into fish trying to get to snags like bushes, reeds or tree roots. You put a lot of strain on your tackle and you need to have total faith in your pole for this kind of fishing.

HOLLOW elastics are much softer and can stretch much more than a solid elastic, making them perfect for carp fishing on commercials as they allow the fish to run around a bit and still keep you in control. Because they are so stretchy, you will need a 'puller' type of Top Kit to land the fish (see next section). Ranging from a 4 rating up to around 20 to 22 for the heaviest. Hollows in the 10 to 14 range are probably the most commonly used.

TOP TIP: Keep your elastics healthy. Check them regularly for wear and tear. You can't always see the damage on elastic but give it a little stretch and run it over your bottom lip. Because your lip is so sensitive, you will be able to feel if the elastic is worn or damaged. If it is, you need to think about changing it. If you can see damage, don't think, change it. Don't wish you had after a big fish is lost.

EIGHT STEPS TO FISHING WITH A POLE -

Fishing with a pole, particularly one over 10 metres, can be heavy, tiresome and sometimes painful. But with some simple tips, using a pole can be as enjoyable as any other kind of fishing. Using a seat box with a decent cushion, a footplate and adjustable legs to level it, is very important. If you are comfortable, you will fish better. If you have everything to hand, you will give yourself a better chance to catch more fish. If you have everything set up correctly, you will give yourself less things to worry about, and if something isn't as you want it, get off your box and fix it. Don't sit there and try to struggle on.



1. ORGANISATION - Make sure you have everything to hand. You shouldn't be reaching for anything when holding the pole.



2. POSITION YOUR ROLLERS - It is vital to have your rollers set up so there is no bounce and no drop off.



3. HIGH & LOW - When using two rollers, your the front roller should be slightly higher than the rear to avoid drop off when shipping out.



4. POLE SOCK & TULIP - These should be positioned so that there is no stress on the pole at rest.



5. ON YOUR LAP - When fishing, your pole should be across your lap with the weight of the pole on your elbow.



6. THE RIGHT ANGLE - When pole fishing, it is important to have your knees at a 90 deg angle. Using a footplate helps.



7. REVERSE - When fishing a long pole, it will get heavy. Reverse your weaker elbow and push the pole through with the other



8. SPRAY BAR - To help you with a long pole, try a Spray bar. An adjustable padded bar that is positioned in front of you.

Keep your elastics lubricated with a purpose made Silicone or PTFE lubricant that is made for the job. A couple of quick squirts or drops down the tip section of your pole will stop the elastic sticking to the inside of the section and make them perform better and last longer.

PULLER TOP KITS

Used for tightening the elastic to land a fish, a puller kit has either a puller bung (Top) or a side puller system (Bottom).

A Puller Bung is fitted into the bottom of the number 3 section of your pole. It is universal and will need to be cut back to fit snugly so that just 5cm is seen as in the picture. The Puller Bung needs to be positioned far enough inside the pole so the next section of pole (The number 4 section) will fit properly without hitting the bung. As you play a fish, elastic is pulled from the Bung with your free hand and then given to the hand holding the Top Kit. This will be repeated as necessary until you have the right tension in the elastic to land the fish. In the same way as reel, you can also release pressure from the elastic if the fish should make a run so your line does not snap. It is worth noting that the white piece at the end of the tube is made from PTFE to allow smooth running for the elastic.



SIDE PULLER KITS

Fitting side pullers to your Top Kit is not for the faint hearted. You have to drill a big hole in your new pole which never feels right somehow. You will notice from the picture that there is an extra wrap of Carbon Fibre to strengthen the pole where the hole for the Side Puller is drilled.

DO NOT FIT A SIDE PULLER TO A SECTION THAT DOES NOT HAVE A REINFORCED WRAP!

You have been warned.



Fortunately for us, Side Pullers are generally fitted at the factory as standard these days, so you don't have to worry about it. You use a Side Puller in exactly the same way as a Puller Bung, only the elastic exits the pole right where your hand should be. So you use it in like a 'pull and pinch' motion, trapping the elastic with the hand holding the section. Again, tension can be released if needed. Take care releasing your elastic. Don't just let go because the bead on the elastic could hit and damage your pole. Again, the white section that the elastic runs through is ultra slippery PTFE.

Another accessory that you will need to complete your Top Kit is a PTFE Bush that fits into the end of your pole at the tip. The Bush protects your elastic from the pole and allows the elastic to stretch and retract smoothly when needed. Again these are mostly fitted for you these days but, if it isn't, you may have to cut your pole back a bit to fit a Bush if you can't find one that fits, or the inside diameter of the pole is too small for the elastic you want to use. Ask someone that has done this before to help you because you can really do some damage if you get it wrong.

WHICH CONNECTOR?

This is one of those grey areas where opinions vary a lot. You will need a method of attaching your line to your elastic. By far the easiest way is to use a 'Stonfo' type of connector seen below. I won't go into how to attach them



because the info is on the packet when you buy them, but basically the elastic is tied to the

connector and then a loop on your line goes around the little hook and is trapped by a plastic sleeve. I mentioned this is the easiest, but is it the best? Just to confuse things, yes and no. They are brilliant for new and younger anglers because they are simple and easy to use. But I personally have issues with the rig coming detached. Having said that, I would use the very small ones for light elastics where there is no real pressure and the biggest ones for the heaviest elastics of 20 plus because I haven't had issues with using big elastics with these connectors before. But for everything else in between, I use something different.

DACRON CONNECTORS

This type of connector is a firm favourite with many pole anglers. A bit more fiddly to fit but far better to use than other connectors. The ones pictured right are purchased on a tube to make fitting them easier. I will explain how to fit these and how they work in a later section.



NOSE CONES & INTERMEDIATE ALIGNERS

Nose Cones are made from PTFE, foam or just plastic. They help to protect your pole from damage like chipping, splits or cracks. Nothing wears a pole out faster than dirt, grit or sand in the joints. Nose Cones can help by 'sweeping' the joints clean as you use them.

Intermediate Aligners or 'Wet Walls' are positioned halfway down your Top Kit. They are very useful because they prevent your elastic from touching the inside of your Top Kit and sticking to it, stopping the elastic from performing as it should.

In the picture below, the Wet Wall is the smallest one on the top right.

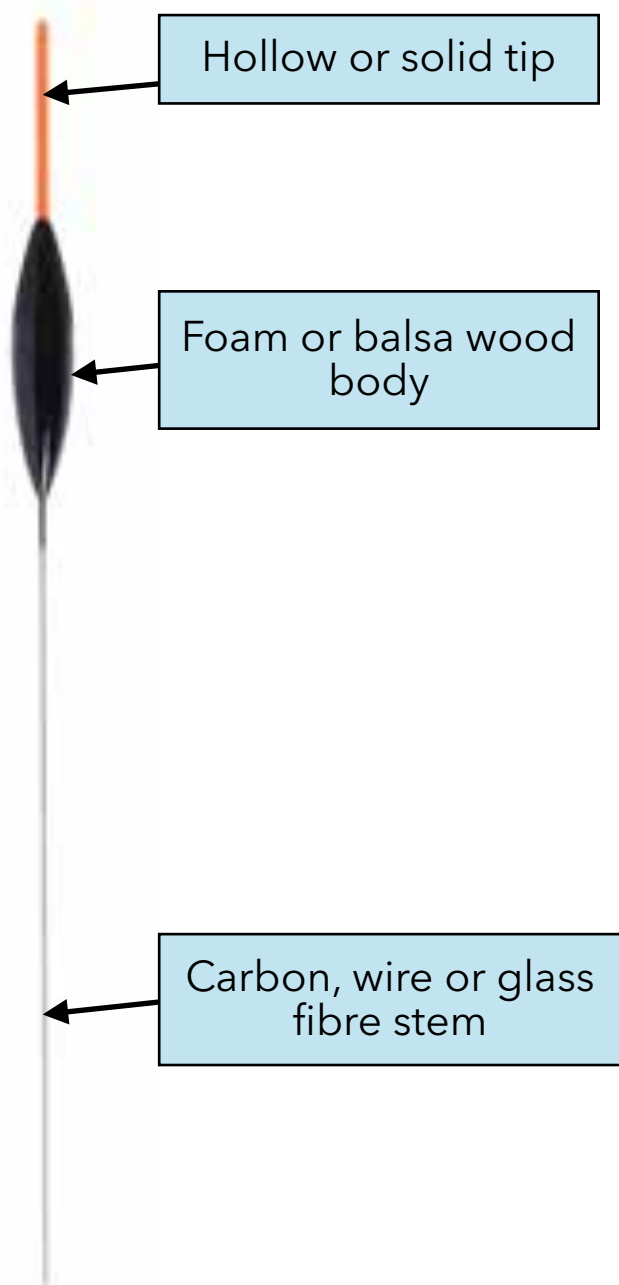


POLE RIGS AND TERMINAL TACKLE

There literally thousands of different pole floats on the market and each will appeal in a different way to individual anglers. But, fortunately, we can simplify things a little. I will stress once again that what follows is simply my own opinion and just a guide to help you.

POLE FLOATS

Modern pole floats are increasingly made from a high density foam that is very durable and strong. The high viz tips are most commonly hollow and the stems are made from either Carbon fibre, Glass fibre or Wire.



TIP or BRISTLE

Either hollow or solid nylon plastic. Hollow tips are more buoyant for larger, heavier baits and they tend to be easier to see because light that penetrates the tip is reflected outwards and makes it almost 'glow' in the right conditions. Solid tips are much more sensitive and more useful for shy biting fish and/or cold conditions when ever bite counts.

BODY

Traditionally balsa, but now more commonly foam, the shape will depend heavily on weather conditions, time of year, species of fish you are trying catch and where in the water you are trying catch them.

The first body shape I would consider is the slim 'rugby ball' shape shown left. Very versatile and stable in all but the harshest of conditions. Because of the narrow body, they offer very little resistance to a biting fish or when you strike into a bite. You can use these floats for most areas of your swim.

The second would have to be a diamond shape body. This is a very stable shape and remains very still in the water.



Pear shaped floats are better for deeper water, where extra weight might be needed.



EYES

The small wire loop on a pole float is known as the eye, through which the line is threaded. Twisted wire eyes are better for smaller fish because they tend to get ripped out by large fish. Spring eyes are better for larger species because they are glued onto the stem or the bristle of the float. Spring eyes have been known to upset the balance of the float a little. The latest generation of floats now combine the two by having the stem run through an eye similar a twisted wire version so you get the lightness of a wire eye with the strength of a spring eye.

Some pole floats have the line running through a tube inside the body of the float and even through the bristle. These are known as inline floats. Inline floats are particularly useful for very heavy duty fishing through trees branches and roots. The ultimate in strength.

STEMS - The Stem of the float plays a very important roll in which float to choose. Many pole floats look the same but it might be just the stem that is different. But why?

There three basic stem types, carbon, fibre glass and wire. Use a carbon stem when you want to fish through the water with a slow falling bait like maggots, pellets or bread. Carbon stemmed floats are slower to settle, but will show bites on the drop better.

Glass fibre stems are very strong and great for floats that might take a battering from bigger fish. Perfect to use for margin fishing or when fishing to a snag like trees, reeds or lilies.

Finally, wire stems are very stable and lend themselves to windy conditions, deeper water or when fishing on or near the bottom. Obviously in windy weather you want your float to have stability in the waves and not be wobbling around all over the place. With the extra weight of the wire stem, these floats can remain very still. Wire is often better for flowing water to, for similar reasons. For fishing on the deck with pellets, it is important for your float to settle quickly so it is fishing immediately. A wire stemmed float will do the job perfectly.

So, carbon for a slow falling bait, glass if you think you're in for a fight and wire for stability or fishing deeper water.

WEIGHTS

We have touched on weights and split shot in an early section of the booklet, so I won't go that again in full. But I will point out that I will use Stotz if there is any chance of hooking a Carp (more often than not these days) and split shot for Silverfish only. The reason for this is that shots can ping off the line if it's pulled very tight. Stotz do not. Of course there will be times when you hook a lump on silverfish rig and that can't be helped.

OLIVETTES

A weight we haven't really mentioned is an Olivette. A larger, slim pear shaped weight that the line either runs through (Inline) and is fixed in place by split shot/Stotz (Left) or by rubber sleeves pushed over small pegs either end of the Olivette (Right).

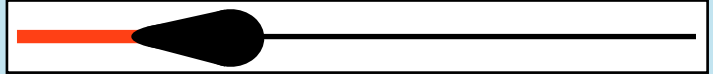


Olivettes are generally used when you need a large amount of weight, or 'Bulk', in one place on the rig. Most commonly seen on running water or very deep water rigs. Use inline Olivettes when you know you won't be changing the bulk weight and the pegged version if you think you might need to change the bulk and/or the number of droppers. At least, that is the idea. I personally have never changed the size of the Olivette when I'm fishing. I would just have a different sized float set up on another Top Kit.

When you're plumbing the depth with a pole, it can sometimes pay to have a few sizes of plummet weight available to use. Most of the time you will get away with just using the same size but, you made need a heavier one for deep water or a lighter one for soft, silty bottom surfaces and/or fine tuning of the depth. Heavier plummets will stretch the line a little, particularly with light lines. So a lighter one to fine tune your rig after you have found the depth with the heavier one, can sometimes pay off.

TYPES OF POLE FLOATS

As usual there are thousands of pole floats to choose from and you may be easily confused. But to be honest, it's fairly straightforward. We've looked at body shapes a bit earlier so you should be familiar with those now. As usual what follows is purely an opinion and may differ from angler to angler but, most will agree that it's a start.



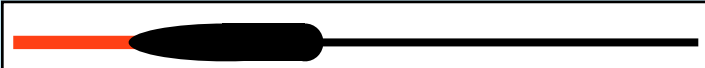
PEAR or ROUNDED PEAR - Better suited for larger baits in deeper water or when there is a bit of a breeze in the air. Because of the body shape, 'Pears' are very stable floats when a slim float can't cope so well. You can get them with the same or similar stems and tips as the slim floats.



SLIM or F1 STYLE FLOAT - I use this pattern of float for nearly all of my pole fishing. Long or short pole, this shape is very versatile and reliable. Wire stems for fishing on or near the bottom and carbon stems for fishing down through the water on the drop. Most will have a 1.2 or 1.5mm hollow tip so they are very visible and very sensitive. Be aware that the 'Chianti' style floats look very similar but have a tip made from thin cane and although there is nothing wrong with them, they can behave very differently. Chianti floats are still a big favourite with some canal anglers with Squatts and very fine lines.



PASTE FLOATS - These floats seem to break some of the rules that we have covered so far. They tend to have carbon or glass stems, but they are used for bait fished on the bottom. They sometimes have a solid tip that is sensitive, but they are used with a bait that can be as big as a golf ball?? Some paste floats are self cocking (no weight needed on the line). One thing they do all have in common however is a nice long bristle so you can see the lifts and dips as the fish chomp away at the paste bait. I like the slim bodied versions that need a few STOTZ down the line. I feel it helps to stabilise the float better. We'll cover more about paste fishing later.



PENCIL FLOAT - I like to use these 'Pencil' shaped floats for fishing larger baits like meat or corn in more open water where there is not much chance of it getting caught up in snags. It is still quite a sensitive float because of the body shape but that extra roundness at the bottom adds just a little more buoyancy for bigger baits. 1.5mm hollow tip and a thicker carbon stem makes them quite tough too.

MARGIN FLOATS - I haven't included an image of a Margin float because, to be honest, I don't think it really matters. You will need a very strong, short float with a decent glass stem and a thicker, 2mm Bristle or more. I like my Margin floats to be 'inline' too, with the line running through the body and even the Bristle too. My Margin floats tend to be a bit heavier, 0.4g or 0.5g in weight. This helps to avoid foul hooked fish because you bulk all the shot down above a short hooklink or close to the hook (10cm) to stop the bait from being wafted around in the chaos.

SHALLOW FLOATS and DIBBERS -

For shallow fishing with pellets, you will need to use as lighter float as you can, but still have enough weight to whip it over to 'slap' it on the water (more of that kind of thing later).

For fishing shallow, probably no more than 30cm under the surface, where you will be actively looking for bites, you will need a float with a short stumpy bristle like the one below.



It has a fairly thick bristle, a pear shaped body and a fibre glass stem, so it's quite a robust little chap, but there is one tougher.

A Dibber float has a rounded or pointed, sometimes inline body, with no bristle. Some Dibbers are made from a transparent plastic which makes them less frightening to wary fish and perfect for fishing a bait shallow. They are also enormously strong so would be a go to float for fishing for big Carp that will beat up tackle in a fight.



Another good reason for using strong floats is to stop them breaking when they're in the landing net with an angry fish thrashing around.

SHOTTING TABLE

Below is a table that will help you decide which shots, STOTZ or Olivettes to use on your pole rigs.

1x no. 8 equals 2x no. 10
1x no. 9 equals 2x no. 11
1x no. 10 equals 2x no. 12
1x no. 11 equals 2x no. 13

As far as STOTZ or split shots are concerned, the most useful size you need to remember is a No.9.

No.9s are pretty much 0.05 of a gram in weight.

2x No.9s is the same as 0.1 of a gram.

When you looking at pole floats they will have either their size in grams or, a more old fashioned method of 4x10, 4x12, 4x14, etc. As far as I am aware, the '4x' measurement comes from the once popular 'Styl' lead weights commonly used a number of years ago, but have now largely been replaced by STOTZ weights.

If your float is in grams, then it is more simple to work out.

Say you have a 0.3g float. You will need at least two dropper shots.

Two Droppers of a No.11 are the same weight as one No.9.

A 0.3g float will need 6 No.9 STOTZ to set it correctly.

You have already fixed two No.11s to the line counting as one No.9, so you will need 5 more No.9 STOTZ to be about right.

In short, 0.3g = approx 6x No.9s.

2x No.11 droppers = 1x No.9

Shooting will be approx. 5x No.9 + 2x No.11.

Of course, we have already said that floats can tell lies. Good quality pole floats tend to be fairly reliable, but there will be slight differences sometimes. I will always add any extra weights or 'Trimmer shots' ABOVE the rest. Usually No. 13s.

Don't be afraid of breaking the weight needed to shot the float down into smaller sizes, especially for silvers rigs or when you want/need to fish through the water. You can always bunch the weights into a bulk if you need to.

SHOT/STOTZ CONVERSION TABLE

1x no.8 (0.06g)	=	2x no.10
1x no.9 (0.05g)	=	2x no.11
1x no.10 (0.04g)	=	2x no.12
1x no.11 (0.025g)	=	2x no.13

POLE FLOAT CONVERSION TABLE

3 x 10 = 0.1g	(4x no.11)
4 x 10 = 0.15g	(6x no.11)
4 x 12 = 0.2g	(3x no.9 + 2x no.11)
4 x 14 = 0.4g	(7x no.9 + 2x no.11)
4 x 16 = 0.6g	(11x no.9 + 2x no.11)

For 4 x 18 you have a choice between

$$4 \times 18 = 0.75g$$

$$(11x \text{ no.}8 + 1x \text{ no.}9 + 2x \text{ no.}11)$$

or

$$(1x \text{ 0.5g Olivette} + 4x \text{ no.}9 + 2x \text{ no.}11)$$

Ok, so, which do you use?

Well, that's a tricky one because fishing situations can differ from one day to the next.

But there is a rough way to work it out. As you gain more experience and knowledge of the venues you visit, you will get to know the depth of each peg.

One 'Rule of thumb' we can remember is that,

ONE FOOT (30cm) OF DEPTH WILL NEED 0.1g OF WEIGHT.

So if the water in front of you is 4 feet (1.2 metres) deep, then you will need to think about a float that needs around 0.4g in weight. It's not perfect but it's a good way to start. Weather conditions will play a part, as will the mood of the fish.

If it's windy you may need to go heavier.

If the fish are feeding at mid depth or above, then go lighter.

This is what makes fishing such a challenge.

MAKING A POLE RIG

We're going to look at a step by step guide to making a pole rig to fish with expander pellets. The process will be the same for virtually any pole rig.

