



# The 3 Biggest Mistakes Walleye Anglers Make

*Brett McComas*

## 1. Fishing too close to bottom

One of the biggest mistakes walleye anglers make is fishing too close to bottom...specifically on ice. Fishing higher in the water column -- even 3-4' off bottom -- can help pull fish in from farther away that otherwise would have never seen your presentation.

Also a great way to target the most aggressive fish in the area. Instead of wasting time trying to get lethargic bottom-suckers to nip at your bait, you'll be fishing the higher marks that are actively cruising, looking for their next meal.

Ever watch fish feeding in a tank/aquarium? Doesn't matter the species...the majority of fish eat upwards. Walleyes can easily lose sight of baits that drop down below them or even worse get turned off by it and wave goodbye.

Once they come in: Always keep your bait above the fish. You're trying to replicate natural prey...how many times have you seen a minnow



swim straight down into a fish's mouth? A subtle game of keep-away can help turn lookers into biters.

## 2. Not going shallow enough

Let's face it: most walleye guys refuse to fish in the weeds...big mistake! Sure it's a bit more cumbersome, but a certain population of fish will be up in shallow weeds all year round -- they're usually better ones and go untouched.

Below we'll breakdown 3 killer techniques that we use to target these weed-dwelling walleyes:

### How to "slick rig" through shallow cabbage weeds.

Trolling anything through the weeds can be a nightmare, which is why most people flat-out don't do it. Here's a weed-friendly version of the Lindy Rig [Brett McComas](#) likes to call the "Slick Rig."

> This is a shallower pattern -- usually anywhere from 9-14' -- in emergent or barely submerged cabbage beds. Really good spots usually have deep water close by and a mixture of bright green coontail on that deeper outside edge.



> A thin, braided mainline like 10-lb [Sufix 832](#) lets you snap the rig out of cabbage leaves if it gets stuck and of course helps feel the bite with lots of line out. If your hook snags the stalk of the weed, you'll likely have to pluck the whole thing out of the bottom.

> Start with an 1/8-oz [tungsten bullet-nose sinker](#) (maybe 1/4-oz if reeeeeeally windy). Sounds ultra-light, but remember that this is a shallow-water deal, so you'll need plenty of line out behind the boat to keep from spooking fish.

> A tungsten weight is going to be much smaller than lead, so it pulls through cabbage like a dream. Expensive...yes...but you'll hardly ever lose your weight while rigging in the weed. Bass guys burn through 'em thanks to pike bite-offs.

Here's a look at the “slick rig” on bottom next to the traditional components:





- > This is one of the few techniques where I think it's important to use a [Sufix Elite Monofilament](#) leader instead of fluorocarbon, simply because fluoro sinks and I don't want my bait dragging on bottom if I drop down to super-slow speeds.
- > I like using a 48" leader (usually 10-lb, not less) tied off to the smallest swivel I can get away with. Anything longer than 48" seems to get wrapped up in the cabbage stalks too often.
- > Owner makes a [Soft Glow Bead](#) that's flexible and can be slid over the hook eye. Helps to protect the knot and makes things that much less snaggy by covering the eye, knot, and tag end. They sink, but are slightly more buoyant than normal beads which helps keep the bait up.
- > Drop down to a #6 or #4 [Octopus Hook](#), or a #8 or #6 [Wide-Gap Walleye Hook](#) for the great hook-up ratios, yet streamlined shape that pulls through the weeds better than expected.



> Live leeches are cleaner and can be rigged more quickly, but a [worm-blower](#) enhanced [nightcrawler](#) usually gets more bites, especially now that water temps have reached the low- to mid-70s.

> Life-like leech and nightcrawler imitations can be just as productive as the real stuff, especially when trolling speeds are bumped up. You almost have to fish them in areas with lots of bait-stealing bluegills, else you're constantly reeling in to re-bait.



> Soft-plastics like the [Impulse Rig'N Leech](#) and [Nightcrawler](#) can be rigged in a variety of ways: from nearly weedless Texas-rigging options, to slow-death styles that cause the bait to spin seductively in the water. Oh and you can't kill 'em ;)



## Al Lindner's rip-jigging secrets!

If you're only ever going to watch ONE video on "rip jigging," THIS is the video. Al gives up a few secrets we were previously sworn to never talk about. Here it is from the man who perfected (invented?) "rip jigging" for shallow walleyes:

<https://youtu.be/jcVRaNJ8HMk>



Al forgot to mention you'll need plenty of spinach in order to rip jig all day:





## Slip-bobbering for walleyes.

Because sometimes we just need to go back to our roots. [Here's a breakdown](#) from northern MN fishing guide Justin Bailey:



> Search out land points or shallow bars with steep breaks where deep water meets shallow cabbage weeds.

> I usually begin targeting these areas when surface temps start hovering around 63 degrees and cabbage weeds began to tickle the surface.



> Set up on the inside edge of the weeds, making your casts out to the deep water. This allows you to split the difference and find the exact depth at which the weed edge is.

> I like to use a 1/8-oz [Thill Splash Brite](#). This lighted slip-bobber has a brass opening on top that allows the bait to sink quickly and prevents line twist.

> My [main line](#) is usually 6- to 8-lb with a [6-lb leader](#). The leader is attached using a small #7 [barrel swivel](#) to prevent line twist. Just above the barrel swivel is a 1/16- or 1/8-oz [egg sinker](#), depending on wave action.

> Leader length depends on cabbage weed density -- extremely dense cabbage calls for a shorter 18-24" leader to keep my bait from swimming too free and getting wrapped up in the weeds.

> A jumbo leech hooked right behind the sucker or a [nightcrawler](#) hooked twice through the head allows the rest of the body to dangle and move freely.

> Match your [hook](#) to the size/type bait you're using -- too small of a hook may impede hook-setting ability.

> Weed walleyes are usually feeding fish and tend to be more aggressive -- don't be afraid to set your bait several feet off bottom.





## 3. Always using live bait

Of course there's a time and place for live bait (leeches, crawlers, minnows), but you're seriously missing out if you haven't added artificials to your arsenal. So why aren't you using 'em? It's a confidence thing....

Your best fishing trips and biggest fish have probably come on live bait...but when you think about it, your worst probably have too [mind-blown emoji]. We strongly encourage you to give the "fake stuff" a go the next time you're on a hot bite -- one confidence-boosting day is all it takes to embrace the artificials.

There's a pile of times when artificials will actually out-fish the real deal. During a hot bite you can pluck an extra fish or two from the school before it moves on. With live bait you have to take the time (20-30+ seconds easy) to re-bait between each fish.

Same goes for missing a bite: With live bait you'd have to reel up and re-bait, hoping you had a second crack at that fish. Artificials let you keep the bait in the strike zone after a missed fish so that hungry walter can have a second go at it.

How annoying are bait-stealing bluegills nipping at the bait?! Constantly needing to reel in to re-bait is NOT a thing if you use artificials. Feel that peck-peck-peck on the tail of your bait and you can pump the rod to shoo 'em off instead.

**Like this kind of Walleye fishing goodness? Then head over to <http://TargetWalleye.com> Where Real Walleye Fisherman Hang**