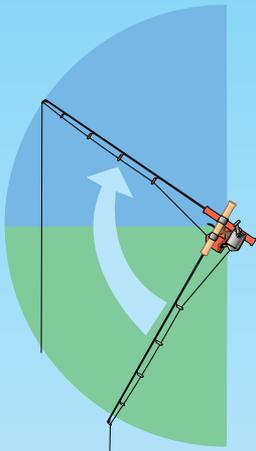


What's at the End of Your Line?



Tip-ups

A tip-up is a nifty little ice fishing tool that does it all. The tip-up keeps live bait like minnows at one depth, signals when the bait is taken, and holds the line. Tip-ups are perfect for setting baits at different depths in open water. They are also ideal for setting baits near the bottom across dropoffs or other changes in bottom structure. Tip-ups are rigged with Dacron® line or special ice fishing line. Don't rig them with just monofilament line. Tied to the end of the Dacron is a swivel. Attach a monofilament leader to the swivel, and tie a hook to the other end. Place enough splitshot on the line to keep the bait at the depth you want. Bait up with a minnow and wait! As the fish takes the bait, it pulls line, which trips the flag. Pull the line gently until you feel the fish, then tug to set the hook. You must pull the fish in with your hands.

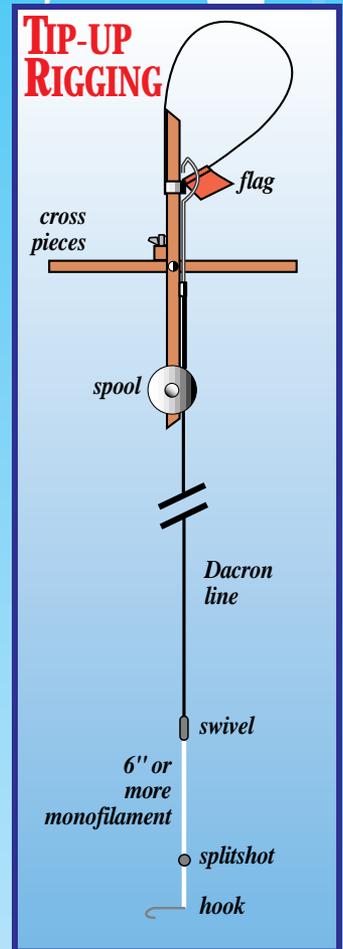
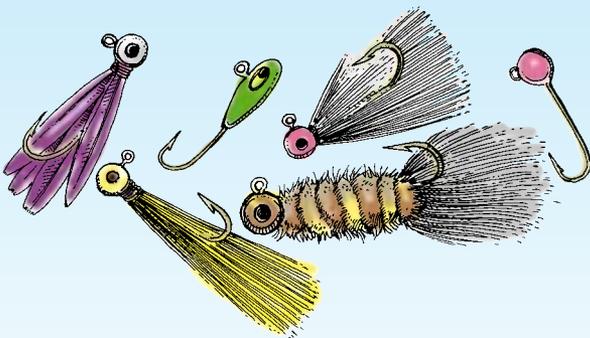


Jigging

Few, if any, ice anglers rely only on tip-ups to put fish in the skillet. Using either a special ice fishing rod (short, designed just for ice fishing), a small ultralight rod, or other homemade contraption, anglers jig a lure up and down through the hole. This method puts a moving lure right in front of the fish. Jigging also gets the attention of other nearby fish. Tipping these lures with live bait or cut bait makes a deadly one-two punch.

Jigs

The same small ($1/16$ -ounce or less) leadhead jigs used for catching panfish at other times of the year may work through the ice. Bluegills and other panfish eat a lot of tiny insects and plankton. These jigs, and smaller special ice flies, imitate these food items. These baits are ideal once you have located a school of fish.



graphics-Ted Walke

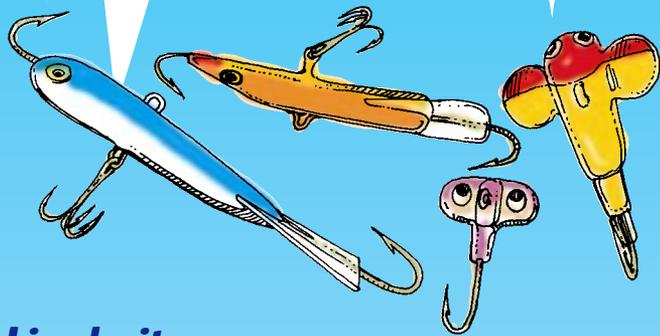


Flash baits

These baits flash and flutter around as they are jigged. Their flash draws the attention of fish. Flash baits are good for the larger fish-eating predators, like bass, walleyes and pike! Trout stocked by the Commission just for you to catch this winter will also take flash baits.

Swimming lures

These lures are designed to swim or spin in circles as they are jigged. Their action attracts fish. Some may be tipped with bait.