STEP ONE - You're going to need the following items.;

A spool of 0.15mm line (recommend Guru N-Gauge),

Some STOTZ ranging from No. 8 down to No. 13,

Some pliers (recommend Preston 'Stotter' Stotz pliers),

Some pole float sleeves (recommend Frenzee multi box),

A pole float around 4x12 or 0.3g (recommend Preston F1 Pellet),

A 2 litre plastic bottle with the top cut off, filled with water and ONE DROP of washing up liquid.

STEP TWO - Try the different sizes of silicone sleeves on the stem of the pole float until you find one that is a snug fit. Cut THREE pieces off about 3 or 4mm long each.

STEP THREE - Thread the line through the eye of the float downwards from bristle to stem and thread on the three silicone sleeves.

STEP FOUR - Push each of the sleeves on to the stem of the float. The first should be under the body with a 1 cm gap. The last sleeve should be at the end of the stem and the third will in the middle of the other two. The reason you use three is so, should one sleeve break, you have a spare on the stem. The only time I use just two is on short Dibber floats where there is no room for three.

STEP FIVE - Slide the float up the line about 10cm and work out how much weigh you will need using the shotted table. Attach the STOTZ to the line droppers first, then the bulk.

STEP SIX - Test the rig in the container. Drop it in a few times to get the float wet and reduce surface tension. Because the bottle is so small, there will be a lot of surface tension on the water. We add a drop of washing up liquid to reduce the tension and soften the water slightly. What you are looking for is the water level to be between the body and halfway up the bristle.

STEP SEVEN - I would expect the body of the float to be fully submerged if I have got my shotting correct or the float is a reliable one. If it is sticking out of the water too much, then I will add some 'Trimming shots', usually No.13 or 12, above those already on the line until the water level is halfway up the bristle. If there is too much shot on the line then I will remove the last one and try a smaller size until I have it where I want it.

There is a good reason why I don't dot the float right down at home as it would be when I am fishing. That is because the water surface tension in my bottle is far more than that of the lakes I will be fishing. So I will probably do the last fine tune to the rig with a bait on, after I have plumbed the depth.

STEP EIGHT - So we are now happy with our shotting. Now we need to get rid of the piece of line that you pinched your weights on to. The chances are it will feel rough and be damaged by the process. We need to slide the float up the line a couple of feet and do the same with each weight. Do this SLOWLY. If you move lead weights quickly, friction will heat them up and burn the line and your fingers! Cut off the damaged section of line and tie a nice, neat figure of eight loop knot.

STEP NINE - I will slide the last dropper shot so it sits just above the loop knot and spread the rest of the shots so they are about 4cm apart, all the way up until the last trimmer. I'll push the float out of the way a bit further up too.

STEP TEN - Measure your Top Kit. You can use a tape measure if you wish, but by far the easiest way is to measure it against your arms. For my Top Kit it is one full both arms width, from finger tip to finger tip and then from my finger tip to my shoulder or my throat. Work yours out and remember it. Keep checking it as you grow or you'll end up with very long pole rigs! Cut the line

and tie a long figure of eight loop knot, about the length of your finger. In the end of the loop, tie a small overhand loop knot about 4 or 5cm long. You will use this small loop to remove the rig from your connector.

STEP ELEVEN - You can attach a hooklink now if you wish but, I like to store my rigs without hooklinks and attach them when I'm fishing. Take a winder (The Preston double winders are my favourite, but any will do) about 18cm in length minimum so it cuts down on any kinks in the line, and begin winding the rig on. DON'T WIND IT ON TOO TIGHTLY! You will damage the line and ruin it. You can either use the sliders on the side of the winder if you're using a Preston one or an elasticated anchor if your winder doesn't have them.

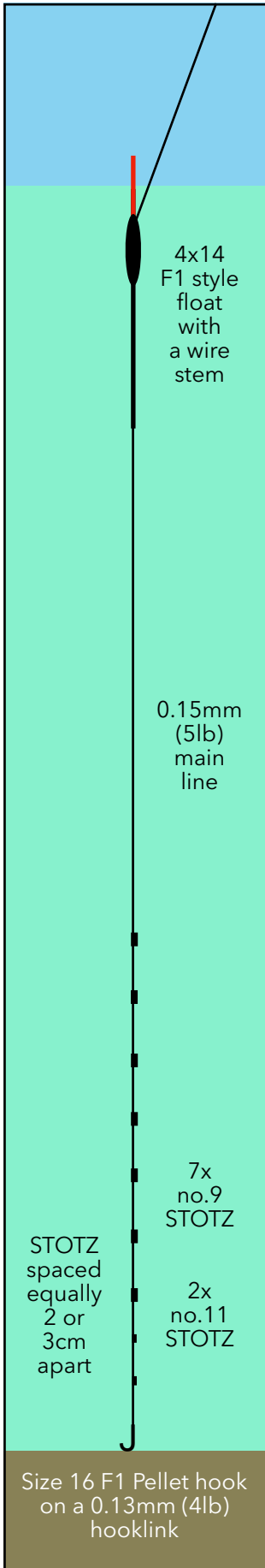
STEP TWELVE - ALWAYS write on the side of the winder what float it is, the size, the main line weight and/or diameter and the hook size if you attached one. It is a good idea to make a note either in a note pad or on the winder how many shots it took so you can refer back to it again in the future.

So that's it! Only 40 more to go before you fill your winder tray!

Seriously though, you don't need hundreds of rigs made up, just enough so that if you break one, you have spares. The winders will take two rigs on one winder these days, so I always buy two floats at a time.

When I find a pattern of float I like, I will usually get it in sizes from 4x10 to 4x14 and sometimes 4x16. So that's six or eight floats in a set. It saves time, it makes you more efficient as an angler and it looks cool in your Seat box....

TOP TIP: Don't forget yellow tipped floats. They are brilliant for dark backgrounds like trees or bushes.

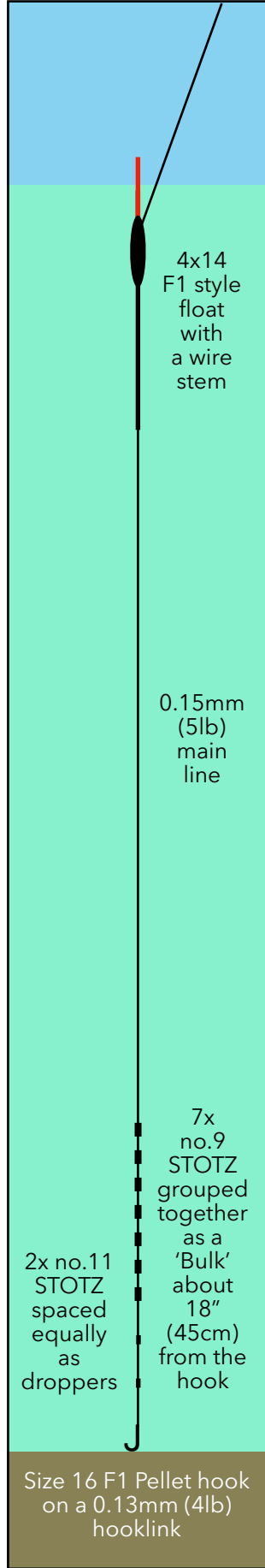


STRUNG OUT BULK -

For me, this is how I set up nearly all of my pole rigs of this type, when I first put them on the winder. I will move them around when I'm fishing where ever I feel they need to be. A strung out bulk pattern gives a good 'intermediate' start to search your swim with, allowing you to fish through the water as well as on the bottom. Keep checking the shot spacing, as they can move when you're catching fish.

Note that all rigs of this kind are made using 0.15mm (5lb) line. There is no reason to go heavier for open water swims in the summer, or lighter in the winter. The exception being really big Carp in the area, then you need to think about stepping it up a bit.

I like to use a 4" (10cm) hooklink with this rig.

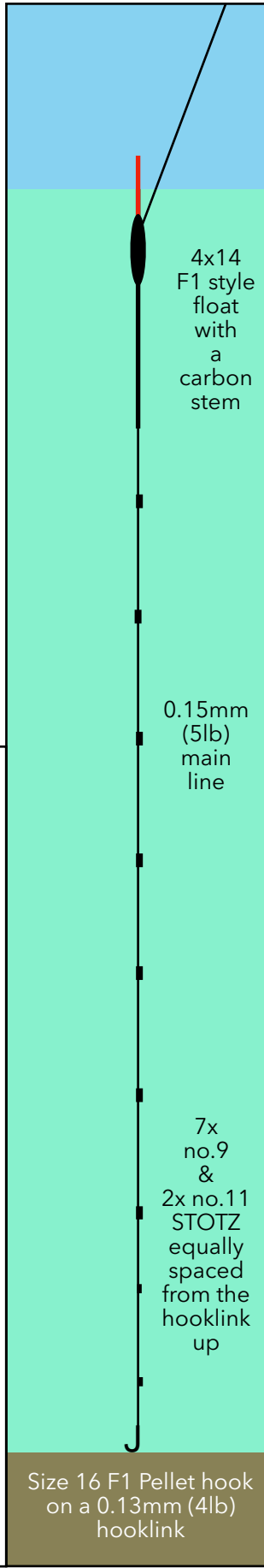


BULK & TWO DROPPERS -

This pattern is used for fishing very positively on the deck mainly for Carp and Skimmer Bream. It is seen as positive because you are essentially ignoring any fish in the upper and middle layers of the water, to target fish on the bottom. I will use a slightly heavier float (4x14 and upwards) for this depending on the depth. Again I will use a 4" (10cm) hooklink.

SHIRT BUTTON SHOTTING PATTERN -

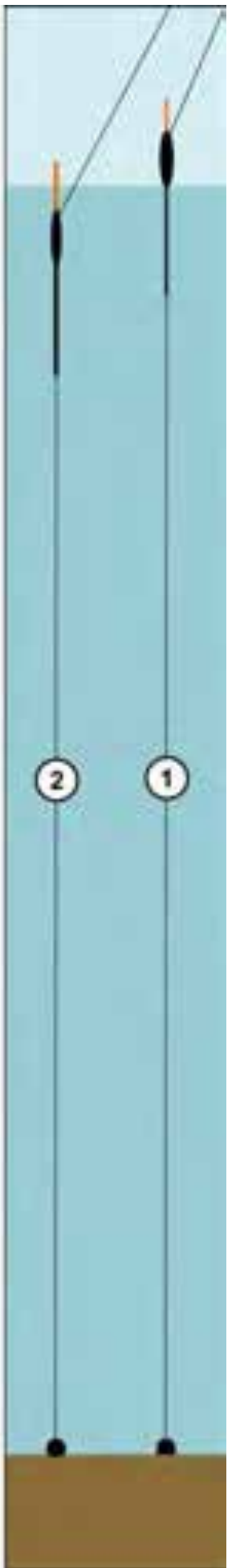
Generally used for slow falling baits fishing 'through the water', meaning the shots are spaced out along the rig to allow the bait to fall as naturally as possible, keeping control over the speed. The closer the shots are spaced, the faster the bait will fall. The further apart they are, the slower the bait will fall. Handy for silverfish.





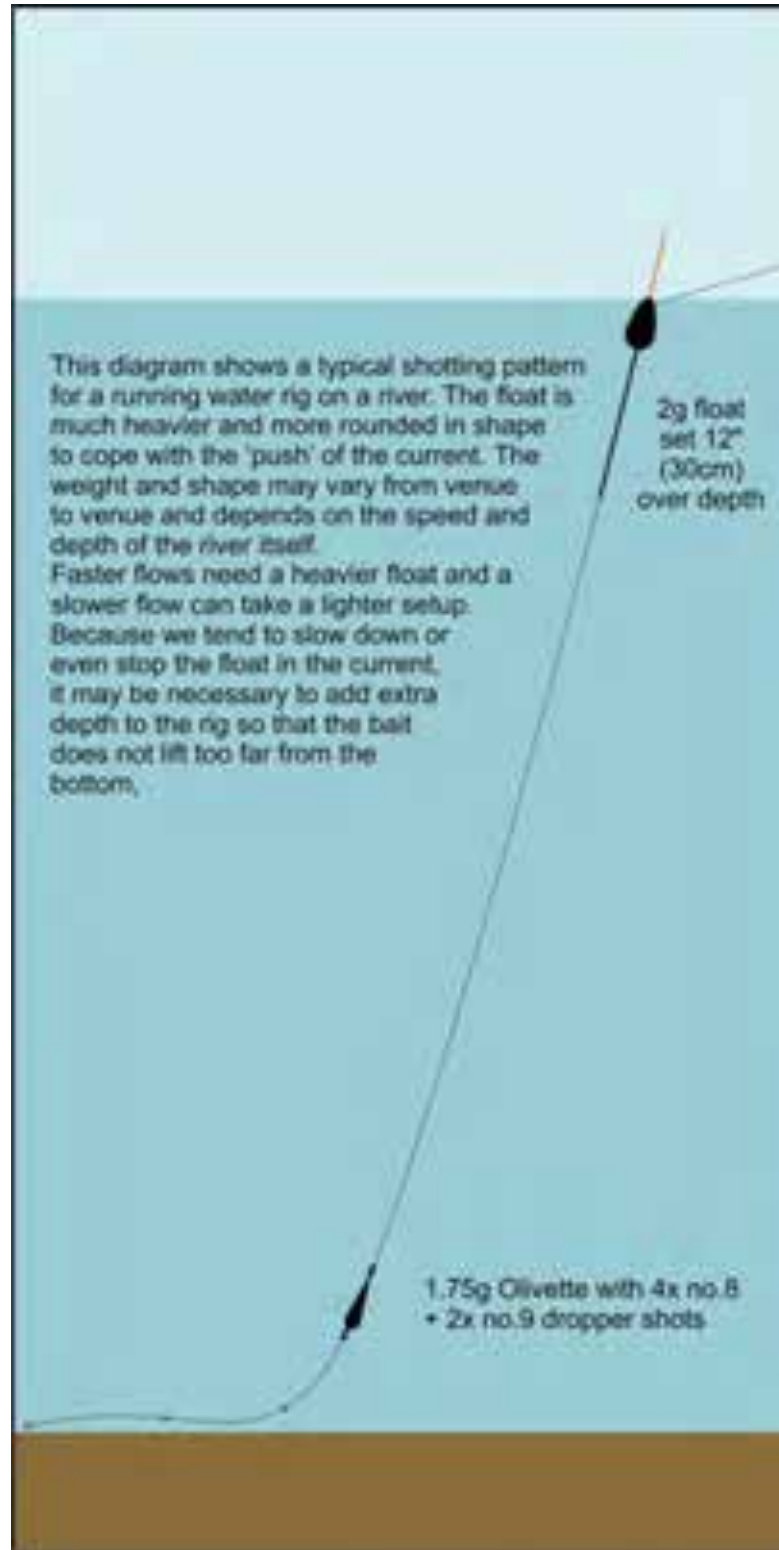
With Margin and Shallow rigs, you will probably be targeting larger fish. In the Margins, the chances are you may be fishing close to tree roots, reeds, weed or lilies. Big Carp love getting into the summer sun and be caught close the surface.

In either case, strong line is required to tame these beasts on the pole



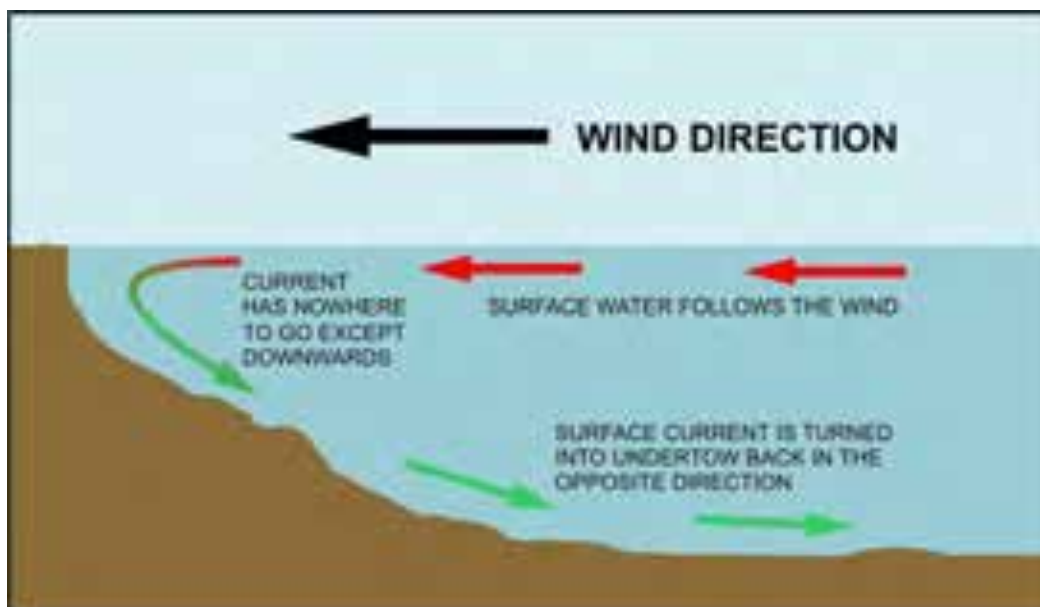
When plumbing the depth with a pole, plumb up so the body of the float just touches the water (1). Make sure you take your time doing this because it is vital that you get it spot on. Try to find a reasonably flat area to fish over, not too silty.

However, with a paste rig (2), you need to set the float as you would want to see it as you are fishing. The paste will then pull the float to the correct position.



SHOTTING WITH OLIVETTES -
 To me, Olivettes only really come in handy for deeper waters, probably over 6ft (2 metres) in depth, or when I need a heavier float. Usually the two situations are the same as deeper water requires a heavier float.

The left diagram shows a 1 gram float with a slim body. This kind of float is useful for deeper venues. I have shown a 1 gram float but I will go heavier if I need to, 1.25g or 1.5g, depending on the wind.



Sometimes an action called 'Under Tow' is generated in lakes on a windy day. Basically, the wind blows the water towards one end and, when it can go no further, the energy in the water has to go somewhere. So it is forced downwards and back on itself.

LITTLE TRICKS -

PRESENTING YOUR BAIT -

There are so many ways to present your bait with a pole and I've listed just a few of them here. Because of the control you have with a pole, you can vary the way your bait falls without touching the rig or even shipping the pole back.

1. **FREE FALL** - Simplest presentation is to just lay your float on the water and gravity do it's thing.
2. **TIGHT LINE** - Same as above only you hold the float back so the bait falls on a tight line and therefore slows it down a little.
3. **CENTRED** - Lay your rig on the surface and drag it so that the centre between your float and hook is over your feed zone and allow your float to 'catch up' with your bait. The float should settle over your feed zone.
4. **DROP, HOLD & LOWER** - If you're fishing on the bottom, you'll want to get your bait down quickly. If you have a few fish feeding, doing the first three methods can result in foul hooking fishing because the bait enters your feed zone at an angle. Drop the rig straight down over the feed zone and hold the float out of the water for a second or two until the rig straightens out. Once you're sure it's straight and the bait has stopped falling, lower the float into the water. Because the bait enters the feed zone vertically, it vastly reduces the chances of foul hooking fish.
5. **FLICKING** - Sometimes, despite how carefully you have fed your swim, the bites can slow down or even stop. The chances are fish have backed off, away from your feed. Instead of putting extra sections on (if you have any) you can search your swim a bit further out by flicking your rig past the feed zone, straight out and to the left or right. Doing this may help you reconnect with the fish again.
6. **SLAPPING** - Noise plays a big part in fishing, as long as it's the right kind of noise! Bait, particularly pellets meat and corn, make an inviting sound when hit the water. You can recreate this sound by literally hitting the water with your rig (Not your pole!). Particularly effective when you are fishing shallow in the summer with pellet.
7. **LIFT & DROP** - When fishing on the bottom, especially with expanders, you get extra bites by just gently lifting the float out of the water and dropping it back in again every 30 seconds to 2 minutes or so. This can attract the fish back to your hookbait again. Of course there days when they want a completely motionless bait.

If you ever wondered if you actually **NEED** a pole? Then the list on the left will tell you that they can be a very effective weapon. Everything to the left can be done without even shipping your pole back. Something that is impossible with a rod and reel.

MARKING THE DEPTH -

Now there is some disagreement about this bit. Some anglers (very good ones too) like to place a couple of shots under the float as a depth marker.

I don't. For me personally it messes up my shotting, makes my float act weird and is only ok if you want to go deeper.

