

The Art of Whipping

by Dave Marcelewski

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Whip fishing is one of the simplest ways of fishing for walleye. The definition of whip fishing is: Anchoring your boat upstream from a school of fish and dropping your bait downstream into the school of fish.

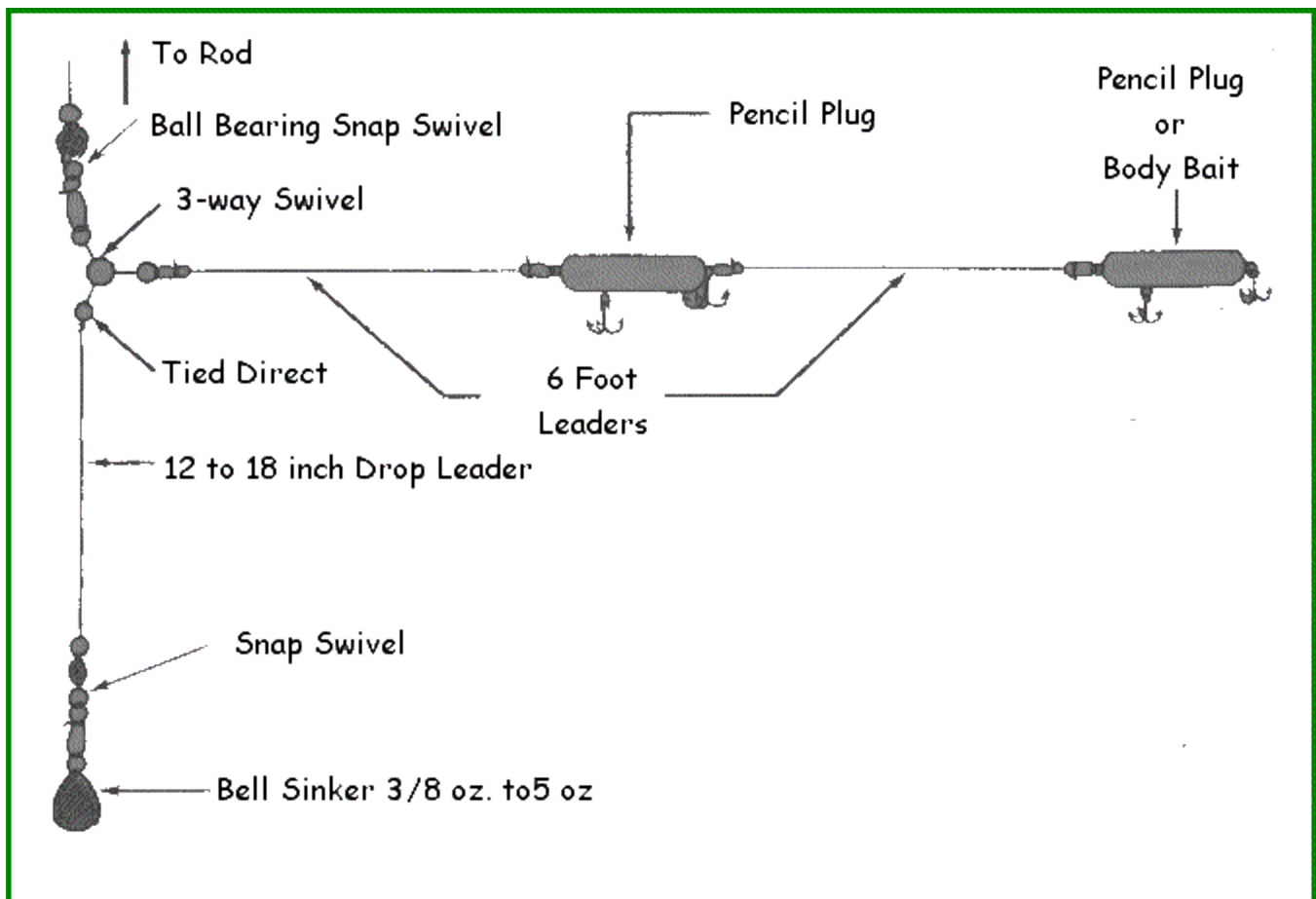
This has to be one of the most productive ways of early season walleye fishing. A well known local and retired walleye guide, Cap. Hank Bradley once said, "if you anchor in 18 to 21 feet of water anywhere in the St. Clair river, you will catch walleye." I find this statement very true.

