

A Complete Guide on **SPOON JIGGING FOR BASS**

Spoon jigging is one of the deadliest lure-and-technique combinations ever devised for catching bass in deep water and around vertical structure such as steep cliffs or sunken forests. It is not necessarily an easy technique to master, but the rewards are great as few bass can resist the enticing action of a spoon bouncing up and down.

Jigging spoons such as the Krocodile®, Cast Champ or Crippled Herring® represent an easy-to-catch, wounded baitfish when jigged upward and then allowed to flutter back toward the bottom. These lures will draw strikes from even the most temperamental, non-aggressive bass if presented and worked correctly.

VERTICAL JIGGING

This technique consists of anchoring your boat, or tying it up, adjacent to vertical structure such as an underwater forest, cliff face, steep sloping bank, stickup (log that protrudes above the water), bridge piling and the like. Your jigging spoon is then allowed to drop alongside the structure, is jigged and paused and then lowered to a deeper level. The spoon is worked this way, clear to the bottom.

The jigging motion that should be used is a slow, upward movement of your rod tip anywhere from six inches to three feet, then quickly, but smoothly, dropping the rod and following the rod tip and line back to the starting level (vary the jigging motion at each level to give the spoon different actions).

In vertical jigging, as in all spoon jigging, rarely will a bass savagely attack the lure. You will not feel an arm-jolting strike in most cases, but rather only a tap or pause as the lure drops.

Takes which occur when jigging spoons can be described as taps, a steady pull, a line twitch, slack line or hesitation. When any of these

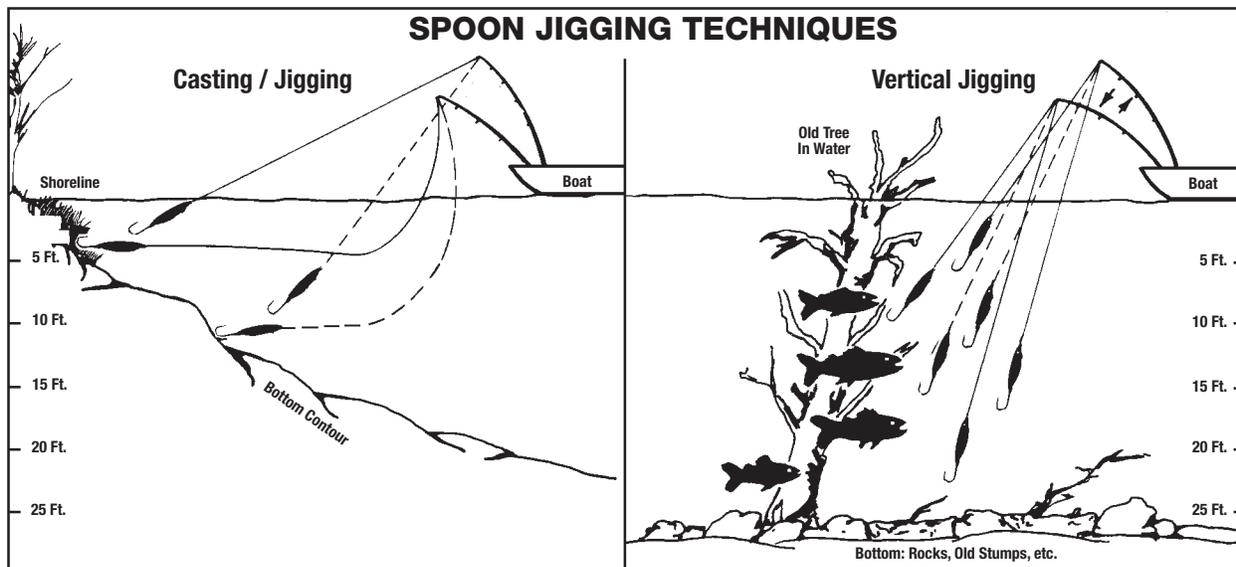
conditions occurs, set the hook hard! Another thing you'll find almost universally in spoon jigging is that the strike will happen as the jig is falling and fluttering or just as the lure has stopped and its upward motion begun. This is the reason for maintaining even, regular rod strokes and not allowing any slack line . . . if you have too much slack, you won't easily sense light takes commonly associated with this kind of fishing.

Vertical jigging is a technique tailor-made for working steep, rocky shoreline areas, dropoffs and cliffs, deep brush piles and/or underwater trees and man-made structures such as a bridge piling. Bass will orient themselves to the various irregularities of these structures. Working the jigged spoon from top to bottom along side the formation provides total coverage within inches of the fish.

Drop the spoon close to the structure and jig the upper several feet of water first, allowing it to pause motionless for a second or two after each jigging motion. After several jigging motions have been made at a particular level, allow the spoon to sink several more feet and continue to work the structure in 3- to 4-foot intervals until you have reached bottom. Then reel in the spoon at a medium speed, stopping every six feet to pause, until it's back to your rod tip. Work the structure down again to make sure you didn't miss any fish and then shift your boat position so a new section of the water column can be fished.

