



Freshwater Lake Trolling for Trout and Kokanee

BY Drew Petzel

About me

Kayak Angler for 5 years

Fresh and Saltwater

California Kayak and Canoe (CCK) Pro Fishing Team Member since March 2021

Northern California Kayak Anglers: Angler of the Year Competition. 3rd place in 2022 and 4th in 2021, Biggest Brown Trout & Sturgeon in 2021 & Biggest Rainbow Trout in 2022





Kayak Safety Essentials

Always wear a life jacket

New to kayaking? Practice flip testing in a safe environment

120 degree rule: if water temperature and air temperatures add up below 120, you are at risk for hypothermia, wear protection like a wetsuit or drysuit

My rule: Always wear wet/dry suit when fishing saltwater.

Carry with you: handheld waterproof floating radio, fish finder with GPS, a first aid kit, and a whistle.



Gear for Freshwater Trolling on a Kayak

Rods: 7' to 8', moderate action, 4-10 lb test capability

Reels/Line: line counter, convention style reels with room for 150 yards of 10lb mono mainline

Hooks: gamakatsu drop shot hooks

Bead chains to avoid line twists

Downriggers with stacking clip

Get a 2 rod and reel setup with rod holders on the kayak

Fish finder: To see how deep fish are and mark locations

Different Ways to Troll: Downriggers and Dropper Loops

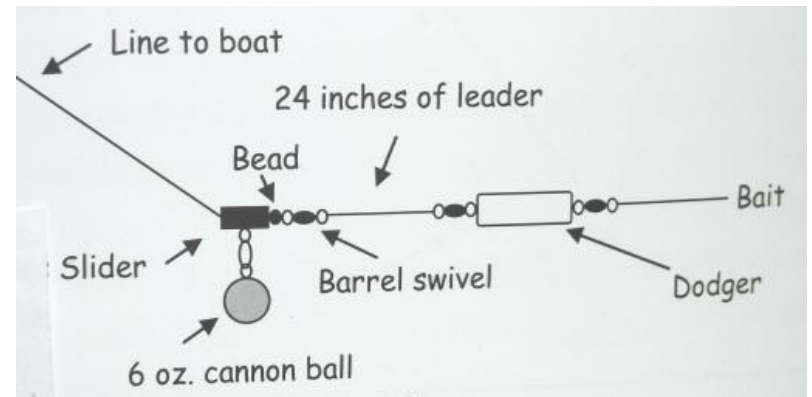
Downrigger pros: gets your bait to a specific level in the water. Can use stacker for multiple rods. Best way to target deep fish

Cons: more expensive, operating takes time away from fishing

Dropper loop pros: inexpensive, quick and easy to send bait down and retrieve it, bait will work the water column up and down when turning attracting fish at different depths

cons: doesn't hit specific depths in water, fish can leverage against the weight when hooked, difficult to get bait deep in water.

Dropper Loop example:



Types of Bait for Trout and Kokanee

Hard baits = have action

Examples: rapalas, spoons, kastmasters, cut plugs,

In big lakes, use flashers or lake trolls to attract fish to hard baits



Spoon



Rapala

Soft baits = no action

Examples: micro hoochies, soft shrimp lures, grub tails, flies

Almost always pair soft lures with dodgers or wiggle disks to impart action on lure

Run leader from dodger short, 6 to 10 inches, shorter leaders and bigger test leaders impacts more action.

Artificial shrimp



Micro Hoochie



Fish Smarter Not Harder: Have a Strategy

Active fish chase bigger and faster baits. Start fast, then try medium speeds, then slow

Fast baits: 2.7 to 4 mph. Includes: Speedy Shiners, Rapalas, Humdingers



Medium baits: 2 to 2.7 mph. Includes: Spoons, Kastmasters, Kripplelures



Slow baits: 1.3 to 2 mph. Includes: Micro hoochies, Nightcrawlers (artificial or real) on a slow death hook, flies, soft plastic artificial grubs.





Fish Smarter Not Harder: What can/can't you control?

What you can't control: If the fish are biting, if you catch a fish, if other people catch a fish, the weather.

What you can control: Your trolling speeds, your tackle selection, your rotation of tackle while fishing, the quality of your lines and hooks, your organization, the areas you troll, your attitude.

Ask yourself: Am I trolling the right speeds? Do I have the right tackle? Am I appropriately switching out my lures? Are my lines damaged? Are my hooks sharp? Are my knots compromised? Am I organized and prepared BEFORE I start fishing? Am I fishing the right spots? Am I fishing to have fun and learn?



Kokanee Tips

Kokanee prefer bait with a very erratic movement. This can be achieved by presenting soft baits (hoochies, micro shrimp, grub tails) at slower speeds (1 to 1.6 mph) along with a dodger.

To improve dodger performance, use higher sized line (10lb mono) and shorter leader length (6-8 inches)

Experiment with different colored baits and always tip hooks with shoepeg corn

Hard baits (cut plugs, spoons, ect.) can be paired with flashers and lake trolls when fish are very active and trolled 1.5 to 2 mph



Trout Tips

Trout opposed to Kokanee: Kokanee I always use dodgers or flashers, and tip my hooks with corn

Trout I usually don't use dodgers as much, and never use corn

Trout I use smaller line, 6lb fluorocarbon, or 4lb fluorocarbon when getting no bites

I always carry a slow death hook, and have live worms or artificial worms (Berkley nightcrawlers)

Tip hooks with live or artificial nightcrawlers, powerbait.