

# On the Water with Rick Daniels

## Ontario Sport Fishing 101

*A quick summary for new anglers.*

I thought I would change the column a bit for this article. I have always written a short columns on various fishing topics. This time I'm writing a two part column for all the novice and beginner anglers to serve as a reference guide to get you started. You can always Google or pick up a book if you want to delve deeper into angling.

**Preparation:** *What you will need before going out:*

1. To start with, with very few exceptions beyond the scope of this column, anyone angling over 18 or under 65 **MUST** have a **Fishing License** to fish in Ontario. There are two categories of license; the *Sportsman*, which allows you to keep more fish than a *Conservation* license. These can be purchased online or at many stores throughout Ontario. You must be cognizant of the area, or Zone which you are fishing in and the limits and sizes for that particular Zone. You can fish from shore from pretty much any public lands where fishing is not prohibited. If you're fishing from private property, permission **MUST** be obtained from the owner. If you're fishing from a boat, you **MUST** not impede navigation or obstruct aids to navigation.
2. A hockey player never brings just one stick to a game. If you're out on the lake or far from home and your fishing gear breaks, your fishing trip is over. Bring a spare. Let's take that a step further. What shape is your line in or how old is it? Is your reel and drag working correctly? You may not want to find these problems in the middle of the lake.
3. Before you even get started, whether you're in a boat or on land – dress in layers. You can always peel off clothes, but you can't put back on what you don't bring. It will feel a lot cooler or hotter on the water than on land depending on conditions. Sunglasses and a hat are a must as the glare bouncing off the lake can be blinding.
4. When you're packing a snack, bring lots of water. I freeze mine first for added cooling on a hot day. Try cutting your sandwiches into quarters to easily manage and put everything in Tupperware containers. You get a second chance if you sit or step on them.
5. Along with your tackle box, do you have band aids, needle nose pliers for removing hooks, knife and scissors? An old towel has a hundred and one uses.

**Execution:** *What you need to do on the water ...*

When we come to the actual fishing, there are literally thousands of lures, spinner baits, plugs, etc., that one can use. I will go into more detail as we progress into the season but for the novice angler, let's start with the basics. Fish have been eating worms and other fish (minnows) for hundreds of

thousands of years. Another advantage live bait has, is it's real. The fish will tend to give it a second nibble, whereas with a lure, if you don't set the hook immediately, your prize is gone! With live bait, you don't have to worry about working your line, just toss it out and wait, with a bobber or without. If you use a bobber (or a float) you can actually see the moment when a fish strikes. This is the part of fishing where you really have to be patient. If you pull on it too soon, you will just pull it out of the fish's mouth. On the other hand, if you pull it too late, your quarry may have already picked the hook clean. Experience will be your best teacher here, along with a few tips.

Berkley Gulp Alive makes a good alternative to live bait.

The lighter line you have, the greater sensitivity you have to actually feel the nibbles, but the more chance of losing a big fish. I find that 6 – 8 lb. test is a favourite unless you going after Muskie. Keep your terminal tackle to a minimum. You don't need a 24" steel leader for bass. My favourite rig is a plain minnow or worm tipped hook tied directly onto the line with a couple of small split shot sinkers 12" and 18" above that.

You should **ONLY** use local minnows from a bait shop as there are only certain ones you can and cannot use. It is an offence to use game fish as bait. For example, if you catch a little perch, you can't use it for bait to catch a big bass. Saying that, since perch is a favourite food for Bass and Walleye, if you do catch a little perch – stick around the area for a while. A big bass may be feeding in the area!

I'm not going to get into huge detail regarding artificial lures, however suffice it to say, you have to be working them or retrieving them constantly for them to perform properly and they must be balanced. For example, a small Rapala will have a lot better action if tied directly onto your line, rather than attached to the end of a big clunky leader – **try it!**

Someone once told me: "You know, fish swim." Don't stay in exactly the same place – move around. Don't use the same presentation all day – if it's not working, change it up. On the other hand, if it's not broken – don't fix it. If you are having a successful day using what you are using, it may be wise just to keep using it.

If you practice *Catch and Release*, you should be aware of the following. The number one killer of catch and released fish is exposure. Have your camera ready instead of fumbling around for your phone or camera while the fish is laying on the ground gasping for air. It's like someone holding your head underwater. Handle the fish as little as possible; you can damage their protective slime. I use a rubberized net to land them and water soaked cotton gloves.

***Good Luck and Happy Fishing!***

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