

Tips 'n Tricks for All Ocean Anglers

By Jerry Esten

1. When casting with a conventional reel, don't thumb the line on the spool, but rather the side of the spool. You will have more control and cast more efficiently.
2. The 'click' on the conventional reel has a purpose. Use it when the rod is unattended or while trolling (still unattended) the reel will "sing" out.
3. If you are fishing smaller species like bass, bonito, and barracuda, you simply do NOT need 400 yards of expensive line. Use backing of any sort, twine, or Dacron. Your tackle dealer keeps it on hand for that purpose, so should you. I find 100 yards on top is plenty.
4. Fill your reel, full reels cast better, both conventional and spinning.
5. When you are through fishing and after you rinse your reels with fresh water, back off the drag. This will take the pressure off the drag washers, and give them a longer life.
6. Your reel needs little oil. Loading your reel with oil can make the drag system less effective.
7. Balance your rod & reel, you don't need a 4/0 reel on a light rod.
8. Light weight plastic and aluminum spools cast better, overcome inertia without the "lurch" of the heavy steel spool, and run more smoothly.
9. Fishing deep with mono line and light spools (aluminum and plastic) may "tweak" your spools and put them out-of-round rendering them useless. Remember, mono has a "memory" if it's stretched it will try to return to its original length, thus crushing the spool.
10. Use Dacron, a line that won't stretch for deep water.
11. Once you have adjusted your drag appropriately, leave it alone! There is no way to know how much you are tightening when you are fighting a fish. If you're being "spooled" you have nothing to lose. You may consider tying a back up outfit to the first and chuck the original overboard and hope you can stop the big fish. This practice is not unusual on long-range trips to Mexican waters, particularly with yellow fin tuna.
12. For the type of fishing kayakers and other small craft operators do, a few basic knots are usually enough. The Palo mar is the strongest and simple to tie. I like the Improved Clinch knot too, easier to tie when using a big jig.

13. Lead: use the amount you must, no more no less. When the action is on the surface don't plunge to the bottom. With surface fish exploding on the surface, opt for "Fly Lining", no sinker at all. NO swivel either.

14. I am convinced that lures catch more fish, no not always, but often enough to make me a believer.

15. Lures: variety is the spice of life, if one won't get 'em, the other will. It's usually consistency that pays off, other times a different color may do the trick.

16. Heavier lures run deeper, you need a variety to meet conditions. You must fish where the fish are.

17. Monofilament, store it out of the sun and heat is the recommended care by the manufacturers. I must tell you though, I had Izorline Company test some 30-year-old line that was stored in my garage. I had been using it with no problem. It tested as it was meant to. It was well wrapped and out of the light.

The question is however, are you going to spend a small fortune on a trip only to have bad line? I think not. Your line is really all you have between you and your quarry.

18. Spare spools are a must, many conventional reels have the quick-change feature. All spinning reels do. In a kayak we need all the space we can get.

19. Swivels: Don't use them for surface fishing except in some very special situations. Such as using with a wire leader for Wahoo. Some lure makers suggest you use a swivel with their product. I trust they tested it and know what they are talking about.

20. Show courtesy to party boats when you are off their stern and benefiting from their chum, Keep a good distance away lest a jig "accidentally" comes whistling by your ear, or worse.

21. Try a heavy jig as a sinker when rock cod fishing, tie it at the bottom of your ganion. You now have an extra way of catching fish. There is a 7.5 Oz. Jerry Jig from Izorline, it is ideal for this technique Jerry Jig from Izorline is great for using this technique.

22. Guides wear out. Check them periodically, especially the tip top. A worn guide may fray your line.

23. The tip top should always be high quality. Good tips are very hard and won't cut.

24. If you are fishing off a kelp bed, or anywhere else for that matter, and there is no action, move to another spot.

25. Watch for bird activity, they fish better than we do. If they are active, that's where you need to be.

26. Fish the area between the kelp and the beach. You can pick up halibut bass and many species that inhabit the surf zone. Of course caution is a must, lest a sneak wave swamps you.

27. A 2-piece paddle though not as strong as a one piece has a few advantages. You can store it in a hatch in case your or a buddy loses one. It can be used like a canoe paddle for trolling. It won't hit your line.

28. A single hook, or fixed hook jig, like a Clobber or a Bada Bing can make do as a gaff in a pinch.

29. Barracuda and bonito are excellent food fish, the secret is to bleed them at once, clean as soon as possible, keep cool and use ice as soon as it's available. Sitting in the sun all day will guarantee you an unpalatable meal. These 2 fish in particular don't deserve the bad rap they get.

30. Don't take a fish out of the water by grasping the lure, it can be dangerous. Violent head shaking may imbed a treble hook in your hand. If this seems to contradict tip #28, keep in mind that tip #28 refers to a single fixed hook jig. Even then caution is a must.