

# When to fish, how to catch

**Geoff Gonella**, BASS catch recorder, helps anglers new to bass fishing catch that all-important first fish

**N**ew to bass fishing but don't know when to fish? This is a common dilemma among new rods, so how about this formula to get you started?

Try fishing regularly from June to September, early morning or dusk, with your trip coinciding with rising springs, on the flood during settled weather with an overcast sky and no rain over the previous few days.

Don't be despondent if you don't catch, though. Even among experienced anglers it is very much a case of trial and error. It applies to all sea angling, not only bass fishing.

Before you start, make two marks on your bass rods, at 36cm and 45cm from the butt end. More on this later.

Use bait that is natural for the terrain, such as a crab for fishing around rocks and man-made structures, rag or lug over bait beds, prawns down harbour walls, and deadbait where fish scraps would be regularly thrown in the water.

For legering bait, a two-hook flapper is a good schoolie rig that can be cast a moderate distance. For float-fishing, try near jetty legs, harbour posts and floating weedbeds.

## How about spinning?

For spinning try to imitate small fish natural to the area, such as a thin silvery one for near sandeel beds, or a wedge-type for where brit could be. The baited spoon can work in harbours, using a leaf-type spoon with the treble exchanged for 50mm of mono and a single hook baited with small ragworms.

Cast uptide, count down so many seconds, and then wind slowly as the spinner goes downstream then towards the shore. Repeat a few times, then try a different countdown and repeat. Knowledge of depth and snags can be very helpful here.

Plugging, surface popping, Red Gills and other soft plastics all simulate small fish and will take bass. Do not use early in the season because crabs, rag and lug are more natural then.

Use thin silvery or pearly plugs where sandeels can be expected, dark artificial eels around jetties that are lit at night, and surface poppers that resemble injured fish.

Fly-fishing is a tough act for anyone trying to catch a first bass, but try sandeel patterns to imitate a sandeel, or a seaweed fly close to floating weed. Again, only in season!

## What to do when you catch a bass

Bring it in firmly but carefully, and then use a landing net to lift the fish from the water. Use wet hands to handle the fish, being careful of the spines and sharp gill edges.

Long-nosed pliers will help with hook removal, but keep everything away from the delicate gill rakers. Measure the overall length from the butt end of the rod, using the two marks as a guide. If it is less than the 36cm mark you are legally bound to put it back. If it is over the 36cm you can keep it or put it back but BASS asks its members to return bass below 45cm (the other mark) because below that they are not of breeding size. You decide.

After that first bass, fish the same spot straight away - there could be more. Do tell friends and family, it is an achievement after all. But when talking about your bass fishing in public, do not give information on marks - careless talk can lead to netsmen sweeping the area.

Surely it is simpler than that? Well, sadly not. Bass are not as common nowadays and access to good bass fishing is being taken away by over-protective landowners and health and safety-minded local councils.

Add to that the forthcoming Marine Conservation Zones, and it seems we need all the nous we can muster to get some bass fishing. I hope these points help you catch that first bass, and many more. **SA**

Use the correct tactics and you could catch bass like this one