My preferred method is to mark my pole with a dash of TIPPEX. There is an important thing to remember however and a mistake that lots of anglers make. After you've popped your hook over the end of your Top Kit, always take the stress out of the line from the elastic before you mark where the tip of the float comes to on the pole.

If you don't, your line will be stretched and you will get a false reading of the depth of your swim.

By marking the pole in this way, you can go deeper or shallower and still have a mark to go back to or if you need to tie another rig on.

TIPPEX doesn't damage your pole and scratches of with your thumb nail.

BACK SHOTTING -

By placing a no.8 STOTZ or shot **ABOVE** your float, about halfway between the float and the pole tip, you will find you can hit bites much quicker, have more control in windy conditions and move the pole tip away from your feed zone slightly. Remember not to lower it in too far though because it will sink the finely tuned pole rig you've made and you'll be striking at false bites all day...

ESSENTIAL ACCESSORIES - ROLLERS -

Pole fishing can be fairly extreme and requires specialist equipment if you want to take it to those extremes.

Very long poles can be awkward to use at best and can put a lot of strain on your body. The need for a decent seat box with a foot platform is something to take seriously. Your seated position needs careful thought to prevent muscular strains or back problems.

A good sized side tray means that you can load it up with everything you will need and keep it in easy reach. One with a lid or hood is even better.

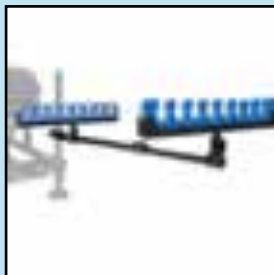
Pole rollers are essential for any poles up to 6 or 7 metres. Anything over that and you will need two.

I would advise that the rollers to go for are 'Flat bed rollers' with four adjustable legs, three vertical rollers and two horizontal ones. Rollers like this will allow you to use both sides of the roller independently of one another.



ROOST -

Poles can be expensive and so can the spares. If you have them, you will want a few Top Kits set up for different areas of your peg. Putting them on the ground could get them broken or, at best, get them filled with mud and grit. A Roost is the best way to protect your delicate carbon and keep it safe. Roosts can be either free standing (Left) or attach to the leg of your seat box (Right).



SOCKS AND TULIPS -

These items have a few uses. They keep the end of your pole in the same place every time so, in a match, it is always to hand. A sock or tulip can prevent your pole from blowing around in strong winds that can cause damage. If you are shipping up a slope, they can also prevent your pole from slipping in to the water.

A sock is like a tiny padded net. I use mine for the larger sections of my pole. For the thinner sections I use a tulip which actually grips the pole quite tightly. I have them both on one padded bar, on the same leg, in roughly the same position all the time. I almost know where they without looking.



LONG LANDING NET HANDLE -

A long, 4 metre landing net handle is not a vital piece of equipment to have, but it certainly helps to have one. 4 metres will enable you to net a fish much sooner than if you had a shorter one. It speeds things up, causes less disturbance in the water and less stress to the fish.

A shorter, 3 metre handle will do the job ok however.

In the beginning you must have a handle that is not too heavy or difficult to use. As you get better and stronger, then you can work your way up to 4 metres if you wish. Long handles often have two threaded sections so they can be used at 3 or 4 metres.



LOOKING AFTER YOUR POLE -

We have looked at the kind of equipment you need to use your pole on the bank, but there is far more you can do to keep your pole in tip top condition.

DRYING -

Even in the summer your pole will get wet from time to time. If you don't dry it out thoroughly, it will start to smell and go mouldy. The carbon itself will be ok, but who wants a furry pole? Not only that but the elastics will last far longer if they are air dried inside the Top Kits. Drying the pole makes it easier to clean too.

CLEANING -

Once it has dried out (I simply stand all the sections in the corner of a room for a day or two), I will use a special brush to remove any dirt particles from the inside of every section that doesn't have elastic inside it. The brushes are called 'Roubaisien kits' (Right), sections of aluminium tubes screwed together with three different sized brushes. But I have adapted mine to a



telescopic classroom pointer to make it easier to use. The sections will be easier to clean when they are dry. It is VITAL that you remove dirt and grit from your pole every time you use it. Nothing wears a carbon out faster than grit. If it crunches when you fit the sections together, you have grit. Once you have swept the sections, get a bowl of warm water with just a few drops of washing up liquid,

and a soft sponge. Remove any mud or dirt from the outside and, in the summer, put your sections on your roost in the garden and rinse them with a hose, then leave them to dry thoroughly once more. Only when it is completely dry do I put the pole away again.

STORAGE -

Most poles come in a holdall with tubes. Which is ok for the main pole sections, but sometimes when you have elasticated your Top Kits, they won't go back into the tubes they came in. In my opinion, the best way to protect them is to use Top Kit tubes like the one from Preston Innovations.



These tubes have separate compartments with a protected divider. Your sections can not even hit each other and so are perfectly safe. You can even attach your rigs at home to save time at the water. They not cheap, but worth it.

SKID BUNGS -

Some poles are supplied with these as standard. A plastic protector that fits inside the end of the larger sections to prevent them from damage should they come into contact with the ground during your session.

As a match angler, pole fishing is an essential skill and is the main method 90% of the time. I appreciate it is not everyone's cup of tea however, but you can not argue against how effective it can be. Some people who say they hate Pole fishing have either never used one or used a cheap, heavy, floppy pole with all the stiffness of wet spaghetti. Push the limits of your budget as far as you can when buying a pole. Look after it and you will have many enjoyable sessions using it.

SECTION THREE



A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL CARP FISHING

Carp are now probably Britain's most popular species. This guide will help you to target some really big fish. From rods to hooks, it's all here.

What is

CARP FISHING?

- Why do we fish for Carp?
- Which rods, reels and terminal tackle do you need?
- How to set up different rigs.
- Which baits, when and why?
- What else will you need?
- Top tips to help you.

In the past, anglers that just fished for one species were viewed as either dedicated, or a little odd. Someone that was prepared to sit for hours, days or even months in pursuit of one particular fish, probably had a few vital ingredients missing.

But now, Carp are Britain's most targeted species in a multi million pound business. Carp fishing has produced fishing technology that many will take for granted, and which has influenced nearly every other type of coarse fishing.

So what is it about Carp that fires the imagination? Assistant Junior Secretary, Tom Foyle, writes;

"Carp, as a species, capture the minds of thousands of anglers across the country. We spend hours on end trying to tempt them. As a species, they hold something special. Their sheer size, the beauty of unique scale patterns and features that can make certain fish a very famous and one that for many will become an obsession. For me it is a fish called 'The Pig' at Luckfield. The search continues.

The excitement of turning up early to a Misty lake, quietly searching for signs of fish, carefully setting up your treasured tackle and nailing that first cast. The silence of patience. The peacefulness of your surroundings. Waiting... The quiet is shattered by a screaming alarm and the battle begins. This, is Carp fishing."

As you will have noticed by now, the choice of fishing tackle can be mind blowing. The popularity of Carp fishing has quite possibly made it the biggest, most confusing maze of all. But with a little guidance, we can make it easier for you. Let's start with rods.

CARP RODS

What is a Carp rod?

Earlier on we told you about test curves. The amount of weight needed to bend a rod the 90 degrees. The test of a Carp rod is important because it will tell you what it is supposed to be used for. The length is important too. With most rods being between 9 and 12 feet long (2.7m and 4m), the shorter 9ft rods are better used for stalking and fishing in the margins. For larger waters where casting a reasonable distance is required, the longer 12ft rod is better.

It is probably fair to say that a 10 or 11ft rod would cope with most situations, but chose a rod or rods that would be at home on the venues you regularly visit.

One further consideration is the action of the rod. The action or taper of a rod will determine how much of the rod will bend to reach its test curve.

If a rod is pulled to its test curve and only the tip of the rod bends, then it a fast taper or fast action rod. These are more powerful rods for big fish or long distances.

If the rod bends almost to the handle, then it is a slow taper or through action rod. These are softer more gentle rods for short to medium distances.

2.75lb and under - These rods will have a more through action and feel softer when playing a fish. It will be more of a challenge and arguably more fun, they will not be able to cast as far.

3lb - This test curve will give the most variety of uses and suit most Carp fishing situations.

3.5lb and above - Rods like these will be used on really big lakes where casting distances need to over 100 metres or to tame some exceptionally large fish.

The features of a Carp rod are different to other rods too. The eyes or guides are much larger allowing line to pass freely during the cast.



The first ring from the reel, the butt ring, is much larger. Usually 40 or 50mm in diameter. Reels used in Carp fishing have grown in size to cope with distance casting. The butt rings have also grown to aid smoother line flow.



The handle of a Carp rod is commonly different too, but this usually down to personal preference rather than performance. The abbreviated handle, (middle), made from Duplon foam and used to keep the cost of the rod down. A full shrink wrapped handle, (bottom), gives a thinner, sleeker look. There is also a marginal saving in weight with a very grippy feel. Some anglers prefer a more traditional cork handle, (top). Classic looks and the added advantage of the fact that it floats. There are rare occasions when this is a distinct advantage if your rods get pulled in!

However, not all rods catch fish. It may not be necessary to have this type of rod to start with, it is certainly worth a mention. As an addition to a Carp anglers armoury, they can be priceless. Especially if you are fishing a really big water or a venue that you don't know so well.



Marker rods are very similar to Carp rods to look at. Similar handles and rings, but there the similarities end. A marker rod needs power with a light tip to feel the lumps and bumps on the bottom. We will go more into how to use markers later.



Spod rod is a completely different beast. 4 or 5lb test curve and all power from tip to butt. Built for launching heavy Spods a very, very long way in the right hands.

In modern Carp fishing however, marker rods and spod rods have merged into hybrid Marker/Spod rods. With a slightly lighter test curve, these hybrid rods mean that you can do both jobs with just one rod, with less weight to carry and less money to spend.

CARP REELS

Although this booklet has covered reels already, Carp reels are very different to ordinary coarse fishing reels. They come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes.

Like the rods, you must think about the waters you are going to visit regularly. Do you need a reel that can cast 100 metres if your favourite lake is only 40 metres wide? Carp fishing, like any other, does seem to suffer from a need to have the latest, biggest, strongest or most expensive of everything. What this booklet is asking you to think about is, what do I need?

Carp reels generally bigger than other types of reel. They are capable of casting a long way, reeling in heavy tackle and, hopefully, big fish. Everything is 'beefed up' with bigger spools for casting, bigger handles for powerful winding and stronger clutch or drag systems. All of these differences will play a part in helping you land some big Carp.

Free Spool Reels - Free Spool reels, sometimes called 'Bait Runners', have a double clutch system that allows the reels to be set up so that a running fish can pull line from the reel. The resistance can be varied by adjusting the free spool tension. Once the rod is picked up, it only takes a turn of the handle to switch reel from free spool to the main drag system. The free spool system is not to be used as a fish playing clutch. Doing this will severely damage or even break your reel.

Like other reels, you have a choice of either a front or rear drag. It really comes down a personal choice because they will perform in a similar way. In many ways it sense to use a front drag reel because that's where the line is and the drag acts directly on the spool making the clutch action smoother.

With a rear drag reel they can sometimes be easier to use during a fight with a fish, but they may be heavier and more expensive because of the additional gears needed to connect rear drag with the spool at the front. Not only that, there are more bits inside that could go wrong!

There is a third option that is gaining popularity with Carp anglers and that is a 'Quick Drag' system. Quick drag reels look similar to front drag reels in that they only have an adjustment at the front. But the free spool is part of the dial and only requires a quarter or half turn to engage the main drag, making the process very fast and easy.



Spool size and shape -

Because Carp reels are generally bigger, they will hold more line or have a 'higher line capacity'. Even smaller '8000' sized reels will have a big line capacity. For most small water Carp fishing an 8000 reel will be enough. But what if you to cast a reasonable distance?

In this case one of the 'Big Pit' style reels will be more useful. The diameter of a big pit reel is much wider to allow the line to peel off the spool far easier and cast further. To make things a little more complicated, big pit reels are numbered differently too starting 5000 and going on up all the way to 14000. But to start with we only need to think about reels up to 8000 in the big pit range. These will be quite adequate enough for young Carp anglers at first.

As far as features are concerned, big pit reels will have the same features that we have already looked at.

There is no easy way of saying this but, good gear costs extra money. You don't have rob a bank to get 'proper gear', but don't be sucked into buying cheap either. When you can, the extra pounds that you can stretch too, will pay off.



In the end we have to ask ourselves, do we ever reach the limit of a reels performance? The answer is probably not. But think about where you like to fish, the size of the lakes you will visit, the size of the fish you may catch and you're own capabilities. Be honest about what you need instead of what you want, and you will have some good, balanced equipment that will make using them part of memorable fishing sessions.

Toms Top Tips!

"Over the years I have used a range of different rods, from cheap to more pricey models from Fox, Daiwa and JRC, all good brand names.

My current rods are 12ft Sonik Dominators and 6ft Sonik Xtractors. They are all in the average price range, but have exceptional build quality and give good value for money.

Choosing a reel is down to personal preference and budget. I've always preferred free spool reels because of how user friendly and versatile they are. But I have changed to Quick drag big pit reels and they made a real difference. Being able to change the setting on the free spool while the rods are on the rests, or the drag while you are in mid fight without too much fiddling around, can make the difference between landing or losing a Carp".





CARP LINES

Monofilament - Nylon monofilament or 'Mono' is a single strand of stretchy line that is by far the most popular choice for many kinds of fishing. There too many different makes of fishing line to look at here. All will have their own qualities, so it really is down to personal preference in the end.

As a good start, the strength of your line should be around 10 to 15lb breaking strain. This will be enough to cope with casting, snags and battling angry Carp. Try to chose a line that will match the waters that you will visit. A clear line for less cloudy or clear water venues. A darker, coloured or even camouflage line for heavily coloured water. If the venue is rocky or has mussels or Crayfish, then a tougher, more abrasive resistant line is needed. The point is that there is no one perfect line to use. You will have to work that one out for yourselves. Asking for local advice is a good place to start.

Braided lines - Before we look at braid, it is worth pointing out that braided fishing lines are banned for Carp fishing on DDAS waters. But, of course, you might decide to go somewhere where you can use braid. Tom says, " Braid is made from tiny woven fibres, making it super strong and much thinner than mono. It has little no stretch so all the power from the cast is used and none is lost to line stretch".

Zero stretch means that it is extremely good for use with a marker float. We will look at marker floats later.

Braid is also essential for effective spodding for the same reasons.

TOM'S TOP TIPS - When you are loading new line on to your reel, always soak the spool of new line in a bucket of water for at least one hour before you need it. Leave the spool in the water and try make sure that the line exits the shop spool in same direction as your reel turns. This will prevent your line twisting as you wind it on. If you have line twist, you will have problems when you are fishing.



TERMINAL TACKLE

So, now we have come to the tricky bit, where it's easy to get lost with dozens of different rigs, patterns and designs. But our resident Carp expert is here to guide you through the confusion with three simple words....

KEEP IT SIMPLE!

Your tackle should always suit the area that you want to fish over and this will have a direct effect on which lead set up you should choose. Here are some simple set ups that you need to know and, importantly, when you should use them and why.

The Pear Lead - Tom's first choice of lead weight and one that he uses for most of his fishing.

For fishing over a soft, muddy or 'silty' area, use smaller sizes from 0.5ozs to 1oz (12g to 30g) depending how far you need to cast.

Using smaller leads will prevent them from burying to deep when they land.

For general fishing requirements, a weight of around 2ozs (60g) is about right.



Inline Leads - These leads are very streamlined and aerodynamic. Like most things in fishing, they do come in many shapes and sizes. One real advantage of an inline lead is it is compact, lending itself very nicely to use with PVA bags. They can be tucked away in the bottom to make them cast much more efficiently.

Inline leads are better used over a firm or hard bottom. If they are in softer clays, mud or silt, they will bury themselves and take the hooklink with them.

Distance Leads - As the name would suggest, these leads have one simple purpose. The fly a long way. A weight forward design and streamlined shape makes them perfect for those Carp that think they are safe 100 metres away from those nasty anglers trying to catch them.

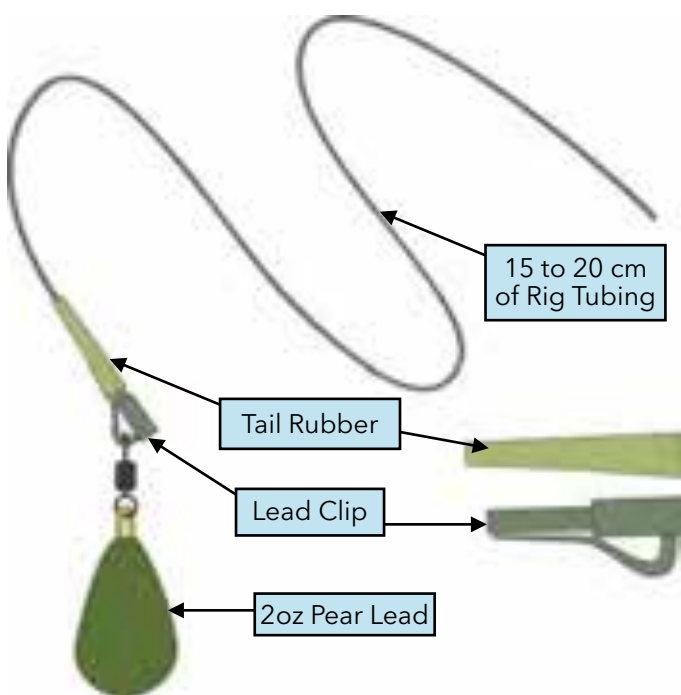


So, now we know about leads, how do we use them? Let's take a look...

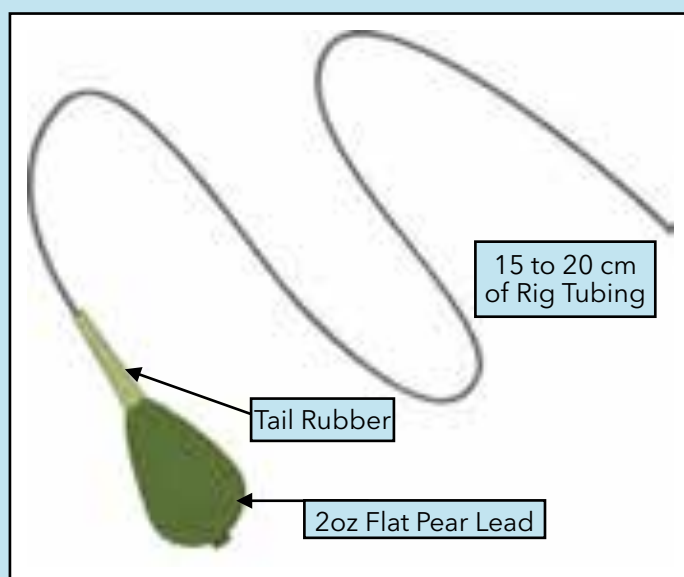
A Lead Clip Lead set up is the best place to start when it comes to terminal tackle.

Technically known as a 'Semi Fixed Lead' it has the advantage of being both fixed (by the clip) and free running because the lead is not physically tied to the line.

The swivel that the hooklink is attached to is held in place by the clip but, should the worst happen and the line breaks, then the clip, the lead and rig tubing are able to be left behind, leaving the fish only to deal with the bit of line left and the hooklink. A barbless hook means that the fish will have better chance to free itself completely.



Better used over firmer lake beds, like gravel, also firm clay. With a lighter lead however, a lead clip can be effective over light silt. Another use for a lead clip is in a snaggy situation against bushes, reeds or lily pads. If the tail rubber is pushed on lightly then, should the fish get the lead caught up, the lead will slide off the clip, releasing the fish.



Inline Lead set ups are perfect for using either PVA bags because of how compact they are. The lead will fit nice and snug in the bottom of the bag so it flies 'weight forward' during the cast. If you don't put the lead in the bottom of the bag, it will tumble in the air and you will lose distance, accuracy and may find yourself in a tangle. There are many shapes and sizes of Inline leads, but to start off, go for a flat pear shape.

