

Choosing the Right Tackle

By Jason Walker



Fishing from a kayak is still fishing. Most of the tackle and techniques used with fishing from other vessels are transferable to the kayak but there are some things to keep in mind when you choose a kayak as your preferred fishing platform, which will influence your choice of tackle and this is what I will look at in this article.

THE BASICS

These are the basics of any fishing set up and it doesn't make any difference what type of fish you are fishing for or the technique you use; these are the two items of tackle that you will need.

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RODS

There are two types - overhead and spin - the type you require will be dictated directly by the reel you choose to use. Pick an overhead reel for an overhead reel, and a spin rod for a spinning reel. Overhead reels sit above the rod and the spinning reels sit below the rod.

Length and weight also need to be considered when purchasing a rod. The length of rod on a kayak can work for and against you, a short rod under five foot can leave you with very little opportunity to play a fish as most shorter rods tend to be stiffer thus transferring the fight from the fish into your arms. That energy absorbed in a longer rod now has to be absorbed by you as you work the fish and overworked arms can leave you fatigued as you paddle back to the beach. A short rod can also lead you with instability issues as the shock absorption of a longer rod has now gone and with each hard pull or quick turn you can become very unstable especially if you are working the fish at a ninety degree angle to the kayak.

Rods between five and seven foot (1.5 - 2.1 m) are the more commonly used. These enable you to take advantage of the flex of the rod to fight the fish for you and work the fish in a larger arc so the fish is not so close to the kayak. Most of the time a seven foot rod will allow you to change

the side of the kayak you are fighting the fish on. You have the length to be able to bring the line around the bow to the other side of the kayak. This simply wouldn't be possible with a shorter rod.

I wouldn't recommend going longer than a seven foot rod on a kayak as you run the very high risk of what's called "high sticking". This is where you are fighting a fish with the rod near vertical and the fish right under the rod butt. The rod butt, or bottom section of a fishing rod can handle tremendous amounts of force but the tip section cannot and will simply snap possibly losing you the fish at the same time. To avoid high sticking move the rod butt away from the fish as you bring the fish close to the kayak. If I am playing the fish on the right side of my kayak

and my rod is in my right hand, as the fish nears the surface for landing I will pass the rod to my left hand and put the rod butt out the left whilst my right hand grabs the fish or the leader, this way



your rod will be at a shallow angle thus putting no force on the tip of your rod.

The majority of the time you will be holding the rod while kayaking, therefore weight of rod must




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be considered. Kayak fishermen tend to be very active fishers. It's not about baiting up a ledger rig, dropping it over the side, and dropping the rod in the rod holder while you go make yourself a drink. You can ledger fish from a kayak, but when you are so mobile and stealthy why would you? You want to paddle around looking for the likely fish holding spots and flick a few baits around trying to find the fish. Therefore you'll end up holding that rod all day long, so look for a lighter rod. Again you will need to save your arm strength for paddling back to the beach or playing the fish.

REELS

There are principally two types of reel, the overhead and the spinning reels. These two reels will allow you to carry out most fishing techniques bar the odd one or two, like fly fishing, which uses a different type of reel.

The choice of reel will be mostly influenced by the fishing technique you wish to use. Most techniques will favour one reel type or the other, although there are some that support both reel types such as jigging.

Factors to consider when purchasing your reel for kayak fishing are: weight; drag; body material; and serviceability.

WEIGHT

Again, the amount your reel weighs relates directly to how long you will be able to hold it without tiring your arms. This is especially important when soft baiting where you are spending a large amount of the time casting and retrieving the soft bait.

DRAG

Consider the proximity to the water when kayak fishing. The reel WILL get wet and if your reel gets wet then so will the drag system on the reel. A wet drag is not a good drag. When buying a reel look for one that has



a waterproof drag. These reels have been built with a system of seals to keep out any water that is splashed on the reel out of the drag system. Just be aware that waterproof does not always mean that no water will get into the drag. In extreme conditions, such as your reel being smashed by the surf there may be some ingress, therefore servicing the reel on a regular basis is required.

MATERIAL

We all know that salt water and metals do not mix.

The reel on your kayak will be exposed to lots of salt water over its life and to keep your reel in tip top condition you need to be sure to give your reel a thorough wash down and clean after each use, otherwise the oxidation will soon start to creep in. There are a few manufacturers with

The advertisement features a background image of a kayaker in a yellow kayak fishing on the water. In the top left corner, there is a yellow logo for "VIKING KAYAKS" with a crown icon and the text "FISHING KAYAK SPECIALISTS". In the top right corner, the website "Vikingkayaks.co.nz" and the phone number "0800 529 253" are displayed in yellow. At the bottom, the text "Look no further than our Profish range of fishing kayaks" and "Just ask the experts!" is written in white with a black outline.

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reels that have been made of non-metallic materials. This eliminates the threat of any oxidation to our reels, and these reels are normally much lighter than many of their metal based competitors too. Of course this comes at a cost, so expect to spend a few more dollars.

SERVICEABILITY

You will soon find that kayak fishing will take its toll on all of your gear with the continued exposure to saltwater so it all needs to be easy to service.

When you get home, a quick wash down with fresh water of your landing net, gear and reels is all that's required generally.

However there is a lot more going on inside a reel than on the outside. All the bearings and gears will very quickly deteriorate if the reel is not serviced on a regular basis. So the question to consider is can you service the reel easily? The basic rule of thumb is; the more expensive the reel, the more technical the reel will be. A cheap reel might have a just a few bearings whereas an expensive reel will have several, i.e. more to go wrong if not correctly looked after.

You have two options: DIY or pay someone to do it. Either way is fine and I do both myself. The key is to do it on a regular basis or your thousand dollar reel won't last long. Ideally your reels should be serviced every four trips, so this may influence whether you service your own or to have it done professionally.

REEL LIFE

As I have said throughout this article your gear gets a hard life on a kayak and even with a good cleaning and servicing regime I have found the life of all my gear is not as long as it was when I was fishing from a

boat because it was much more well protected from the environment and this is especially true with reels.

I have found that my reels would last me several seasons on a boat but they now only last one or two at the most in a kayak, so take this into consideration when buying reels. Your investment may need to be made again in the not too distant future. The key to reel life is servicing, don't do it at your peril. When I started, I was using my six month old boat reel that I had used previously for soft baiting, I continued to service it just as often (never) and the reel only lasted a further six weeks before is literally fell apart. The oxidation had eaten through the whole frame of the reel and it finally broke into several parts in my hands.



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