

To Catch a Cat

Flatheads, bullheads and channel catfish are considered panfish for the purposes of Pennsylvania fishing regulations. If you catch a 30-pound flathead, though, you'd better have a big pan! For most waters in the state, you can fish for catfish year round, with no minimum size and a creel limit of 50 (combined with other panfish) per day.

So, how do you catch a catfish? Fish at night. Be safe. Don't go alone. Fish clear, deep runs or muddy ponds and lakes. A good bait is a stinky bait. Catfish hunt by taste and smell. Chicken or beef livers, cut bait (inch-long pieces of any fish), minnows, crayfish or stinkbait work well. Channel catfish and flatheads will take lures or live minnows. Hook size varies from 4 for smaller bait to 1 for larger bait. Use line with a test weight of at least 10 lbs. or no heavier than 30 lbs.

There are several different ways to rig your equipment. No matter how you rig, your bait

needs to be on the bottom. Try using a slip sinker rig. You'll need a swivel, slip sinker (up to an ounce or more) and hook. Circle hooks can help with hook ups and keep the fish from swallowing the hook.

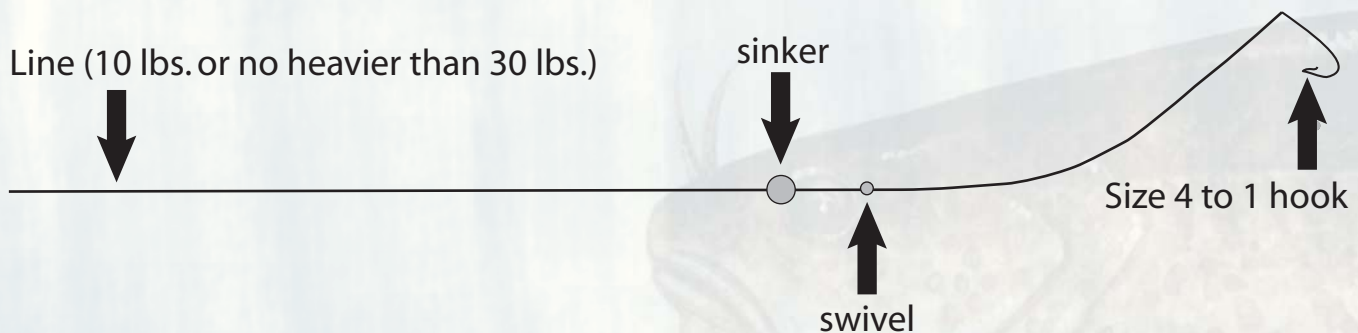
Attach a two foot section of line to the swivel. Slip the sinker on your line and tie the swivel. The swivel keeps the sinker from sliding up to the bait and helps reduce the twist in your line. Tie the hook to the end of the leader, and away you go. Big split shots can also be used, without the swivel.

Cast out and leave the bail open on your rod and prop it up. Attach a small bobber above the first line guide from the reel. Catfish will slowly take your bait, and the bobber shows that movement. You can also hold the rod and feel the line with your hand.

Give catfish fishing a try this year. You can find these great sportfish in almost any large waterway in the state!

Rigging Diagram

Line (10 lbs. or no heavier than 30 lbs.)



Did You Know?

- Bullhead catfish adults have been seen taking eggs into their mouths and blowing them out. Biologists believe they are cleaning them.
- One way flathead catfish feed at night is to lie still with their mouth open waiting for smaller fish to swim in.
- Flathead catfish fossils look the same as modern catfish.
- Flathead catfish grow heavier than any other catfish in Pennsylvania. The largest flathead catfish in the world weighed over 100 pounds! Large catfish in Pennsylvania are usually 40 plus lbs.