

Circle Hooks

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What they are – how they work

Circle hooks have been used by commercial fishermen for decades due to their ability to efficiently catch fish. The principle behind the hook is simple. After the hook has been swallowed the fisher applies pressure to the line, pulling the hook out of the stomach. The unique hook shape causes the hook to slide towards the point of resistance and embed itself in the jaw or in the corner of the fish's mouth. The actual curved shape of the hook keeps the hook from catching in the gut cavity or throat.



When to use them

Circle hooks can be used on any species of fish caught on hook and line. Current research is being done on billfish while commercial (grouper/snapper/swordfish) fishermen have been successfully using the hooks for years.

How to use them

Basic Rule: Don't impede the hook with bait; that is, don't put the hook in the bony portions of the bait. See picture below.

■ **Bottom Fishing**

For bottom fishing simply replace your standard hook with a circle hook. When a fish eats the bait allow time for the fish to completely swallow the hook before steadily reeling in the line. **DO NOT** attempt to set the hook by sharply jerking the rod as this will pull the hook out of the fish's mouth.



■ **Trolling**

For trolling it is best to attach the hook to the bait with a rubber band or waxed string. This allows the hook to hang freely above the bait.

■ **Live Baiting**

For live bait simply hook the bait through a fleshy part of the fish. This allows the bait to tear loose when the fish strikes.

Hooking techniques

There is only one technique: **DON'T SET THE HOOK**. Steadily and slowly reel in the slack in the line until the hook sets itself in the fish. This requires some patience and restraint. Patience to make sure the fish has had time to swallow the bait and restraint in the initial urge to violently set the hook.

Benefits

- The hook sets itself when you reel in the line. This is great for inexperienced anglers and for deep water fishing.
- Fewer gut-hooked fish.
 - Predicted higher survival than gut-hooked fish.
 - Better fighting fish. Fish hooked in the corner of the mouth tend to fight better than fish that are hooked in the gut.
- Lighter leaders. With the hook in the corner of the mouth the line is generally out of the way of the fish's teeth.



NOAA Fisheries

For more information on marine fish conservation, visit:

National Marine Fisheries Service
www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocs/



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