CASTING/JIGGING

The second method utilized by spoon jigging bass anglers is casting/jigging whereby the spoon is cast near likely-looking structure or cover area and then worked in a jigging motion back to the boat. The difference in technique between this and vertical jigging is that slack line must



be taken in after each jigging motion as the spoon falls deeper and angles closer to the boat (see diagram).

Again, however, it is critical to keep slack out of the line so you can feel the lightest of takes. Because of this, it often is advisable to cast several feet beyond the structure or cover you wish to fish so that by the time the lure has been jigged a few times the angle of descent on a tight line will place it close to the fish's hiding place where it won't have to be chased.

The casting/jigging technique is particularly applicable when bass are found schooled in open water or found suspended in the thermocline layer of water. Besides this oxygen-rich middle layer of water which results when lakes stratify in the spring, bass can be found during summer months where other oxygen sources exist, such as around underwater springs or dropoffs next to inlet and outlet areas and in old river channels in impoundments where residual water flows still exist.

These fish generally will be scattered and the casting/jigging technique will allow coverage of more water in unknown areas. When the first bass is caught you then can switch to vertical jigging as a pinpoint technique.

DRIFT JIGGING

Briefly, this technique resembles the casting/jigging technique except that your moving boat keeps you over new water all the time. It is a method which sometimes comes in handy for locating fish scattered in the thermocline or where you wish to work a gently sloping ledge. It, like casting/jigging, is a fish-finding technique that gives way to vertical jigging once fish have been located.

DIVERSE ACTIONS

One of the distinct advantages of using a jigging spoon for bass is the variety of actions you can impart to the lure besides those already built in, such as the fluttering one.

You can make a spoon hop, swim, flutter, inch along, stop dead, rise, fall, swim fast or however you wish it to appear to the fish. The slow, varied actions which signal "something's in trouble" to a big bass and an easy meal is nearby, are easily achieved with a jigged spoon.

You should choose a spoon that will be heavy enough to reach bottom easily on a free fall but you also should be careful of size, selecting smaller 1/8- to 3/8-oz. models when searching for smallmouth bass and larger models up to several ounces when after largemouth. Smaller spoons also will result in other species being caught such as crappie, perch, trout and walleye, so if you're interested in these fish species, stick to smaller spoons. Largemouth bass spoon jigging commonly is done with 1- to 2-oz. spoons and line testing from 14 to 20 pounds (sometimes heavier if working near underwater trees, brush or other snaggy objects where a big bass might run when hooked).

SPECIFIC JIGGING SPOONS

Four lures which lend themselves exceptionally well to jigging for bass are the Krocodile, Cast Champ and Crippled Herring.

KROCODILE®: Versatility is the key word in describing the Krocodile's position in the spoon jigging scenario. The "Kroc" is an excellent lure for vertical, drift and cast jigging and can be worked at all levels with fine results. It has a distinct side-to-side fluttering action when allowed to free-fall in the water and gives off plenty of flash and vibration when worked with a jigging action. Choose color patterns that match the natural baitfish in the area such as threadfin shad, trout, perch, crayfish or other organisms. Experiment with different colors and finishes. In some areas where bass are found extremely deep try Everglo or UV Bright finishes.

CAST CHAMP: When it comes to jigging spoons, this is an excellent choice. It is a thick, slab-sided spoon which has an excellent jigging action and one that will rise and fall in almost a straight line. Because of its design, it is well suited not only for vertical jigging but also for casting/jigging as it casts like a bullet.

CRIPPLED HERRING®: This minnow-shaped spoon is one of the most versatile in the Luhr-Jensen arsenal of lures and is the perfect jigging, casting/jigging lure for bass as well. It is different from the traditional jigging spoon because it is made of lead rather than polished metal.

Spoons are extremely versatile and will allow you to reach the haunts of not only deep water trophy bass, but also those fish at both shallow and medium depths. You can also use the spoon jigging techniques described here for a variety of other gamefish so always take a few spoons along. ve a small amount of metal from at least two sides of the point, resulting in both a needle-sharp point and a knife-like cutting edge.

SOMETHING SPECIAL

Spoon jigging requires patience, concentration and the learned ability to detect light strikes. However, it is a technique when mastered that will allow you to take fish from areas not possible with other techniques, and in many cases, catch larger fish than normal. It's a versatile technique you should learn and add to your bag of tricks for those times when "something special" is needed.



ADDITIONAL TIPS

One of the easiest things you can do to improve fishing results is to sharpen dull hooks with the Luhr-Jensen's Original Hook File. Simply hold the file parallel to the hook point and, with gentle one-way strokes, remove a small amount of metal from at least two sides of each point to make them sticky-sharp. If the hook is too damaged replace them with premium quality VMC Hooks.



You should always use a premium quality braided or monofilament line that has superior knot strength, small diameter in relation to pound test and is abrasion resistant.

Purchase a quality depth finder which will help in locating fish as well as prime underwater fish-holding structure which can't otherwise be detected.



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