As was mentioned earlier, you need to know the ground you are fishing over before using an Inline set up. The bottom needs to be hard, or at least fairly firm to prevent the lead from burying itself in soft mud or silt. If this happens, the rig will not be anywhere near as effective and you will go home empty handed.



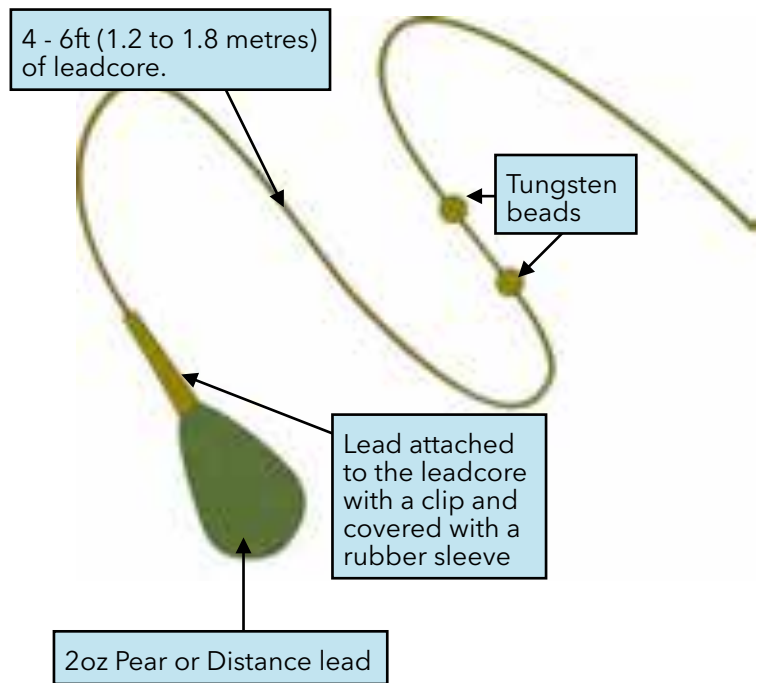
Leadcore Helicopter Set Up - The go to lead set up if you're not sure of what the bottom is made from. A good starting rig for exploring in weed or silt.

Tom explains, "If I am unsure of what I am fishing over, then I will quickly tie on a leadcore helicopter. This will enable me to fish a rig that I know will be presented perfectly on any material or 'substrate'. Whether it is really soft silt, weed or a leafy, 'Choddy' bottoms and let's face it, no one likes a Choddy bottom!"

The lead weight is attached to the leadcore with a clip and covered with rubber sleeve. Further up the leadcore there two tungsten beads, between which the hooklink is trapped.

Once cast, the lead weight can pretty much do what it wants when it hits the bottom, allowing the hooklink to slide up the leadcore between the adjustable beads, and land more slowly and gently onto the bottom preventing being obscured by litter and debris.

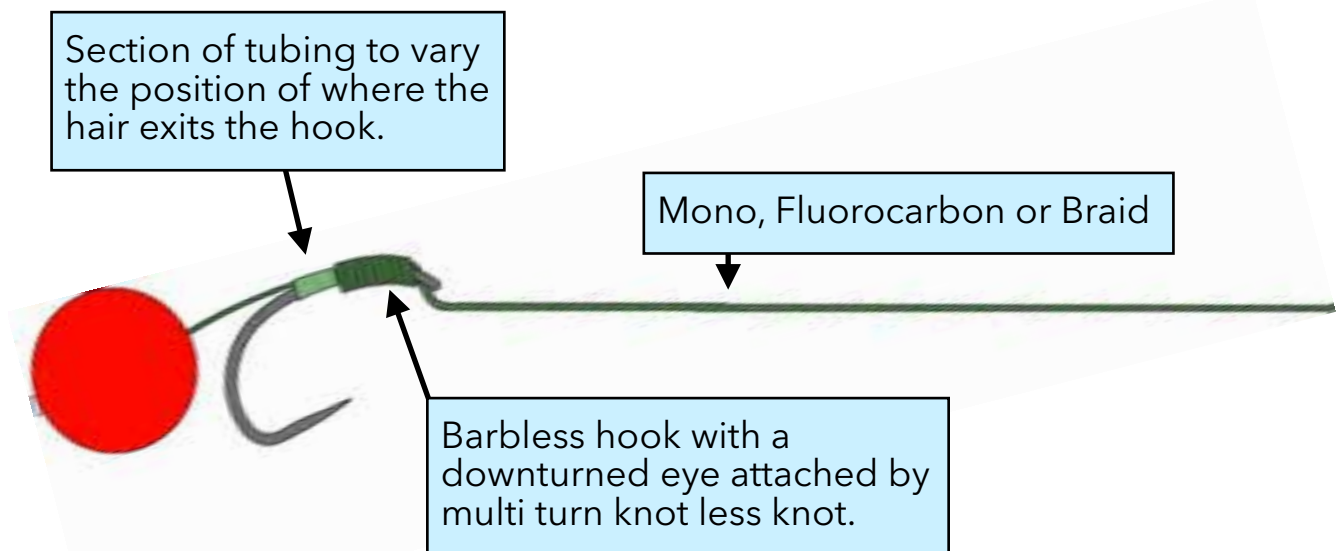
One little tip that I did pick up during my years as a Carp angler is to use a pointed distance lead over really soft, deep silt even on the shortest of casts. The distance lead maybe sleeker, more streamlined and may dive deeper in the soft silt than other leads, but it will cause less suction and be easier to pull out too...



RIGS & HOOKLINKS

Carp fishing has been at the forefront of rig innovation for many years and given us some true pioneers. One name that I would like to introduce you to, is the late Lenny Middleton. Lenny was widely recognised as being the first angler to use a bait presented on a hair, changing fishing forever. We all have our favourite rigs and there is not enough space to list them all, but Tom has singled out four patterns for us to take a look at and, although Tom makes his own rigs himself, similar patterns are available to buy in tackle shops.

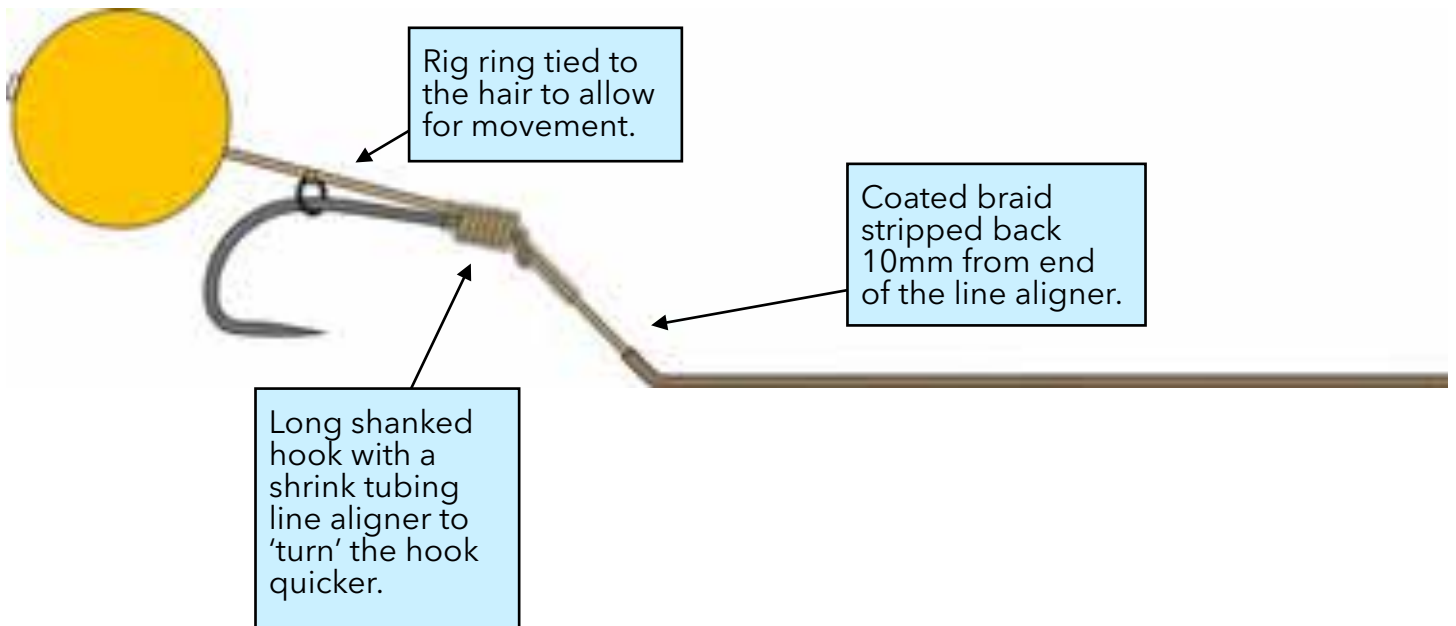
Basic Hair rig - A modern twist on Mr Middleton's hair rig. Made from mono, fluorocarbon or braid, it's about as simple as it gets. The down turned eye of the hook gives an angle to kick the hook round to virtually grab the fish. The hair can be positioned to how you like it with the section of tubing on the hook.



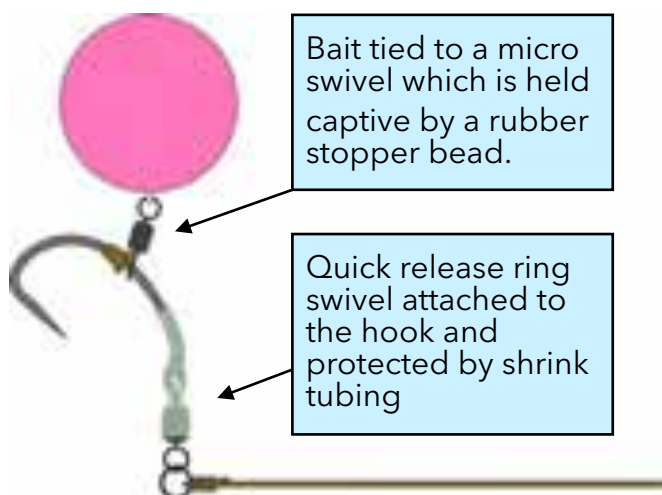
The Chod rig - By now, you've probably read about Chod, but what is it? Chod is a nickname given to leaf litter and debris that collects on the bottom, particularly in Autumn. When it is particularly heavy, a bottom bait can disappear from sight. This is where the Chod rig comes in. Made from a stiff bristle filament that has been bent or steamed into a curved shape. A wide gape works better and must have an out turned eye. If you have a straight or down turned eye, it can cause a high stress spot and the rig may fail. The pop up bait is tied directly to rig ring that is held captive in the 'D loop' made from the bristle filament. At the other end there will be a ring swivel, this allows the rig to turn through 360 degrees. So it doesn't matter which direction the fish approaches from, the rig will turn to face it.



Blow Back rig - A classic rig that has a great track record. Not too unlike a standard hair rig but with some differences worth noting. Firstly the rig ring on the shank of the hook (sometimes a piece of tubing) allows the bait to be blown from the fishes mouth with moving the hook and the section of shrink tubing, called a line aligner, makes the hook point turn towards the fishes mouth much faster. Traditionally a longer hook is used, but you can use shorter patterns, as long as they have a down turned eye. The hooklink material needs to be a coated braid with the coating stripped off to about 10mm past the end of the aligner to allow more natural movement



The 'Ronnie' rig - Based on what many Carp anglers know as a 360 rig, the Ronnie is much more fish friendly. It works in a similar way to a Chod rig in that it can rotate in a full circle and is always 'ready'. The boom that is attached to the quick release swivel can be coated braid or very stiff bristle filament. Again, a hook with a down turned eye is used as well as shrink tubing to protect the fish against the nasty metal bits. A micro swivel to which the bait is tied, is held captive on the hook by a small silicone stopper bead.



Braid - Very strong with a thin diameter and zero stretch. You can really feel every kick and lunge from an angry fish. But all this comes with a penalty. Being so thin with no stretch means that, in careless hands, braid can cut delicate flesh like knife and can cause some horrific injuries to fish. Be mindful of how you play a fish, set your catch properly to release line without excessive pressure. Follow lunges at the net with your rod and don't bully the fish unnecessarily. Of course, the same be said of monofilament but the risk is greatly increased with braid.

MARKERS & SPODS

Earlier on we looked at marker and spod rods, but what on earth do they do?

Let's start with a Spod. A Spod is a rocket or bomb shaped bait delivery system that can deposit large quantities of bait quite accurately in experienced hands.



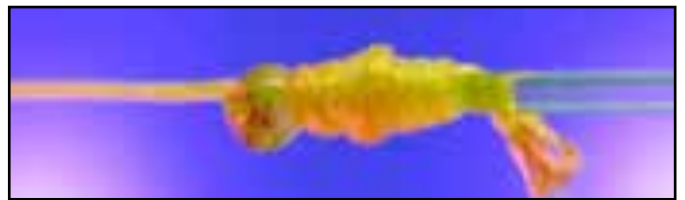
There are two types of Spod, one with a button at the front that will open on impact with the water surface, and the other is a rocket shaped tube with holes, fins and brightly coloured, buoyant top. Fins to make fly straight, holes to make it easier to retrieve and the coloured top so it floats, let's the bait drop out in the water and you can see where it is.

All types of Spod have one thing common. They are going to be pretty heavy. Too heavy for regular Carp rods to cast in most cases. Spods were designed to deliver a bed of bait anything from a coffee table to a tennis court in size. It can be time consuming and noisy, causing lots of disturbance on the water. So much so that there will probably need to be a 'settling down period' afterwards. Not much point putting huge kilos of bait in for a day session. Smaller Spods can be used on standard rods and for smaller areas of feed. You can put pretty much any bait in them from hempseed to boilies.



It is important to use a line clip on your reel when spodding for accuracy. Clipping up limits your cast to a fixed distance, reducing the 'spread' of bait over a large area. Of course, there may be times when a large thinly covered area of feed is what is required, but most the time a controlled cast is needed.

If you are casting a long way with a Spod, there are two safety measures that you should use. The first is a shock leader. This is a length of much heavier line or



braid than that on your reel, to withstand the pressure of the cast. The length of the shock leader should be a standard 'drop' (half the length of your rod) plus three or four turns of the reel.

The second is a finger stall. Protective sleeve or cover for the finger that you use to hold the line when you cast. The last thing you need is a cut right where you hold the line.



Because it will find its way there every time! Ouch!

If using a Spod is the brute force of Carp fishing, then a marker float is the brains. Gathering intelligence of a lake in the same way as you would with a plummet, only at greater distances.

Marking an area likely hold fish is very useful and taking notes with a pen and paper is a good way of building a map of your swim for future sessions.



A marker float, like the one seen above, is a buoyant float, usually with flights like a dart which are brightly coloured. It is used as a visual indicator of whereabouts in the lake your marker set is. But it's not only about sight.

Below the float is a bead, then a free running boom.

The boom has a large run ring, a stiff section about 15 to 20cm long, then a lead is attached to it by a clip.



Fortunately for us, tackle companies are saving us time and effort by producing marker float kits with everything you will need to get you started. One feature you may notice is the shape of the leads. Not smooth like normal weights, but bumpy and contoured to 'feel' they way across the various surfaces on the bottom of the lake.

So how does it work?

Let's imagine that you are looking at a new water for the first time. You might have been given some reliable information by local anglers about the venue, but there is nothing like finding out for yourself.

For a start, let's do a cast to your far left, with your marker rod loaded with braid, if it's allowed. It will work with mono, just not as well. Tighten down to the lead and slowly, with the rod, pull the lead along the lake bed. You will start to 'feel' the lumps and bumps through the rod.

If it pulls slow and smooth, then you're probably over a muddy, silty patch. Watch the surface as you do it. You may see bubbles from gases released by your lead, or even oily slicks on the surface.

You may feel the pull on the rod tip getting heavier and increasingly more difficult to pull through. It may even stop altogether. It is fairly obvious that you have found weed and you will be glad that you fitted some heavier line or braid.

If it rattles and skips, then you'll be over stones or pebbles. Probably harder ground. If the lead doesn't stop or 'catch', then it's fair to assume it's clear or debris either naturally or cleared by feeding fish. You may have found a feed zone.

Time to see where you are. You can now release some line out until the float emerges above the water.

Next you will use your line clip on the reel to mark the distance. Reel in and get ready to use some distance sticks.

"What are Distance Sticks?" I hear you cry.

Distance sticks are two specially designed metal sticks with 2 metre cord between them. The sticks are pushed into the ground exactly 2 metres apart because of the cord.



Put the marker float set up next to one of the posts and wrap the line round the post a couple of times to stop the set up moving (don't forget to do this with the Carp rods too) and then, using the rod, start wrapping the line around the two posts, counting as you go. Two, Four, Six, etc. Until you reach the line clip. There should be a bead on the cord to mark where the rod tip ends up. Slide the bead to mark

the spot. Now you've counted the wraps and, hopefully, remembered the number, you can wind the line off of the sticks.

Do exactly the same with the rod you intend to fish on the spot. Remembering to wrap the line around the first stick a couple of times. If you don't, the distances will be different. Wrap the line around the sticks only this time letting line off the reel until you reach the number of wraps and the rod tip is on the bead. Now you can clip up and wind it all back in again. Bait up the rig and you're ready to fish.

It sounds like a lot of messing around and maybe it is for some. But you have to ask yourself, just how much effort is too much?

There is an old saying that says, 'If you fail to prepare, then you are prepared to fail'.

Tom says "My distance sticks are the best idea since someone thought of using floating bread as bait". A definite stamp of approval! As a final word on the marker float, most of the rods will have depth markers on the blank set at 6", 12", 18" & 24" (15, 30, 45 & 60cm).

Once you have found your position, you wind the float down until it meets the lead. Then, pull the line off the reel and measure each pull on the rod. Once the float pops to the surface you can work out what depth you have.

Using the depth markers will help you find flat spots, slopes, gullies and humps.

That's a lot to read about marking your swim. But time spent doing it and recording the information you find is priceless and will be proven by the fish you will catch.

ALARMS

Like most things in fishing, you can spend as much or as little as you want. Stuff will do the same job. But if you want your tackle to last, the chances are you will have to pay a little more. So with that in mind, let's talk about alarms. A long standing argument is do you really need them? Well, in



modern Carp fishing they have become widely used and essential for night fishing of course. Over the years they have become much more advanced and packed with technology. They have shrunk in size and cost, with £50 now buying what would have cost £400 a few years ago. It is one of those items that you have to let your budget dictate which to buy. Alarms do have a visual indicator with one or two flashing lights

As your coach however, I will offer a word of warning to those using alarms. Just because you have a warning system on your rods, it does not mean you can leave your rods unattended and wander off. Many times I have seen 'anglers' sprinting around a lake because a fish has taken the bait and they off somewhere else. This is irresponsible behaviour and one that will give fishing and in particular, Carp fishing a bad name. So be an ambassador, not an embarrassment. Stay with your equipment!

when the alarm is triggered. But Carp anglers very often if not always use a secondary, more traditional method of indication.

INDICATORS

Bobbins or 'Indicators' as they are now known, have been used for many years. Bread dough, washing up bottle tops, bits of tin foil, even a stick, have all made perfectly good indicators. But, like everything else, innovation has improved on things that already worked.



Countless different materials, colours, shapes, weights and prices, make which one to choose is a personal choice. So, why use a bobbin at all? A visual indicator is a quicker way to identify which rod is active. You can add extra weights to the bobbin to make it heavier if it is windy or there is a strong undertow. On some indicators you will find a slot or a hollow chamber. This is where an isotope or mini glow stick can be used if you go night fishing to make the glow at night. Or you can splash out on illuminated indicators that plug in to the alarm so it will flash along with the alarm lights.



The other type of indicator, seen above, is called a swinger. Unlike a bobbin indicator that is held on a chain or cord and can move where it wants to, a Swinger can only move up and down on its metal bar. To be honest, that's all it really needs to do. This restriction of movement is a good thing though because it makes Swingers particularly effective in windy conditions. A bobbin can blow around and cause false indications on the alarm, but a Swinger can't move sideways and is more stable. Swingers have a sliding weight on the bar. Move it towards the alarms for a lighter, sensitive Swinger and to the other end for a heavier Swinger for windy days or to combat a heavy under tow. The brightly coloured head usually has a compartment for a glow stick or Isotope, they can also be illuminated like the bobbins. Personally I preferred the Swingers over bobbins because they were more convenient and they looked better.



