

Jigs

Jigs are one of the most productive baits used today, especially in clear water, and when bass are in an inactive mood and down deep. They are an alternative to Carolina to Texas rigs. Jigs are presentation lures and the key to fishing them is to make them look as much alive as possible. This is accomplished through a slow presentation. Skipping the jig across the bottom in a slow up and down motion.

A jig is a lead-headed bait (1/8 to 3/4 ounce) with a single hook. An attracting trailer is added to the hook such as a 3 to 6" plastic grub, worm or lizard. Some jig heads have single spinner blades like a Road Runner. This gives the jig a little flash that can help attract fish. For clear water, light weights should be used with light line (8lb) and spinning tackle is recommended, especially with 1/8 and 1/4 ounce jig heads. When the wind is blowing a bow in your line, it's hard to maintain contact with the jig to detect strikes. Go to a heavier jig or another deep water bait like worm rigs. As a general rule, fish the lightest jig weight you can get away with -- that is, the lightest one that permits you to feel the bottom and any bottom surface or cover it contacts. Keep a supply of different weight jigs, ranging from 3/16th ounce to 3/4 ounce.

Use the jig as a "drop bait." Cast to the bank and engage the spool. Let the jig fall on tight line. When it hits bottom, drop the rod tip, reel up the slack and draw it back slightly to move the jig and cause it to start dropping again. A strike may be detected only as a line twitch. Set the hook immediately. Jigs can be used as casting lures. Cast them around any cover and retrieve as you would a Texas-rigged plastic worm. Jigs can also be fished by "swimming." Simply cast out and begin a slow, steady retrieve with the rod at 10 o'clock. The jig will flow smoothly through the water like a swimming baitfish. This retrieve is effective on flats in the springtime.

In clear water, light colors (white, chartreuse, and green) tend to work best. Transparent jig skirts and transparent crawfish-type trailers cast less of a silhouette and are less threatening to spooky bass.

Remember that jig fishing demands lots of concentration. Fish jigs slowly during all seasons, but extremely slow in cold water. Use a fast action medium-heavy rod 6 1/2 foot long. When bass aren't hitting more attention-getting lures such as rattling crankbaits, a jig is often the answer to getting bass to strike. Stay alert, have patience, be motivated and think positively.