

Finesse Fishing

for
Largemouth Bass

by John Allen
photos by the author



What is it that drives people to fishing? Is it the time spent “away from it all?” Is it the constant unknown of what the next outing will bring? Or, is it thrill of the fight of a big fish that keeps us coming back for more? For me, it’s the feel of a big fish slamming my lure and the subsequent battle. In the summertime, one of the best ways to experience these two thrills at the same time is finesse fishing for Largemouth Bass. Finesse fishing requires the right tackle, lures and techniques in order to be successful.



When a bass grabs the bait, you should be able to feel it, and that’s when the fun is about to begin.

Tackle

Finesse fishing requires a spinning reel and a medium or medium-light, extra-fast action rod. I prefer a rod between 6- and 7-feet in length. The extra-fast action allows you to feel every little bump as you move your lure. When selecting a spinning reel, I always use the highest quality spinning reel that I own. When you expect to hook into some nice-sized fish on light weight tackle, you want a reel with a drag system that is capable of keeping up.

The next most important part of your set-up is your line selection. You want between 6- and 10-pound-test line. I normally keep one rod rigged with 8-pound-test line and another with 10-pound-test line. I’ll use the 8-pound-test line in open water, where I know there is less debris and the 10-pound-test line around fallen trees, docks and heavier vegetation, such as lily pads. I will typically use either monofilament or fluorocarbon line. Occasionally, I use 8- to 10-pound-test braided line, which is the approximate diameter of 2-pound-test monofilament line. Then, for the last 3- or 4-feet, I add a fluorocarbon leader to keep from startling fish. Using this thin braid gives the angler even more feel. If I’m fishing for suspended bass in the middle of the day, that are a little less aggressive on the grab, I prefer to use the braid set-up, because being able to feel every little movement is important.

Lures

Due to the amount of play in an extra-fast action rod, you're going to want baits that have a lot of movement. This will typically narrow it down to soft plastic baits. Tube lures, crayfish, minnow and worm imitations can almost always be found in my bait box during the summer months. My heavier rod usually has a tube lure with a 1/8-ounce jig head on it as that is my go-to lure around cover, which requires a little extra strength from the line to keep big bass from breaking it. On my lighter rig, a wacky-rigged sinking worm tends to find its way onto the end of my line more often than anything else because of the amount of water that it can cover as it sinks on an angle.



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Techniques

Soft plastic lures take less movement by the rod to make the bait come alive. When fishing over finicky bass, that little bit of movement can make a huge difference. The biggest reason that I tend to use only two lures is that it takes a little getting used to what each lure will do with each set-up. The best way to practice is to stand on

a dock when the water is clear, and watch the bait with each rod movement.

After casting the bait out, I leave the rod parallel to the water as the bait sinks with the bail of the spinning reel remaining open for a few seconds. Then, I close the bail and lift the rod up to about a one o'clock angle. I reel up

any slack until I can feel the weight of the lure. Next, I move my rod down to about a two o'clock angle as I reel down a little more. From there, my rod movements will go between two o'clock and one o'clock with the average motion being about half of that gap as I move the lure along. A weighted lure will typically require less motion than an unweighted lure, because the weighted lure is bouncing along the bottom. You don't need to move the bait very far to keep the action looking natural. Most of your strikes will come on the lift as the fish inspects the bait or on the drop as the bass spots the free fall. When a bass grabs the bait, you should be able to feel it, and that's when the fun is about to begin. ☐



This finicky, summertime Largemouth Bass fell to a wacky-rigged sinking worm.