PODS & RESTS

Carp fishing can be a waiting game. Long periods of patience and anticipation. Your rods will be at rest for a lot of that so the question is, Pod, Goalpost or Banksticks? Confusion again....



A Pod is a frame with three or four legs that is adjustable to the ground. It keeps your rods together, nice and tidy, and looks cool! Essential for hard ground or platforms. Made from aluminium or stainless steel, and can be heavy to carry but very stable. Designed for two, three or four rods and vary in price from cheap to 'How much?!'...

Goal post buzz bars are quicker to set up as long as the ground is soft enough to push the banksticks in to the ground. In fact, some Pods can be used as goal posts as well as in the standard configuration.

Goal posts are more compact to carry and store, as well as being easy to move if so required. Available with one or two legs as pictured below.





The third kind of rod set up is the humble bank stick. Nothing flash here but just as effective as the more expensive options. As you can see from picture above, on such uneven ground, a pod would be useless. You could get away with goal posts but single sticks can be angled much wider, to have the rods pointed straight at the area in which the bait lies, important when fishing towards or close to snags. No big bend in the rod giving the fish a chance to make it to sanctuary.

POD ACCESSORIES

It wouldn't be right to have a complete set up without needing some additional extras, and so it is with pods. Here's a list of useful bits and pieces;

Snag ears - Not a medical condition but a device that sits behind the alarms and prevents a running fish from pulling your favourite rod and reel in.



Gripper butt rest - You will need a rest for your rod handle and grippers do what the name suggests. Great for really windy days.



Bank Stick

stabilisers - If you are considering using goalpost rests, then you might need some stabilisers.

Attachments that fix to a standard stick to give extra support. Handy on stormy days or against aggressive takes.



Stage Stands -



In modern times, venues are often fitted with wooden platforms to fish from. This can pose a problem when it comes to setting up your rods. A pod is one solution but sometimes, especially on windy days, a pod can be blown around or even completely over, risking valuable fishing tackle to the waves. One inventive solution is Stage Stands. Specially machined fixtures that are screwed tightly to the platform. It goes without saying that permission should be asked before making holes in platforms that are, at the end of the day, property of the fishery.



So much has been written about to get the bait out to the fish, how to fool the fish in to taking the bait and how to recognise a bite. But how do we get the fish into that very special photograph?

Landing net - To a beginner, a Carp anglers landing net looks ridiculously large.



Most fisheries will have rules stating that the arms of the landing net required at the venue are to be no smaller than 42" or roughly 1.07m. When you get a 20lb Carp in the bottom of your net, you'll be glad you had that ridiculously large net.

The nets themselves have very fish friendly mesh, hung from strong fibre glass, composite or Carbon fibre arms. The arms locate in a spreader block which is then screwed to the landing net handle. When attached, the spreader puts

tension on the draw string that joins the two arms together at the tip. Usually used with a 2m handle.

Such a large net will become heavy when wet and difficult to manoeuvre. Using a net float (right) will help prevent a sinking net.



When a fish is landed, the arms are detached and placed side by side. The arms are then rolled down the net until close to the fish. Once the fish is safe, it can be lifted out of the water and on to the waiting unhooking mat.



Unhooking mat - This area of fish welfare has become extremely important to how we are seen as anglers, and as environmentalists. It has also become a personal crusade of mine to make sure the beautiful creatures that we spend so much time and money to catch, are given the utmost respect and care that we can provide. As anglers we must recognise that we have a responsibility to take the best of an animal that has given itself for our sport and pleasure.



Made from fish friendly nylon and filled with thick foam and/or polyballs to protect delicate scales. There are many different types of mats out there, it doesn't matter which one you get, just make sure you get one!

Unhooking Cradle - As a self confessed 'Mat Police Officer', imagine my delight when Carp Cradles were introduced...



Some of the cradles you can buy makes me wonder if the fish aren't

looked after better than the anglers that catch them? The one pictured has its own supportive frame to help keep the fish off the ground. Naturally these models are going to be at the high price range. Fortunately there are cheaper foam filled versions.



Regardless of which mat you buy, you should always keep a small bucket of lake water next to the mat to wet it BEFORE you place the fish on it. Not only does this help protect the fish but, on summer days, the mat will get extremely hot and for a cold blooded creature, it can be uncomfortable to say the least.

Mats will also serve as a safe area over which to take photos. We'll talk about holding a fish later but just make sure you hold it low and absolutely DO NOT stand up when holding a fish.

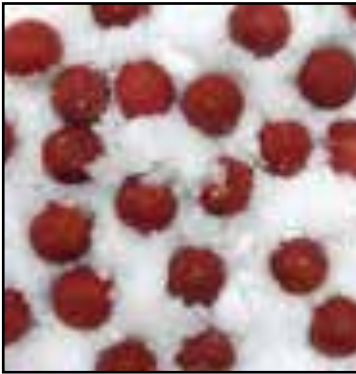


BAIT

Tom writes, "Carp fishing is 5% rigs, 5% bait and 90% location. A quote that has stayed with me for a while and it is definitely one worth remembering. Bait choice is important but it is all too easy to get swept away with the hundreds of different bait options".



Boilies - Made from a specially flavoured dough or paste. The mixture is then boiled in water for a couple of minutes for a softer bait or baked at a high temperature so they go really hard. This makes them last much longer in water and too tougher for small fish to eat.



Frozen boilies - Arguably not quite as popular now than they used to be and certainly not as convenient. Frozen baits were once thought to be a far better option because of the preservatives that were thought to be used in shelf life baits. Of course, for those anglers that still like to make their own baits at home, freezing them is the best option.

Shelf life boilies - By far the most common and most popular way to buy your boilies. I would love to give you some advice about which boilies are best but twelve new baits came out while I was writing this sentence, and twelve more while you were reading it. This is something that you will have to find out for yourself. There many good companies to chose from and local advice will help.



Wafers - Formerly known as critically a balanced bait, Wafers are designed to be semi buoyant. Cork dust is added to the boilie mixture to make the bait lighter but not as buoyant as a pop up. The big advantage of using Wafers is that, unlike bottom baits, a Wafer will gently settle on the bottom because their weight is balanced and almost neutral with a hook. This makes land softly on any leaf litter, debris or 'Chod'. These days you can buy bottom baits to match your Wafers. To steal a saying from fly fishing, you can 'match the hatch'.





Pop up baits - Rigs like the Ronnie or Chod rigs are purpose made for pop up baits. Pop ups are floating baits that need to be weighted down to the bottom. The range of sizes, flavours and colours is enormous. Try to find two or three that feel confident using and stick with those. Many pop ups are strongly favoured and/or brightly coloured to be used as single baits.

So, we now know that there many different types of boilies. They will all promise you fantastic success beyond your wildest dreams.

I once asked a chap who had caught a few, what bait he was using.

"Boilies mate" was the reply. An answer that had a thousand different variations.

Tom tells us,

"I break down my fishing into the four seasons of the year, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter.

The Spring and the Autumn will see the fish taking on extra energy stores. In the Spring, after a long winter and before the effort of spawning. In Autumn, all animals will prepare themselves for the winter months and fish are no exception. During these period of the year, I will use a natural looking, 'meaty' boilie that has low visibility. Two baits that I would recommend are CC Moore Pacific Tuna or Sticky Baits Krill.

As it starts to get colder, fish activity starts to slow and their eyesight starts to fade. Sweet baits contain vital energy that will sustain a fish in cold water, that combined with a bright highly visible colour will score well if you brave enough to face the cold yourself.

'Citruz' boilies from Nash smell good enough to eat myself! Highly attractive baits that have caught me some winter warmers in the past. All baits have the option of being enhanced with sweet additives like Molasses, or other bait soaks and 'Glugs' to make the baits ooze with flavour and attraction".



Pellets - Since pellets have become available with a lower oil content, they are now probably the biggest fish attractor in modern fishing. Pellets for match and general coarse fishing are not available in such a wide variety of flavours as they are in Carp fishing. Often pellets will match the flavour of your favourite boilies, along with pop ups, Wafers, pastes, glugs , dips and liquids. Matching the hatch is much easier once you have found a bait you are confident in. Everything is done for you.



Sweetcorn - Although we have covered some of these baits earlier in the booklet, it is worth talking about how they are used in the world of Carp fishing. Corn is a bright, sweet and more importantly, cheap bait that works well all through the year. Carp have poor eyesight in cold water, the yellow grains are like a beacon, attracting cold reluctant fish to a baited area. Very realistic plastic corn offered as a pop up bait over a small bed of loss grains of corn can be a real winner. Corn is great for bulking out Spod mixes too.

Maggots - There is no doubt that the humble maggot comes into its own in winter. Tiny bags of juicy protein in a skin, maggots have very little food content to fill up fish quickly. Live maggots will be less likely wriggle away when they cold and even if they do, Carp stay in your swim longer to look for them. Dead maggots have the advantage of not wriggling away and just lay on the bottom, but be sure they fresh and don't refreeze them. Maggots will attract any small nuisance fish too.

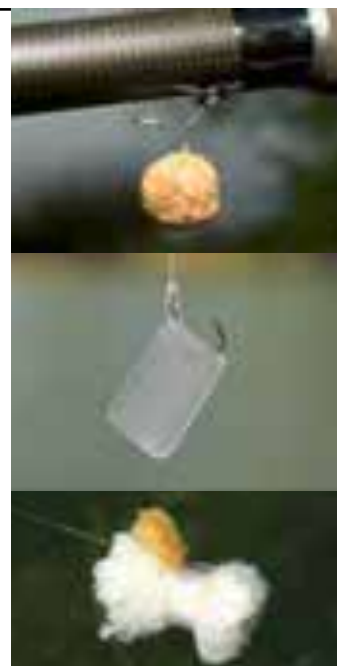


Bloodworm - Larvae of the Midge fly, bloodworm are carnivorous creatures that live in established waters, with a muddy bottom. They are tough and need very little oxygen to survive. All fish will eat bloodworm, in fact they vital to aid digestion because they are a laxative...They make fish poop! Because they are so small, expensive and difficult to get on a hook, they have only been used by match anglers. Today they are available to Carp fishing in all sorts of ways and fish love them.



Bread and surface baits - On warm sunny days Carp will lay near the surface taking in the sunshine. They will feed there too and that's where surface baits come in. Bread is one of the most traditional baits. It's sweet, fluffy and cheap! 16 slices for a quid. You can't argue with that! Bread can

be tricky to keep on the hook, but special bait bands, called Bread Bombs, have made life much easier. Cat or dog biscuits make a great floater baits. The mixture of shapes and colours really confuse inquisitive Carp. Make sure with any bait, that the fish are feeding confidently before casting in your hook bait.



BAIT DELIVERY

PVA - Polyvinyl Alcohol bags were originally designed for use in hospitals for soluble laundry bags. Now they widely used Carp fishing as way of getting controlled amounts of bait to an area very accurately. Not just bags either, mesh stocking, string and foam nuggets are all useful to the modern Carp angler.

On thing about all PVA though, you **MUST** prevent moisture from getting to it. Many a session has been ruined by a sudden rain shower. Keep it covered up!



Solid bags allow many kinds of baits to be used. From maggots to boilies and 'wet' baits like corn, hemp and groundbait can be used, as long as they are dried or made/covered with a PVA friendly liquid first. Solid bags allow your rig to be placed inside with the feed to create a streamlined package that can be cast a very long way. Providing that you've tied it correctly!

PVA Mesh - some anglers prefer mesh because they find it's easier to use. Bags can be tricky to tie, where as mesh is filled through a tube and then simply tied off with a knot. Mesh has a different 'action'

to solid bags too. Bags will gently melt away, where as mesh will release bait almost explosively if it's packed in tightly enough.



You can make your mesh bait bags at home and tie them to you rig or just slip the hook through the mesh and away you go.

PVA String, Tape and Nuggets - PVA String or Tape can be used to tie off solid bags or to tie a mesh bag to your rig. You can thread boilies on it and then tie it to your hook for a 'Stringer' presentation (Left).

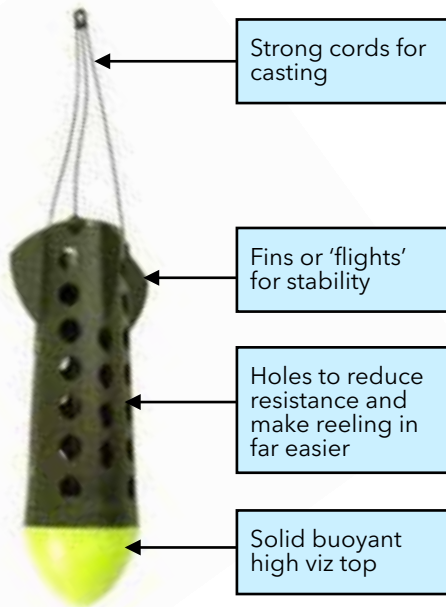


PVA Nuggets, (Right), are used make the hook buoyant until the PVA dissolves, leaving your baited hook to flutter gently on the bottom without damaging the delicate hook point. It also stops the hookbait from burying itself in a soft bottom and can prevent tangles during the cast.

Tom's Top Tip - When using a solid PVA bag, always pierce the bag with a baiting needle a few times before casting. The holes will let any air out and stop the bag from floating.

Spods - Although we have briefly discussed Spods in an earlier chapter, it's worth having a closer look because there are quite a few to choose from.

A classic Spod is rocket shaped with holes, fins and a buoyant coloured top.



So that's the basic Spod, but there are many more. Here's a few types that are worth considering.

A solid Spod for wetter baits and mixes. Much more difficult to reel in and acts more like a parachute in water.



A Spomb has a trigger at the nose that pops the spring loaded catch on impact with the water.

Very popular in modern Carp fishing.



Mini Spod, for smaller amounts of bait. Obviously!



A surface Spod will use a hollow ball that 'floats open' releasing the bait inside. For fishing floating biscuits or pellets at distance.

A boilie rocket unsurprisingly designed for Boilies. This version has a door that opens on impact with the water. Others work the same as normal Spods.



Throwing Sticks - Again coming in all shapes and sizes, a throwing stick can be tricky to use at first. A single boilie is

dropped in from the top or 'posted' through a special window and used with a strong flicking action. The sudden stop launches the boilie up the tube. The curved shape of the stick gives the boilie a back spin so that, when in the air, it will actually rise and fly further. Baits can put a very long way with practice, but boy do they make your arms ache!



Catapults - The good old catapult still has a part play with different versions for pellets, particles (Left) and boilies (Right).



LUGGAGE

Bivvies and Shelters - Let's look first at the largest item you might like to consider.



A bivy, short for bivouac, is specially designed tent for fishing overnight or in bad weather. Light, tough and should be fairly easy to put up, a bivy is just another item with a million different options to chose from. Prices will range from under £100 to close if not over £1000! So your budget will help decide. A good bivy will have a selection of tailor made extras like ground sheets (if not sewn in or fitted), over wraps for colder weather, porches and extensions. Chose one to suit your needs. You won't need a multi person super hotel bivy for an overnighter on your local



Oval brolly systems are designed to be easily moved if need be and double as a bivy or a shelter . A lot of experienced anglers prefer this type of bivy.

Chairs and Bedchairs - If you are fishing overnight, you will need something to sleep on. Of course angling companies have been kind enough to give us a billion different options. As usual, price will dictate your choice. But make sure it's comfy and that it actually fits inside your bivy! Don't laugh, it's happened before (not to me!)



Some models will have specially designed sleeping bags that will zip on and off for cleaning, and special 'crash zips' for a fast exit for screaming alarms in the middle of the night.



Chairs like one on the left are essential to be comfortable when you're waiting for the fish to play the game, the Moon chair in the middle was included because it just looks so comfortable! The chair on the right fits across the frame of your bed chair is very handy and space saving inside your bivy, especially if it's raining.



HOLDALLS & QUIVERS



Holdalls - Padded rod bags (Left) keep valuable rods safe and protected, with padded separators between each rod and pouches to protect each reel. The holdall in the picture will hold up to 6 rods and reels plus a landing net handle and other accessories.

Quivers - (Right) For anglers who prefer to travel lighter or want to get fishing faster if time is short. Of course, your rods and reels will need extra looking after because they are not quite so well protected as they be in a larger holdall. Delicate rod tips can be protected with rod socks and reels with zip up pouches.



Hard case - (Below) These more coarse fishing styled rod bags are somewhere in between, and give good protection to rods.



Barrows - All this new gear needs shifting unless you want to carry everything to your swim? By far the easiest way is to use a barrow. You could use a normal wheel barrow, but it's much nicer to have proper one. You can spend a lot of cash on barrows, but you're budget will dictate which one you end up with.

Super barrows come with side and end frames, water carriers, extra external bags, extra wheels and even electric motors! Extra price and extra weight.

So called 'session barrows' are smaller, lighter, much more compact and cheaper. A more basic design for shorter sessions.

WATERCRAFT

Spend all the money you want on tackle and accessories, but if you don't know where the fish are, you may as well save yourself a walk and fish in the car park.

Watercraft, especially for fish that seen a hook before, is everything. Location, location, location. Modern technology like Google



Maps can give you a huge amount of information, and not just about how to get there. Bars, islands and which way is North will all become apparent on your phone or laptop. Once you know where to go, get permission to walk around the venue and if it's small enough, walk round again. Keep your eyes open for signs of feeding fish.

Bubbles (Right) and cloudy or muddy water are all signs of feeding fish.



Swirls from tails and bow waves of swimming fish, disturbed lily pads and shivering reeds all give away the position of a lakes inhabitants.

Sightings of the fish may happen when they 'show' themselves with head and shoulders or by leaping clear of the water completely.



Walking round the venue will allow you to see features above and sometimes below the surface. Paying attention to the margins might allow you to see the bottom and be a window to how it is made up. Islands are a sanctuary for fish and both the margins and islands with form part of the patrol routes of the Carp.

On larger venues accurate distance casting can be a real advantage to reach fish that think they safe in inaccessible areas. If other anglers have baits at 100 metres and you can put a bait at 110, guess which one the fish will find first.



Take note of the behaviour of water birds. A sudden taking to wing or other commotion could signal Carp activity. Swans serenely gliding along may sometimes swerve to the left or right after an encounter with a patrolling fish.



In the summer, you will see Carp aimlessly swimming around in packs or on their own. Or are they?

At your chosen venue, watch Carp moving in summer because they will often follow 'Patrol Routes' that would use during low pressure days, on the bottom. Make note of these routes and learn them. The same can be said of rest areas.

Islands - Absolute magnets for fish with extra margins for feeding from, extra snags to hide under and other kinds of inviting features. Patrol routes will naturally have to go around islands, so the ends or points on an island are an excellent spot to set a trap.



Gravel Bars - The Motorways of the lake. High pressure will see Carp in shallower water on top of the bar and, during low pressure, they will be at the base of the bars or in between. If possible, fish on the back of the bar rather than the front. Your line will be hidden by the bar itself and away from causing false line bites.

Margins - Same or similar to the margins of any islands. You can observe the fish, bait an area very accurately and place your bait exactly where it needs to be. Make sure you have a spread of bait to attract fish in and focus them into a baited area.

Weed - With an endless supply of food sources, weed and lilies are a haven for fish. A gap in the weed or a hole can be a holding area for feeding fish. A carefully placed bait at the mouth of a weed channel to tempt a patrol or around the edges of a weed hole where all the food lies.

Channels - Carp get funnelled into channels through weeds, islands and reeds. Concentrating them into a small area. The entrances and exits of these corridors are prime positions to lay your bait traps.



Snags - Under tree branches and through tree roots, weeds, reeds and lily pads. All give Carp sanctuary from anything that may trouble it or shelter from the sun's rays. You can grab a strong rod, heavy line and some real animal hooks to drag the fish out. There is nothing wrong with fishing in or close to snags, but I do sometimes wonder if the need to catch a Carp over rides thoughts of their safety. Damage to fish can be avoided with strategic baiting and patience. Try to create a bait trail to lead Carp away from those safe snags, to an area where they can be hooked, played and landed safely. Yes, I know it's easy to write this stuff but, a fish caught with clever strategy cannot fail to bring more satisfaction than one caught with brute strength, In my humble opinion...