However, I have anchored in water up to 25 or 26 feet deep and done very well. All the people I know that whip fish, do it in the St. Clair river. I don't know why anyone doesn't fish this method in the Detroit River. They simply do not, but I'm sure it would work there also.

The equipment used to fish this method is very basic. You need a short stout rod equipped with a level wind reel. Any brand rod will work, but the favorite brand level wind reels are Penn reels and Abu Garcia Ambassadeur reels. The reels need to be wound with 20 to 30 lb. test braided line. This line gives no stretch, so you can feel even the slightest bite. Very large walleye sometimes bite like a small panfish. I always put a quality ball-bearing snap swivel on the end of the line, as this will prevent any line twist.

The favorite bait of whip fisherman is the pencil plug. Rapala's, Bomber's, and other floating body baits are also used and work well.

Here is the setup that goes on the end of your line.



I use 6 foot leaders on the lures. The leaders on the lures are from 30 lb. Trilene Big Game monofilament line. I use only wire snaps without swivels on both ends of the leaders. The lures are rigged piggy back style.

The first leader is clipped to the 3-way swivel and the other end of the leader is clipped to the front of the lure. The next leader is clipped to the back eyelet that holds the rear hook on the first lure. The other lure is clipped to the other end of the second leader.

The drop lead that goes to the sinker is 12", in the early spring, with a snap swivel on the end. It is tied with a lighter pound test line. This is so if your sinker gets snagged, you will not lose all of your lures.

As the weed growth starts on the bottom of the river, the drop lead gets longer. It may get as long as 18 inches. This keeps your lures just above the weeds.

The sinkers used are always bell type sinkers. The weight of the sinkers vary by how deep of water you are fishing and the amount of current at each fishing spot. I have used sinkers as little as 3/8ths of an ounce, up to a 4 or 5 oz. sinker. The deeper the water and the more current you are fishing, the heavier of a sinker you use. You want to use the lightest sinker you can that will still get you down to the bottom.

Now that you have your boat anchored and your rod rigged, you can begin to fish. You begin by putting your lures into the water, starting with your second lure. Then you put the first lure in the water, making sure that the leaders aren't tangled. Drop your sinker into the water. Keep your thumb on the spool on the reel and release the line SLOWLY. This will prevent any tangles.

Work your rod up and down and let out 6 or 8 feet of line a little at a time. You keep doing this until you feel the thump of your sinker hitting the bottom. Once you reach the bottom with the sinker, you work the rod to put action in your lures. You always want to feel the thump of the sinker on the bottom when you drop the line back.

You work the area downstream of you and try to get an active fish to bite. If you don't get any bites, let out some more line, maybe 15 feet of line or so. Let it out slowly. Then, when you feel the sinker thumping the bottom again, you work your lures in this area of the river bottom. Keep doing this until you get the fish to bite.

When you get a bite, don't be shy setting the hook. I give it a good yank to set the hook. Make sure you have your drag set and never horse in a fish. Let him run and work him up to the boat.

We have also caught the odd King Salmon and Steelhead using this method, so be prepared. Always keep your outboard motor in gear even though the engine is off. This will prevent the propeller from spinning. If your line gets into the prop, the prop will not turn and spin your line around the prop shaft. This has happened to me and I learned a good lesson from it.

Remember that you are anchored with your engine off and in gear. You can use your outboard motor as a rudder to move your boat into or away from the shore. You can work your lures up and down the drop offs this way, covering a little more river bottom and letting more fish see your lures.

I forgot to mention that this is strictly night fishing. The best thing to do is get anchored and set up just before dark. You can fish till you are tired or you limit out. I hope this method is as productive for you as it has been for me!

Good Luck Fishing!!!!