

IGFA School of Sport Fishing

Tips & Tactics: Maintaining Rods & Reels

Even the most expensive and technologically advanced rods and reels are useless if they don't function properly in the heat of battle. Maintaining your rods and reels is one of the easiest things to do, but is often overlooked or done incorrectly by even the most seasoned anglers. In fact, if not carefully done, some of the maintenance performed on big game outfits can actually hurt their performance and can lead to an angler losing the fish of a lifetime. Here are some tips on how to maintain your rods and reels on a daily, weekly and yearly basis.

Soap and water: Washing your equipment at the end of a day of fishing is common practice. However, how and when you wash your tackle can be critical to your equipment's performance. Big game reels can be complicated pieces of machinery. They have intricate knobs, levers, and small screws where salt can build up. These areas also rely on grease to protect their components as well as help them run smoothly by decreasing friction. Constantly soaping your outfits will wash the grease right out of these places and actually promote the collection of salt inside the reel. Instead of heavy soaping at the end of every day, try using only a light, indirect spray of fresh water and a thorough wipe down with a chamois. Fully tighten the drag whenever you wash down your reels in order to keep from pushing salt and water into the reel's drag mechanism. Only after several days of fishing, or when you are putting your tackle away for an extended amount of time, should you soap your reels.

The same goes for big game rods with roller guides. A light, indirect spray of fresh water and a thorough wipe down is the best way to wash your rods. To protect your rods from getting dirty, apply a coat of insulator wax before you use your rods and at least once every two months. Waxing your rods will protect them from the elements and keep them looking like new for years to come.

Grease: Grease is a big part of your outfit's performance. It is important to keep most parts of your rods and reels freshly greased. WD40 makes a great cleaner but is more of a short term way to protect these parts from salt. There are several excellent products on the market for this purpose. Penn Reel Lube, Corrosion Block Multi-Purpose Grease, and

"Blue" Grease are all good choices. It is important for you to grease your reel parts and roller guides once a month if you fish regularly. It is also recommended that you remove the reels from the rods and re-grease the reel seats.

Annual service: In addition to regular maintenance, it is important to do major service to your rods and reels once a year. The amount of time you spend using your equipment will determine how often you will need to do a complete service. A complete service involves taking your reels completely apart for interior cleaning and for servicing your drag washers. This can be done yourself or by bringing your equipment into a tackle shop for a major overhaul. Similarly, at least three times a year all roller guides should be taken apart, cleaned with WD40 and re-greased before putting them back together with the rod. Always check each roller for rust or small dings that could damage your line or impede the roller from working correctly.

Keep most parts of your rods and reels freshly greased. WD40 is a great cleaner but is more of a short term way to protect these parts from salt. Instead of heavy soaping at the end of every day, try using only a light, indirect spray of fresh water and a thorough wipe down with a chamois. Soap your reels only after several days of constant fishing or when you plan on storing your reels for an extended period of time.

Storage: It is important to let your equipment dry out before storing. After washing your reels, pull the drag lever back to a position that is just above free spool. This will let the interior of the reel dry out and lets the drag washer have some breathing room when being stored. It is also important to have a storage space with a consistent temperature. Exposing reels to temperature extremes on a regular basis will affect your drags. Always store your rods and reels in a storage rack either horizontally or vertically. Do not stand them in a corner where the rod is being bent and exposed to possibly bent guides, scrapes, and dings.