We have spoken in detail about finding depth and feature marking already, so I won't go into the any further. It is worth noting that depth will have significant effect on the location of target fish.

Features like gravel bars and margins, both close and along islands, will harbour food and where there's food, there's fish.

Temperature plays a part in finding the right depth too. Warmer winds will see the fish heading towards shallower areas. The opposite will occur for colder winds, making the fish go deeper.

WIND -

Northerly winds will naturally be colder and usually bring cold rain and/or snow.

Easterly winds will be cold and bitter.

Southerly winds will, as a rule, be warmer. But they can bring

thunderstorms and rain.

Westerly winds are most common and generally warmer, but they can bring rain too. Of course it is never as simple as that. In the winter, a south or westerly wind can be a blessing because of the warmer temperatures they may bring. North or Easterly winds can be an advantage in the hot summer with cooler conditions. So, where to sit when it's windy? Many anglers believe having the wind blowing into your face is the way to go.

Sometimes they are right. A facing wind brings with it food and oxygen, the two most favourite things of a Carp.



Fishing facing into a south and westerly wind is always going to be warmer and the fish will know that. They will usually be found on the windward bank.

North and easterly winds, being colder, fish are not going to be comfortable being blasted with cold air and water. So the opposite bank from where the wind is blowing is usually better. This known as 'fishing on the back of the wind'.

The next two subjects are more complicated. An important part of weather is air pressure and the effect it has on fish. Understanding air pressure will give you a big advantage against the fish and other anglers. Enough to make you look pretty good. Air pressure is measured in Millibars, or Mb for short.

Let's start with sea level, the thing from which everything is measured. Air pressure at sea level is 1013Mb. Air pressure under 1013Mb is regarded as 'Low pressure' and a measurement over 1013Mb is regarded as 'High Pressure'.

Because we are inland and higher than the sea level, 1010Mb is regarded as high pressure.

Low air pressure will raise oxygen levels in water. High air pressure over extended periods in the summer will lower oxygen levels in water. The oxygen in the lower layers of the water, near the bottom, will be much less than the upper levels, near the surface. This explains why Carp spend much of their time



'Sun bathing' during the warmest days. Of course, fish are cold blooded animals and the warmth of the sun on their bodies will also make them feel more comfortable. From a fishing point of view, and I have seen this many times, fishing hard on the bottom is much less effective in these conditions. Zig rigs may be a better option than bottom baits.



Low pressure will see oxygen levels rise and the Carp sink lower and out of sight. You may see large patches of bubbles like a Jacuzzi as the Carp rip the bottom up looking for food. So it's obvious that periods of low pressure give you the best chance of bagging a big one.

Low pressure in the winter will cause air and water temperatures to plummet and fish will switch off in an instant. Days like these can leave you scratching your head in frustration.



"Big Commons get caught on a full moon"... Well, there is no real scientific proof to back up that statement. However, science has shown us a new moon often brings lower pressure. Lower pressure causes insects to hatch. Carp feed better during periods of low pressure. One of the beautiful coincidences of nature that we would do well to remember.

The Moon. The Sun. The wind and weather. What does it all mean? All have their own and very different effects on the fish and how we try to catch them.

As usual, there is no real substitute for experience and asking advice from those more experienced than us. Get to know your favourite venues and learn their behaviours and moods. Quiet time or time spent just watching the water will increase your knowledge now you know what to look for. When You start to understand watercraft, then your Carp fishing journey will then have truly begun.

SECTION FOUR



A GUIDE TO FISHING ON DDAS RIVERS

A guide to show you how to fish on the river stretches currently on the DDAS club book.

What is

RIVER FISHING?

- Why fish a river?
- Safety near running water
- Which rods, reels and terminal tackle do you need?
- Which baits, when and why?
- Top tips to help you.

In the days before commercial fisheries, man made lakes and even canals, rivers provided food and sport for many years. In fact the sea was the only other place you could go.

Unfortunately our rivers have been in decline in recent years due to poor management, water quality, predation and the appearance of commercially run fisheries. All of these have taken much of the focus away from our rivers.

DDAS, like many other clubs, owes its very existence to rivers and they remain a vital part of the club's portfolio of venues.

Rivers are seen by many to be the purest method of catching fish. Many species are only found in rivers, like Dace, Minnows and Grayling. River inhabitants are usually born naturally in the river and nurtured rather than stocked by humans. They are wild fish and harder to catch until you learn the ways of the river.

It's harder going too, with many spots a long walk from the car across fields and fences. So different tackle is required to minimise the load you need to carry. Maybe another reason why modern, pampered anglers shy away from rivers.

In this section we will be showing you how to approach the sections of river that are currently on our venue list and to guide you on what you will need to fish them.

SAFETY FIRST

The mood of a river changes through the year. From a gentle, peaceful, quiet place in summer. To a raging, angry, deadly animal in the winter. But it can be both within a few weeks at any time of year. In times of heavy rain, a river can rise to dangerous levels in just a few hours, sometimes without warning. So extra care needs to be taken when planning a session and an up to date weather forecast is essential, even a few days before fishing.



When fishing rivers, many anglers prefer use of waders to cross more shallow areas. This poses an extreme danger if you are not careful. Thinking clearly in an emergency is not easy but there are a few things you should try to remember if the unthinkable should happen.

1. **Stay calm and do not panic** - Easier said than done, especially if the water is cold. You are likely to go into shock. Thrashing around in panic will use energy that you may need later.
2. If you are using chest waders, wear a wading belt. A wading belt will slow down the water trying to fill your waders. If you lay on your back, relax and lift your feet, you should be able to float.
3. **Do not fight the river** - go with the flow, use your feet to push away from rocks or obstacles until you make your way towards a place where you can get out safely.

4. **Do not grab at branches or logs etc.** - obstacles like these can form 'strainers' under the water. Submerged branches 'catch' debris in the current and hold it there. Stuff goes in, but only water comes out.

5. **Wear an inflatable vest** - Obviously you have a better chance of surviving a fall if you have one.

6. **Shout for help!** - If you are fishing with others, make them aware that you need help.

7. **Take a full change of clothes and towels** - You may be out of the water, but you are not out of danger. Exposure and/or hypothermia is a real risk. You must get dry and into dry clothes as quickly as you can.

If you Wade a lot, you are going to have a trip or fall at some point. Try to use a stick or a landing net handle for balance and to 'feel' for rocks, weed and deeper spots. Neoprene waders are made with tiny air pockets in the material making them and you float better.

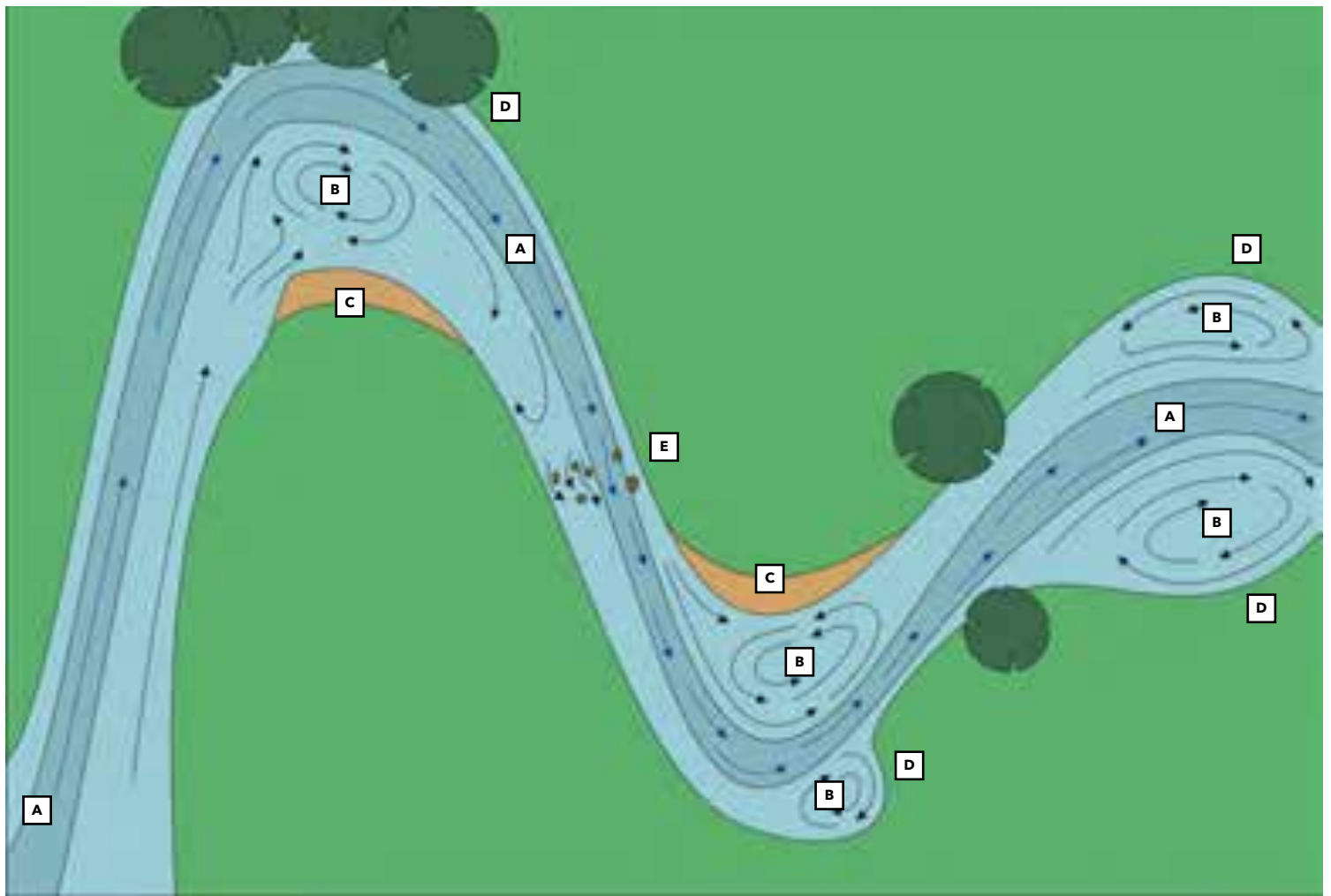
**Stay calm. Feet up.
Get out. Get dry.**

Other dangers come from under cut river bank caused by erosion. The the water carves out the the soil making the top surface dangerous to stand on. The picture below



might not look that dangerous. But the water at the edge could be 6 or 9 feet deep (2 or 3 metres). Look for signs of the ground cracking and use your stick/handle to test it first.

A river bank with steep sides is more than likely going to be deep close in. A steep, slippery bank means there's only one way to go. Chose your fishing spots carefully.



A - Water will always take a path of least resistance. So the main flow of a river will meander from one side to the other, scouring a path for itself as it goes. The edge of the main flow is called the crease. The crease will be the first place any food particles will appear once they washed out of the main current. There you will find fish gobbling free bait and hopefully your hook bait too! The crease is easy to find because of the change in appearance on the surface, a visible difference in pace and small ripples, eddys and swirls.

B - Large eddys form on the inside of bends or behind obstacles in the river. The flow in an eddy will be much slower and fish will often rest up there to conserve energy. Eddys will provide shelter in rivers heavy with rain water and will attract predators because this. So there are many reason to drop a bait in to an eddy. Often described as having a washing machine effect when everything in the river swirls round and round, depositing food, silt and stones on the inside of any bends.

C - This will build up over time and create bars. Shallow areas of sediment and stones that will eventually change the shape of the river.

D - The outside of a bend will usually be in the fastest part of the current because, as we said earlier, water will take the easiest route. These areas are most likely to be carved out by the river, causing under cut banks. The bank will eventually collapse and be washed way. The process will begin all over again.

E - The Riffle. A shallow, fast moving section of a river either natural or man made. Can be used to control the pace of the river to slow erosion and to provide essential oxygen in the water for fish. The water below a riffle can be rich in food sources and make excellent fishing spots.

It is important to know that rivers are only open for fishing from 16th June and close on 15th March.

RODS AND REELS

The rods and reels used for rivers are fairly similar to other types of fishing. For beginners or younger, smaller anglers, a 12ft (3.6 metre) rod is fine to start with. As you gain experience and grow, rods of 14 or 15ft (3.9 to 4.2m) are common on the river. The angler allows the float to run down with the flow of the river. This is called trotting.

The flow or 'current' may vary in speed in different areas. This may cause your line to catch up with your float, dragging it from its preferred course. A longer rod will allow you to pick the line up much more easily, and lay it back behind the float, making the float travel down the river straighter instead of going across the river unnaturally. This action is called 'mending the line'. You may have to mend several times in one trot.

The diagram below shows a situation where the red float has been left to trot down 'un-mended'.

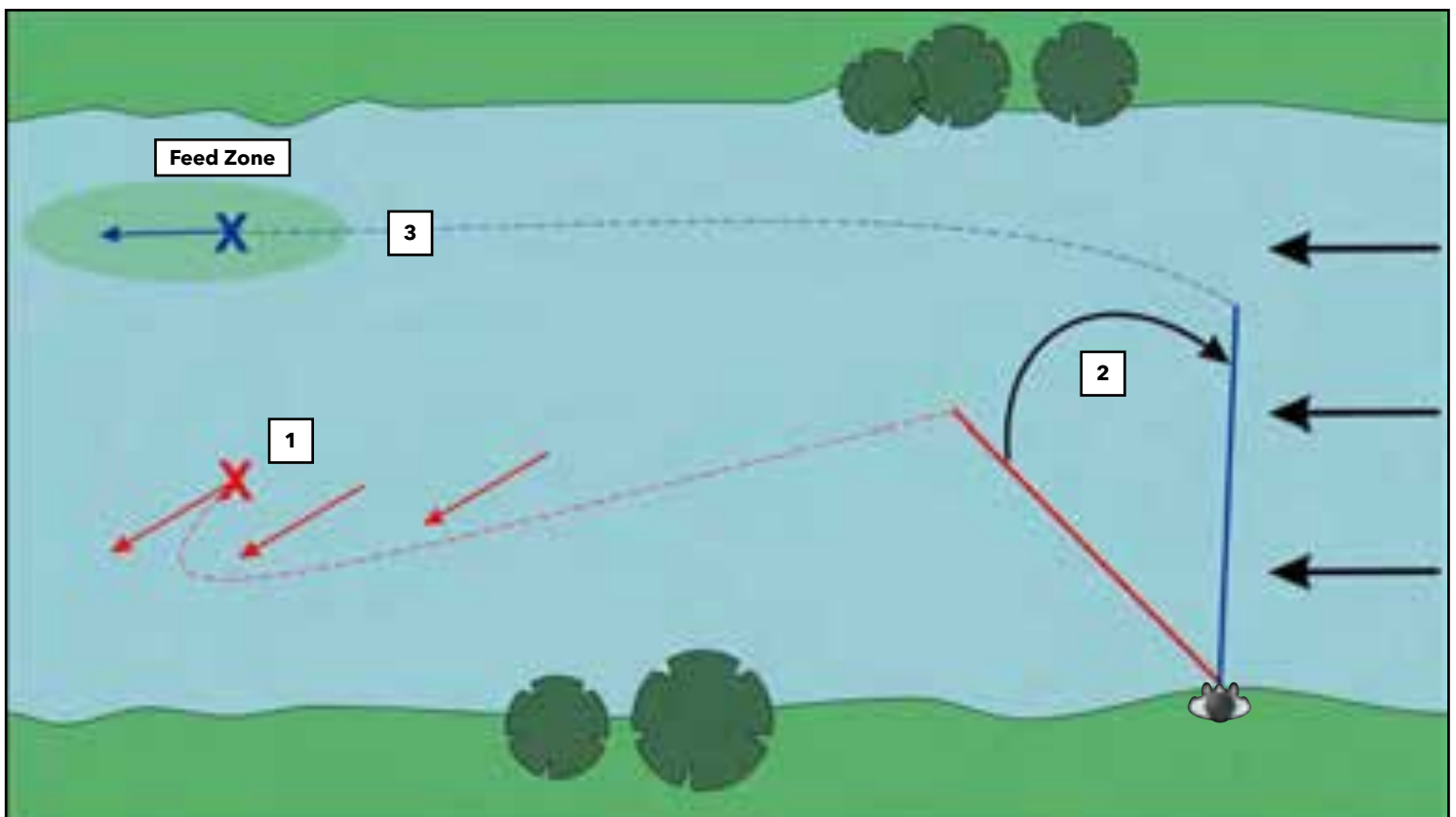
In **Fig 1**, the current or wind pushing on the line has dragged the float across the river and away from the feed zone. This cast will probably not catch any fish.

Fig 2 The float has been recast and the line is being mended before the bow gets too bad. The line is lifted gently off the water and laid back down behind and inline with the float's direction of travel to the feed zone.

Fig 3 shows the result of the mend with everything in a nice straight line and ready to catch fish.

Wind direction will play a big part too. An upstream wind makes life much easier to keep the line under control. However, a downstream wind is precisely the opposite, making fishing a real handful because the wind will push the line faster than the river flow, dragging your float with it.

Many a deep sigh has been breathed by anglers facing a nasty downstream wind!



Reels for the river are pretty much the same as for any other type of fishing. You can fish perfectly well with your usual reels, just make sure they are in the 3000 size or under. You will be holding your rod virtually all day, so larger reels will be heavy to hold for long periods of time. I loved using Closed Face reels (Left) for my river fishing in the past. They are small and light and less prone to tangles on windy days.



Centre pin reels (Right) are worth a quick mention, even if they may be a little advanced for very young anglers or beginners.

Centre pins have very smooth ball bearings and no gears or any other working parts, apart from a ratchet to put a semi lock on the reel. The spool is so smooth that the float travelling down the river can pull line off the reel by itself. All you need to slow the float down is the lightest touch of your thumb on the rim of the spool to check the speed for perfect presentation.

Casting a Centre pin can be a tricky business. One thing you have to remember is that they are not casting reels. If you want to cast more than two or three rod lengths, then use a fixed spool reel.

Basically, and this is very basic, with two fingers of your free hand, pull the line from either side of the butt ring making two large 'loops'. Now you either under arm swing your float out or have the rod parallel to the bank and cast the rod sideways, releasing the line from the two fingers to let the float travel out in to the river. This simple method should give you at least two rod lengths of cast.

To be honest, most of the time you can simply allow the float 'trot off the rod tip' without even casting.

LINE

Just a short word on fishing line for rivers. For float fishing you will need a floating line. As we have seen, it is important to be able to lift the line off of the surface to mend it. If we have line that sinks, we can't do that. The line would get trapped by the swirling under currents and we would end in a right mess.

Another good reason for a floating long is a clean strike. There are few things more satisfying than the splash of a stick float as you connect with a fish. Of course, the wind does play havoc with floating lines, but we have to learn deal with that when trotting.



Drennan float fish in 3.2 or 4.4lb makes a good starting line. You can go up or down from there, depending on the size and species of fish you are catching.



For the feeder, a line of about 6 to 8lb is adequate for most rivers. Try to chose a low diameter line. Tenths of a millimetre matter when you are fishing in a strong current.

Braid is a good option for feeders because of its low diameter and low resistance, but check if it is allowed before buying any. It's a lot of money to waste if you can't use it!

FLOATS

There are so many river floats to choose from but, here are four that will be useful on DDAS rivers.



Stick float - A streamlined float with a balsa wood top half and cane, plastic or wire bottom. A high viz, dome shaped tip blends in to a slightly wider, stretched body. You will notice there are no 'eyes' to thread the line through. 'Sticks', along with many other river floats are attached with small bands and/or silicone tubing in a 'top and bottom' style. 'Shouldered sticks' have a thicker body with a pronounced step for faster running water.



Avon float - Used in faster currents, the Avon float has a much fatter body, a longer tip and a wire stem. Like the Stick float, Avon's are attached top and bottom with rubbers. The rounder shaped body helps the float to hold steady in the flow when held back, instead of rising out of the water. The wire or alloy stem gives stability in strong, turbulent currents. Avons have a wide range of sizes from a few No.4s to 8 or even 10 grams.