Live baits

Minnows can be deadly when fished on tip-ups. Bass, yellow perch and trout can be caught this way. Larger crappies also take very small minnows fished under tip-ups. Minnows can also be used on jigs and some flash baits and swimming lures.

Nightcrawlers might catch bullheads or catfish when fished on a tip-up. Largemouth bass might also take a worm. Smaller pieces might catch panfish, but you will lose more fish than you catch.

Waxworms and mealworms are great baits when jigging for panfish. Tip a jig with a couple of these larvae and watch out!



Cut bait

Some ice anglers use small pieces of meat from minnows or suckers. A strip of belly meat or a filet makes a nice addition to a flash bait. The cut bait has enough smell and taste to keep the fish from rejecting your lure.

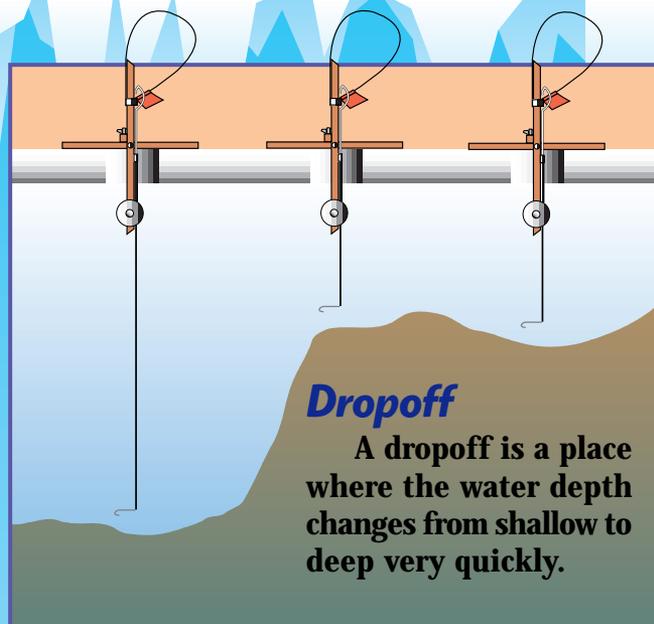
Depthfinder

You can buy a fancy electronic gizmo to help you find the depth. Or you can attach a sinker to the line and lower it until it reaches the bottom (the line goes limp). Mark the line where it enters the water.

IT'S THE LAW

You are permitted a maximum of five tip-ups, or any combination of five tip-ups and rods. No more than two rods may be fished at a time.

photo Jell Knapp



Stream mouth

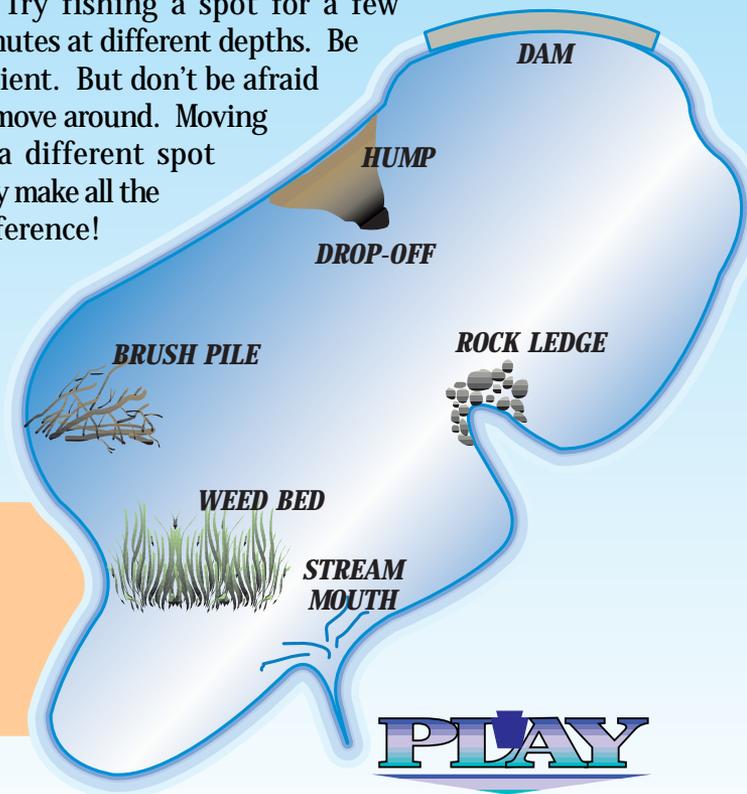
Water entering a lake through a stream may be a little warmer—enough to attract fish. Be extra careful when fishing these areas because the ice thickness may not be safe!

Cover

Submerged trees, brush piles and weed beds are great places to fish. The cover gives panfish a place to hide and a place to find food. Bass and other predators can also be found here, especially along the edges.

Keep moving

Try fishing a spot for a few minutes at different depths. Be patient. But don't be afraid to move around. Moving to a different spot may make all the difference!



PLAY