Bolognese or 'Bolo' float - A bit like a pole float on steroids, the Bolo float comes into its own in fast running water, or where the river is too deep for a stick float. Originating in Italy, Bolo floats are normally used with very long 5 to 8 metre long rods! But this is not essential and we can use them with normal rods too. A thick but sensitive bristle, a thick shouldered body and a wire/alloy stem. They are fixed to the line top and bottom.



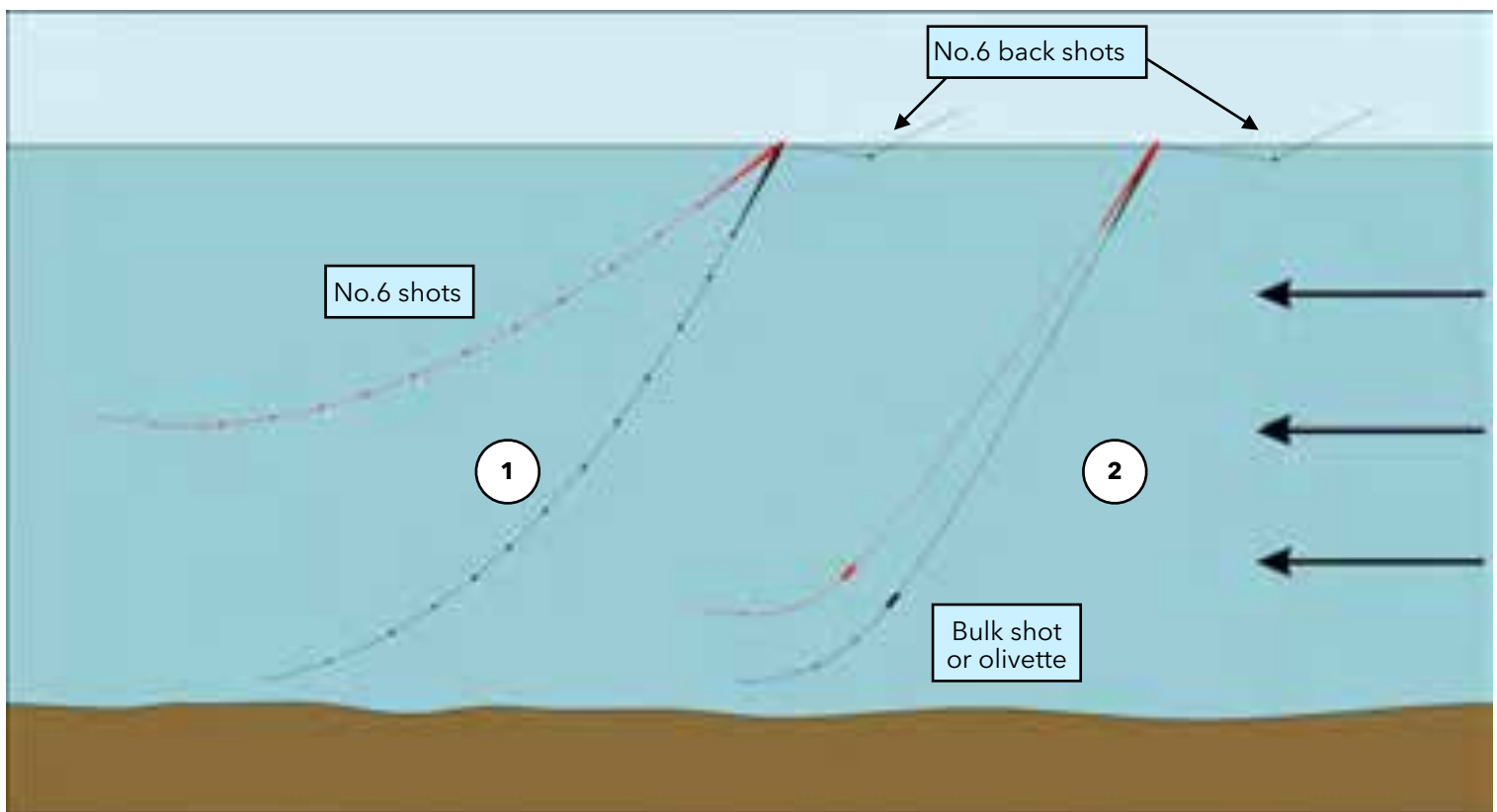
Insert, straight or bodied Waggler - You might recognise the float pictured because it's the same as the ones we use for coaching. We can use Wagglers on stretches of the river that are deep and slow, like the Stour. A 1.5 to 2 gram (2 or 3 AA) is perfect for the river, particularly if you are faced with a strong downstream wind that makes a top and bottom float difficult to control. Use a straight Waggler for fishing on the bottom and inserted wagglers for mid depth.

FLOATS

Below is a diagram showing how two shotting patterns work so differently.

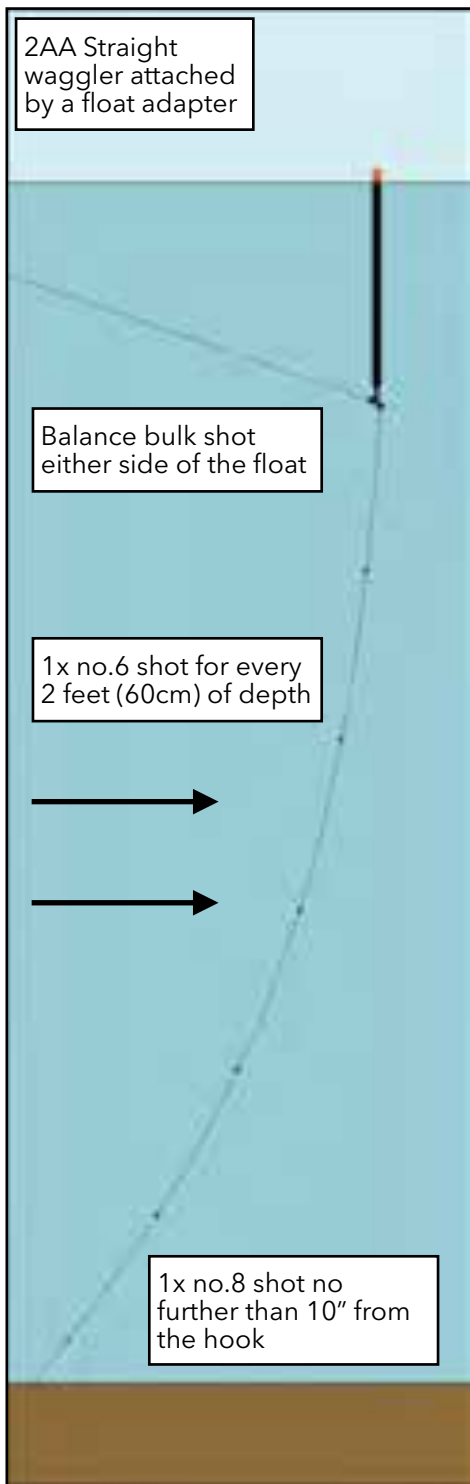
'Shirt button' style shotting pattern - Fig 1 shows the most traditional shotting pattern for a stick float. The float in the picture is a 6 no.4 stick. The idea is to break down the shots into smaller sizes so you spread the weights down the length of the rig. $6 \times \text{no.4} = 12 \times \text{no.6}$. I would break that further by have one of the no.6 as $2 \times \text{no.8}$ shots. So complete rig is $11 \times \text{no.6}$ shots plus $2 \times \text{no.8}$ s.

If you're making this at home, I would set the depth at 8ft (2.4 m) and fix the shots equally space once I have found the depth. If you're making it on the bank, plumb up first then fix your shot as above. The red part of the drawing shows how the equally spaced shots behave when you hold the rig back against the flow. The bait will be lifted much higher through the water. So you can fish through more water to find where the fish are feeding and then adjust your depth to suit. If I had to shallow up, I would keep the spacing as it is and spare shots would be bunched under the float.



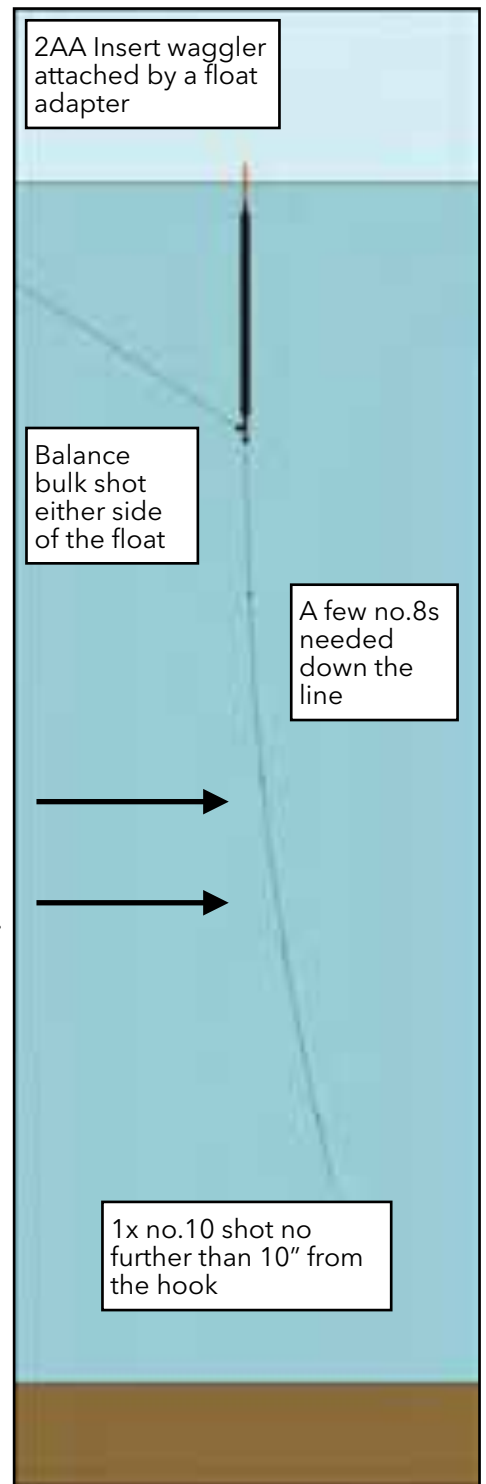
Bulk and two droppers - There will be occasions when you will need to fish your bait closer to the bottom. Species like Bream or Barbel and smaller species like Gudgeon like to feed near or on the river bed, so, that's where your bait needs to be. Using bulk shot ensures your bait gets to the bottom and gets fishing much more quickly. If you know that this pattern is going to work, you can use larger shots or even olivettes as the bulk weight. Olivette leads are much more streamlined and less likely to get caught up on weed. Having the weight 'down' the rig means that when you do hold back, mend the line or check the pace, the bait will not rise through the water like a spaced out shotting pattern does. This is the shotting pattern that works best in much faster flow with the Avon or Bolo floats. On both examples you will notice that a small shot like a no.6 is placed above the float called a back shot. A back shot stops your float being pulled off line when you mend the line. It simply bobs and stays where you need it, but don't mistake this for a bite! Another thing to notice is that both rigs are fished over depth. If the rigs are dead depth, then when you hold them back, they will lift and be nowhere near where you think they are. Plumb the depth then add 6" (15cm) unless the rig is to be off the bottom.

The straight Waggler, shown right, has a thick, highly visible tip. Because it's thick, it is much more buoyant than the thinner, inserted tip floats. More buoyant but, if it's shotted correctly, just as sensitive. We can use that buoyancy to fish our bait close to or even dragging on the bottom if we need to. The thicker tip will not be as easily pulled under as an insert would. The diagram shows the bait behind the float, being dragged along by the current. Bait choice is important for this method and only a Caster or Hemp, where you can bury the hook inside the bait, will work. An exposed hook with a maggot or worm will catch and snag the bottom.



In the picture, the bulk of the weight is underneath the float for casting. There is 1x no.6 shot equally placed down the line for every two feet (60cm) of depth. You must make sure that you have a no.8 shot no further than 10" (25cm) from the hook. This last shot will be the 'tell tail shot' that tells you when a fish is biting.

The Insert Waggler is much more sensitive and a perfect float for shallow to mid water fishing. Not all fish are on the bottom of the river, so fishing off the bottom means you don't need a chunky float to stop it getting dragged under. The Insert requires very little shot down the line. Just a few no.8s with a no.10 that vital 10" (25cm) from the hook.



Hooks need to be fairly small. 16, 18 or down to a 20. The fish you are likely to catch will be comparatively small compared to Commercial fisheries.



FEEDING AND FISHING

Throughout the river section of the booklet, one phrase has been used a lot. What do we mean by 'holding back' and why do we do it?

Rivers have lots of turbulence under the surface. Swirls, ripples creases and folds. All make food particles dance and bounce around, even in the steadiest of currents. Fish constantly move and dart around, chasing food and competing with their shoal mates as well as swimming against the flow of the river. They use lots of energy doing it and an easy meal saves some of that energy. By slowing the float down just a little with your finger on the spool or a thumb on the rim of a centre pin, you can make your bait very attractive to hungry fish. The idea is to just ease your float through your peg, holding it back, letting it run, lifting and dropping the bait to catch the



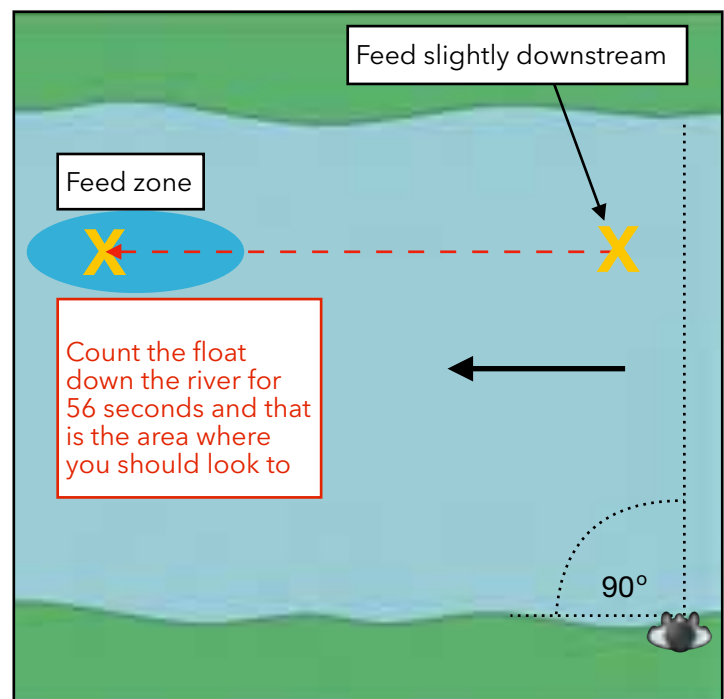
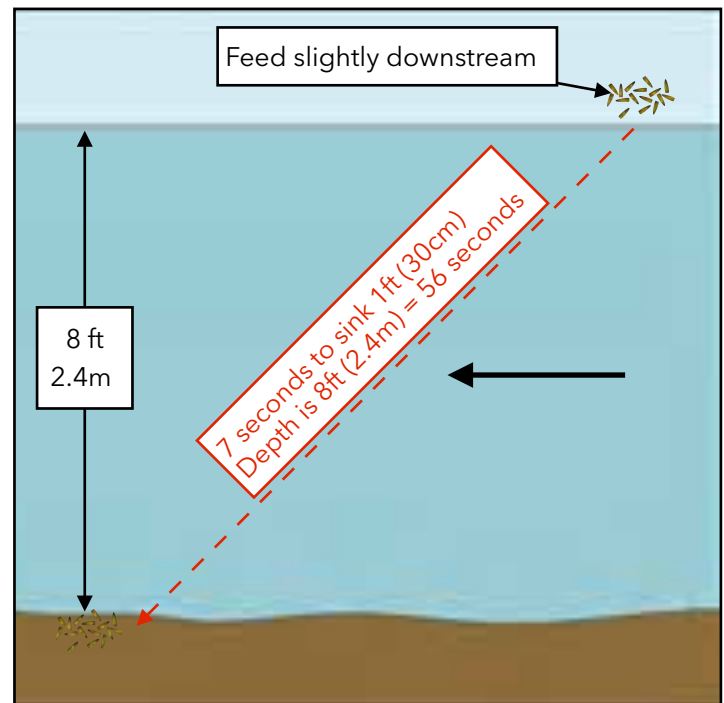
attention of the fish. Of course, it's never as simple as that. Some days they will want it running through, others held back hard. It's something that can't be written and anyway, you need to find some things out for yourself!

There will be fish in your swim from the start, hopefully, but once you've caught some and the rest have been spooked off, then what? You could patiently wait for more to turn up or you can make something happen by feeding. In a lake, the feed goes in, it goes straight down and it might get moved around by wind or undertow, but it's going to land roughly where you want it to.

Unless you're a visitor to the planet (Welcome), you will know that rivers move. Fast or slow, from one place to another. This presents us with a problem.

Where do you feed and where is it going to end up?

One vital thing to remember is that maggots will sink 1 foot (30cm) in roughly 6.5 to 7 seconds. When you work out your depth with a plummet, you will have an idea of when you should be expecting a bite as you trot your float down. Another good tip is to always feed slightly downstream. Fish like Chub, Dace and Roach, will naturally follow the stream of loose feed up to its point of source. That means that the fish will compete with each other to get to the bait first. They will rise higher in the water and move further upstream. In matches, this means that the angler in the peg upstream of you could, if he's clever, steal some of your fish!



FEEDERS

There are plenty of swims on our rivers where a swim feeder will work particularly well. In fact, a feeder can out score a float if the conditions are right.

Of the feeders we looked at earlier in the booklet, the Block end or Maggot Feeder will probably work the best.



One of the biggest and most difficult questions to answer is, how long should the hook length be? There isn't really a solid answer, but there are ways to give us a clue of where to start.

When the water is warmer and the fish are more active, we might get away with a relatively short hooklink.

Like loose feeding with a float, the fish will naturally make their way to the source of the feed, in this case, the feeder. You may be able to use hooklinks as short as 6" (15cm).

But in the colder months, longer hooklinks are used. Anything up to 3, 4 or even 5ft (90cm, 1.2 or 1.5 metres) on some days.

About 2ft (60cm) is a good, sensible starting length.

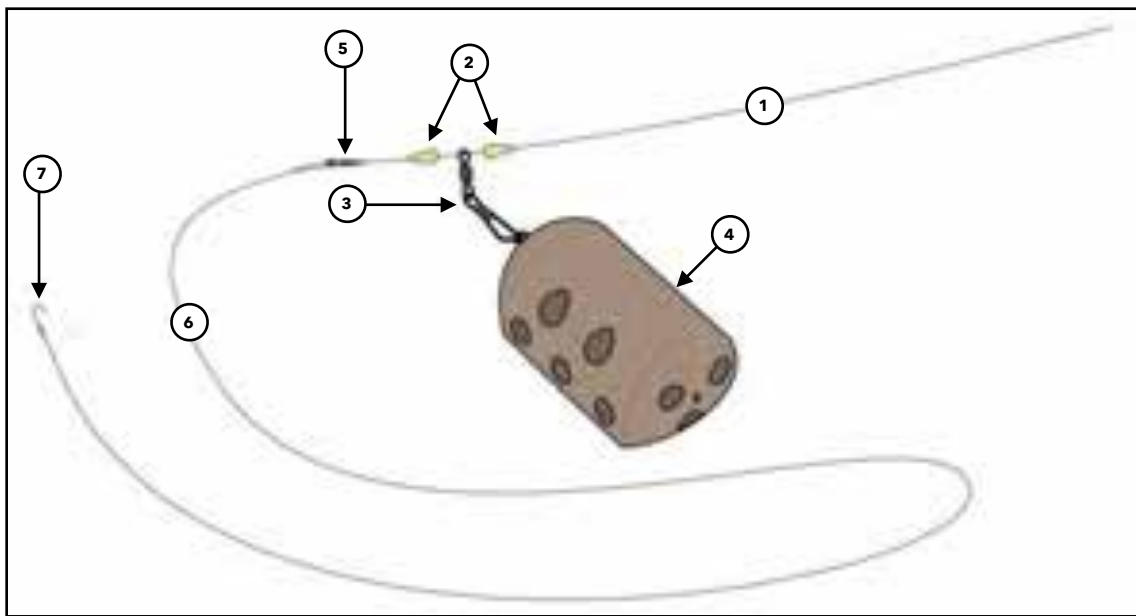
As you catch fish during the day, look at where the fish is hooked. Too deep and you may need to shorten your hooklink. Lightly hooked or if you lose a fish or two at the net, and you will need to put a longer one on. The bites may come immediately your feeder hits the bottom so a short hooklink will be required. As the day goes on and you're waiting longer for a bite, the fish may have backed off and drifted down the swim. If you feel this is the case, a longer hooklink may reach down to fish waiting for a tasty bite and less bait in the feeder or a smaller feeder might bring them back up again. The last thing you want to do is chase fish downstream without reducing your feed. This will just push them out of your swim and you'll never get them back.

TOP TIP: Always bait your hook before filling your feeder. If you do it the other way round, there may not be any maggots left in the feeder when you come to cast!



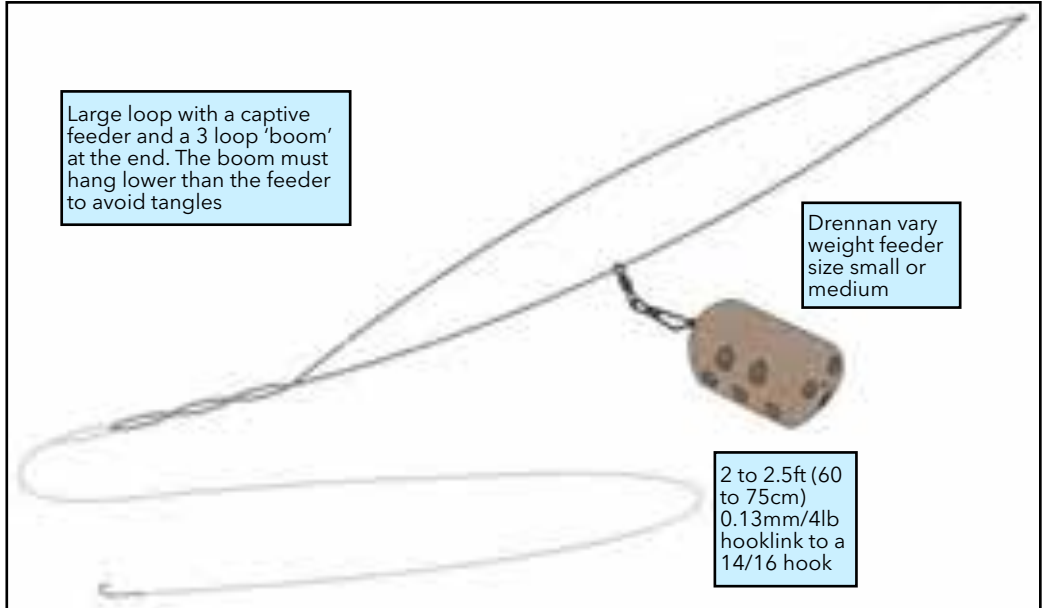
Drennan Vary Weight feeders have weights that you can slide in and out and swap or change them to suit your fishing on the day. A light and heavy version of each size will give you 9 different weight variations without changing the feeder.

If you have small and medium feeders in both light and heavy, that's four feeders to carry instead of 18! You'll be thankful of the weight saving as you trudge across heavy, muddy fields!



1. 6lb main line
2. Drennan Big Grippa Stops
3. Quick link swivel
4. Drennan vary weight feeder
5. Micro Quick Release swivel
6. 2ft/60cm 4lb hooklink
7. Size 16/14 barbless hook

The Feeder loop is set up by first threading your feeder on the line. Then, with a figure of eight loop knot, tie a large 2 to 2.5ft (60 to 75cm) loop with the feeder inside. In the end of the large loop, tie three or four smaller loops, the last of which you will use to attach your hooklink.



Fishing the feeder in

running water - If you were to use a tight line as you would on a lake, you will keep dislodging your feeder unless you used one the size of a house brick! So what weight should your feeder be? First, the river will tell you the size of the quiver tip and the weight of the feeder.

The picture, right, shows a feeder rod positioned pointing upwards. There is a very good reason for this. The current will always push on the line, forcing it downstream. The more line you can keep out of the water, the less there is for the river to push on. Having your rod high like this will lift the line out of the flow.



Quiver tips - New anglers do not really need to worry too much about the strength of their quiver tips. But it is advised to fit a stronger tip if the flow is very fast, or you need to cast a long way. A tip of about 1oz will cope with slow water situations.

Working out the weight - before you start fishing, take some time to work out the weight of your feeder. Start with a 1oz (30g) feeder and cast it out empty and without a hooklink. Let it hit the bottom and close your bail arm, but don't tighten up to the feeder. Put the rod on the rest and let the tip pull round in the river current.

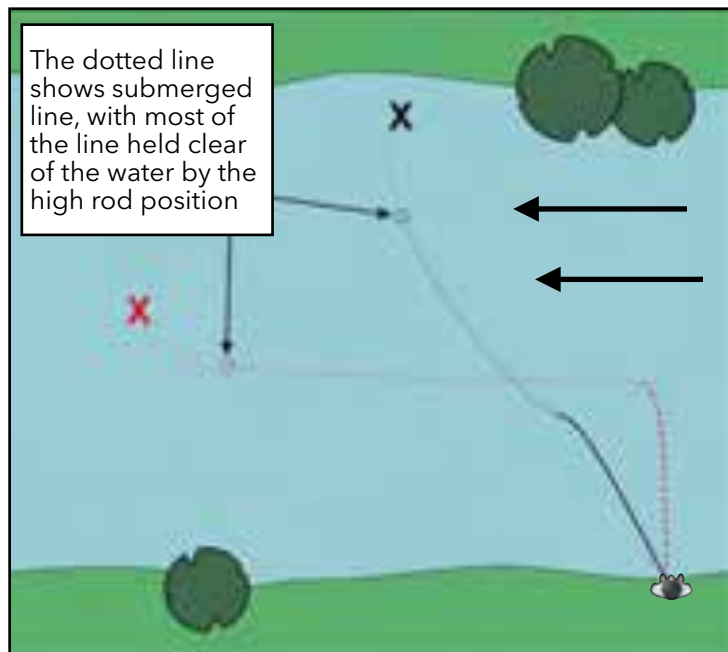
Now, if the feeder is easily moved or won't hold the bottom, then it is too light.

If the feeder is hard to move and the rod bends past the quiver tip, then the feeder is too heavy.

Either add or subtract weights, or clip on different feeders until it's right.

Fishing the bow - So we have our feeder holding bottom nicely and we've got the right tip in. Now we need to think about how much bow to have in our line. Fishing the bow like this will help anchor the feeder so we use less weight making the setup more sensitive. But how big should the bow be?

During your test casts to find the weight of your feeder, you can do a few test strikes. You should be able to move the tip of your rod about 1 metre before the feeder moves. In this metre you will be picking the bow or slack line and, therefore, the bow will be the right size.



The diagram above shows how the position of your rod will depend on where in the river you are fishing. The black rod has the feeder fishing in front and slightly downstream of the angler. So the rod is pointing more downstream, more towards 45 degrees.

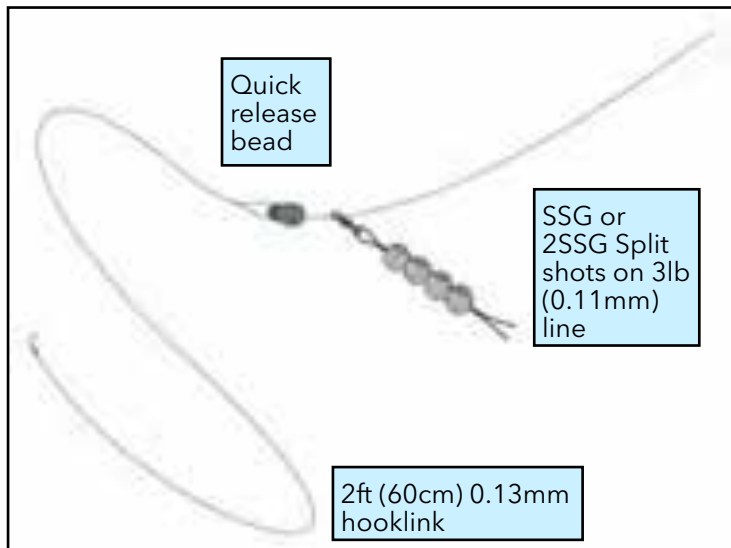
The red rod is fishing closer to the anglers side and further downstream, so the rod is positioned directly in front of the angler.

I would love to tell you where the change point from one to the other is but, to be quite honest, I have no idea.... you will have to see which one feels right to you.

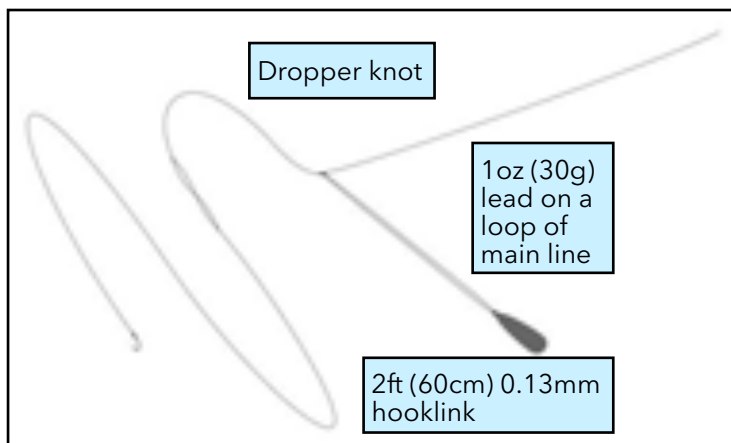


River Ledgering - A couple of rigs from my past as a Junior that I wanted to pass on to you. How to set up a ledger with nothing more than a number of SSG shots and some spare line. I've brought it up to date a little by adding a bead and a swivel.

Trim off 6" (15cm) of line and tie a



swivel to it, loop to loop style. Thread the main line through the swivel and tie on a quick release bead. To the line on the swivel, attach 3, 4 or 5 large SSG or 2SSG shots. If the weights become snagged, they simply slip off the line and the rig is released.



Above is a basic paternoster rig. A good chance for you to practice tying the tricky Dropper knot. Once tied, attach the lead weight, then make sure the short section leading to the hooklink loop is longer than the lead boom to avoid tangles.

BAIT DROPPERS

Bait Droppers - Largely forgotten these days, a bait dropper is a very traditional device that introduces bait at the bottom of the river without it getting washed too far downstream.



The dropper is filled with bait, the door is closed and then the latch is pulled down to lock it. The loaded dropper is then lowered or gently cast into the river.

When it hits the bottom the latch is released and the door falls open releasing the bait. Holes in the dropper allow the current to wash the bait out.

You use your dropper by attaching it your float fishing rig.

Thread the hook and line through the wire loop at the top. On the back is a rubber or cork block to push the hook into.

Just don't forget to take it off again!



Bait

Which bait is most commonly used on rivers? If you guessed maggots, have a point!



Our favourite wriggly friends are a firm favourite with the fish too. Red, white or bronze are usual, it doesn't matter which you use really, but we all have our favourites. Bronze maggots are Mr Chubs favourite. Maggots are an all year round bait and anything will eat them.



Castors (Above) will always pick out the better fish on the right day. Not many Roach can resist a nice crunchy caster. Very often used together with Hemp (Below), a very traditional combination and very effective. Hemp can also be loose



fed and/or used on the hook, although they are very fiddly to put on.

One bait that will be new to most Juniors are Tares. Tares are small, dark brown cooked pulses, about the size of a pea. Tares are another bait that work very well with Hemp.



Get the fish feeding on Hemp then slip a Tare on a size 16 hook and away you go! Like Hemp, you can buy Tares ready cooked these days, so it's never been easier to use them.



Pinkies are a brilliant bait for DDAS rivers. Don't be fooled by their size either. They may small, I've seen some pretty big fish taken on the humble Pinkie. Used all year round but work best in winter.



Worms are a must have bait for rivers. Chub, Perch and even Pike love a nice juicy worm. Earthworms, Lobworms or Dendrobaenas from a shop will all do nicely. Use them chopped and introduced with a bait dropper down the edge for bonus perch.



USING A POLE

I love fishing with a pole on a river. You can be so accurate and work a bait in so many different ways. But it can be quite difficult because of the steep banks, the equipment you need and the distance you have to fish at most of the time. Using a pole can be quite demanding on lakes. It is even more so on a river.



The river Stour can be quite deep and you have to use longer rigs with longer top kits. Spare sections for extra top kits or a cupping kit gets expensive. Sure, there ways around it, but it gets so fiddly, you start to wonder why you bothered.

Longer top kits are harder to manage, particularly when playing larger fish.

The Frome is not as deep, but it is faster. Everything is more intense and you need special 'Flat' floats in many of the pegs. Touch the the water with a long pole in a fast river and you will be facing downstream pretty quickly if you don't have the strength to pick it up.

But it's not all doom and gloom, and fish can be caught using a whip at close range or with your normal pole. Let's look at some basic pole floats.

The floats themselves may differ from those used with a rod and line, but the shotting patterns are the same. Shirt button style and bulk

down are both used for pole rigs, perhaps slightly lighter for a whip.



For slow moving, fairly calm water close in, a pencil float (above) is ideal for whip fishing to hand. Fishing 'to hand' means the line of the rig is the same length as your pole, so you can lift or 'swing' the fish directly to your hand. A float between 0.75g to 1.5g is about right.



Above is a typical river pole float available in a range of sizes that we can use. A long, sensitive and highly visible tip. A rounded body to stop the float 'riding up' when it's held back in the current and a long wire stem. You can use a carbon stemmed float, wire will be more stable through turbulent water. 0.75g for fishing to hand or at mid depth down the river, right up to 2 or 3g for when the river is 'pushing' after rain.



The flat float (left) is not a wind up or a joke, these floats are about as technical as floats will ever get, and they really work too. Highly engineered, these floats come from Europe where 'shallow' rivers are 7 metres deep! They have been adapted to UK rivers now they are used by holding them back HARD against the flow with a large olivette close to the bottom. Mad looking floats with serious capability.

One area where a pole won't be beaten is feeding accuracy, providing it is in range and on our rivers, it probably is.

Introducing feed, particularly groundbait, with a cupping kit is by far the best way to get your feed zone where you want it. Yes you could throw it in, but you will have to practice a lot to accurate enough to prevent spreading your fish all over the river. Another good reason for



using a cupping kit is, the splash from throwing balls of groundbait will attract fish, but it will also attract predators too. Your days fishing will be a short one if Mr Pike shows up.



Talking of groundbait, I have purposely left it until now to mention it because, if you are going to use groundbait, using a pole is the best way to introduce it. Now, which groundbait to use is a personal thing. We are all different but I will tell you what I prefer, after that it's up to you.



On the left is a river groundbait. It's the black version because I believe that works better. A river groundbait is a 'heavy' mix with no fish meal and sticky binders that hold the ball together until it reaches the bottom. There it will breakdown slowly, without too much 'fizzing'. A groundbait like this is called an 'Inert' groundbait. Don't be confused with 'Feeder' groundbaits. These are the opposite of inert and will fizz like mad, taking your fish downstream and out of reach.

On the right is a 'Roach' groundbait, again a dark version. This mix will put a little food and flavour in the water to attract fish. When it's really cold, I will run the Roach mix through a flour sieve to remove some of the bigger bits and make it finer, with less food content that might over feed the fish.

I will use these two mixed 50/50 if the river is normal, with a handful of fluoro pinkies and some casters. If the river has some extra water on it I might add some Leam, a very fine clay powder that will add weight and more binding. If the river is really moving, I will add sieved and dried mole hill soil.

If you see Mole hills in the fields next to the river you're fishing, grab some dirt for another time. But get permission first of course. The soil will be perfectly match to that in the river. Shake it through a riddle and sieves a few times, then air dry it.

TIPS & ACCESSORIES

If you fancy fishing the rivers, you may have to make changes to your usual tackle.



Inflatable life jacket.

Rivers are dangerous to be around, especially if you are not a strong swimmer, and wearing winter clothes, boots or waders. Life vests or jackets maybe a nuisance and get in the way. They may look 'silly' but, **THEY WILL SAVE YOUR LIFE** if you fall in. Don't be one of those that wish they had worn one. Sometimes you don't get the chance to tell anyone.

For a start, take only what you need and travel as light as you can. Very few rivers have nice paths or permissions to park at your peg. So, most of the time you're going to have to walk. Across fields. Maybe through mud. Oh the mud.....



Even pushing a trolley can be difficult on clumpy grass. So, take all the tackle and bait out that you know you won't need. I even take out layers of my seat box that I know won't be needed to make it lighter. I did take a drill and whisk to mix ground bait once and that won't happen again!



If you are going to use a seat box, a feeder arm is going to be useful. Your regular feeder arm will do if it's adjustable or one with brace (pictured) for good stability. A long bank sick or storm pole will do if you're travelling ultra light.



Aluminium platforms are not strictly necessary and they're expensive. But if you're going to fish the river a lot, then they worth considering. They offer a safe, level surface on steeply sloped banks or allow you to wade out in shallow areas. Some even convert into wheel barrows.

You're going to be standing for a lot of river fishing, so a bait apron or pouch is vital for putting bait and accessories in. Either a match style apron or smock, or a carp fishing 'pouch', seen here with boilies but you can use them with maggots. Both will do the job and make your life easier.





To sum up, if you are new to fishing on rivers, then the best place to start would probably be the river Stour.

It's a much easier water to fish using less technical methods.

Experienced river angler, Jon Bass, writes;

"In the summer time, a 4BB Avon style float is a good way to start, fixed top and bottom, with a bulk shot and one or two small dropper shots to keep it simple.

If you have a strong, downstream wind, it is probably better to use a Waggler float, either straight or bodied, about 2AA.

On occasions, a Stick float will be your best option. The Stour tends to be deep and slow. So get confident in catching river fish first and practice mending your line and using the flow, before using the more challenging Stick float.

Single or double maggots on a size 18 hook to catch Roach, Dace, Gudgeon, Perch and Chublets down the middle of the river. A light catapult will be useful too".



The river Frome is much more challenging to fish. Not as deep as the Stour, but much faster with different species to catch. The Frome is more seasonal and is a winter venue because of fishing rights.

Jon writes;

"The Frome is much more challenging for the beginner, with a variety of depths, faster current, turbulence and weed etc. All of which can make it difficult to cope with.

A deep slack bend is probably the best place to start, then work your way on to faster and shallower stretches.

A heavier 3AA Avon float gives easy under arm casting, easy depth adjustment and line mending.

You can use a quiver tip with a light leger or swim feeder. It is easier to use but bites can be slower and you will need patience".

It may be easier for Juniors to start on the Stour before trying the Frome. In either case rivers are more dangerous and every care should be taken.



THE BOTTOM LINE -

At the end of the day the whole reason of going fishing is to enjoy the day. Sometimes, particularly in competitive events, things can get on top of us and we wonder why we bother? When fishing gets like this, and it will from time to time, we must just take minute to think about things.

Fishing can give you so many emotions. Excitement when you land a good fish or when the whistle sounds at the start of a match. It can be calm and peaceful on your own, or filled with laughter with good friends. Fishing brings space age technology into contact with wild creatures, pitting man against fish in a battle of wits. It should make us very respectful of our surroundings and provide awareness of the environment.

Fishing, if done properly, can bring great rewards and a life time of memories.

We have remember too that, every time we go fishing, we are ambassadors to ourselves, to our club and to our sport. Five minutes of thoughtless behaviour can take years to repair. So, be respectful. Be polite. Be responsible.

For me, fishing has been part of my life since I started at four years old. It is a way of life that has changed over the years, mostly for the better. Fish and environmental welfare is and always should be improving all the time. Our sport must be protected at all costs and educating new anglers about the correct ways to do things and how to conduct themselves is paving a secure future for fishing. I have met so many more people and gained many friends than I would have otherwise. I am obsessed with fishing and helping others to share my passion.

I would like to acknowledge Tom Foyle and Jon Bass for their help in writing this booklet.

I hope this booklet has passed on some knowledge and experience that I and others have picked up over many years. It doesn't cover everything, but it should give you a good start on your own fishing journey.

Tight lines,

G...



DDAS Juniors are;

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Graham Howard

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