




A Beginner's Guide to **Kayak Fishing**



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 Kayak fishing is an extreme sport which can lead to injury or even death if things go wrong. The information contained in this document is intended only as a guide. Always seek appropriate training and advice before fishing from a kayak. The author accepts no responsibility or liability for any injury, loss or damage arising from the use of information contained herein. Readers hereby acknowledge that the use of information contained in this guide is done so at their own risk.

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Foreward

I have fished for as long as I can remember, and tried sea, coarse and game fishing, over the years. I enjoyed them all, but wanted something different. Something which would get me closer to nature and closer to the fish, and allow me to fish spots that no-one else could get to. After reading an article on an American website about kayak fishing, I knew I had to try it. Since then, I have never looked back.

When I started getting interested in kayak fishing, I gained a lot of information from on-line forums such as AnglersAfloat in the UK. Advice was freely given, and I ended up making some of the best friends I have ever had. Those forums are now busier than ever, and on-line forums are available worldwide to enthuse and advise you. Help is never more than a question away.

Since those early days, I now help answer a lot of questions from others – and I noticed that the same questions keep cropping up. So I thought it was time to try to answer all of the common questions which get asked by newcomers to the sport, and put them all in a handy guide.

So here it is – a beginner's guide to kayak fishing... Hopefully, it will help and guide you, should you decide that the sport is for you... Kayak fishing can be dangerous, addictive and expensive – You have been warned. Best of all though, kayak fishing is a great leveller, and the most fun you can have on a piece of floating plastic – Enjoy!



Safety

Safety should always be the highest consideration when kayak fishing. Your personal safety and that of other water users should be foremost in your mind. Kayak fishing is an extreme sport which deserves and commands respect. Anyone who ignores safety advice is asking for trouble. Please read the following advice – you cannot remove risk altogether, but you can take steps to minimise it.

Training, Experience and Paddle Skills

Safety equipment is all very well, but without the knowledge, experience and training to use it – it is next to useless. The first thing you must do before going kayak fishing is to get some training. There are plenty of courses around which will give you the basic skills and advice needed to paddle your kayak safely. Don't worry about fishing skills – that comes later, the first thing to do, is to learn how to paddle and control your kayak. The course needs to include practical hands-on (or perhaps that should be sit on !) experience on the water with your kayak – it should include as a minimum the following:

- **Paddle Skills:** Basic paddle strokes and bracing.
- **Self rescue:** How to get back on the kayak when (!) you fall off.
- **Capsize drill:** How to right a capsized kayak.
- **Surf entry and exit:** How to control the kayak when entering and exiting the surf.
- **What to do in an emergency:** Raising the alarm and what procedures to follow.

I would also like to see anchoring included in any good kayak fishing course – as there is a definite art to it!

There is no substitute for experience, but everyone has to start somewhere – training will give you the confidence you need to progress in the sport. If you can't afford training, then ask for help – there are plenty of experienced kayak fishermen who are willing to show you the ropes.

Essential Safety Equipment

Once you have received some training, you can start to think about safety equipment. There are a number of items which I consider essential. Each one of these, could save your life:

- **PFD:** A personal floatation device. Always wear one. It will keep you afloat if you fall overboard. Make sure it fits correctly. Don't put sinkers or other heavy objects in your PFD pockets (apart from the equipment listed on page 5).



- **VHF Radio:**

A portable waterproof VHF radio – make sure it is leashed to your PFD and fully charged (You will need to attend a course to gain a licence to transmit using a VHF radio). Know and learn how to use it. 5 Watts minimum transmit power will give 5 miles line of sight range.



- **Compass:** A waterproof steering compass. Learn how to use it, and do not locate it close to metal/electronics.



- **GPS:** A GPS will tell you your location, speed, where you are heading, and how to get back. Make sure it is waterproof and has fresh batteries and is leashed to your PFD.



- **Flares:** A set of in-date flares. The day/night type are the best. Make sure they are protected ideally in a waterproof tube. I also carry a couple of military issue high intensity chemical lightsticks in the back of my PFD.



- **Whistle:** To attract attention – again, attach it to your PFD.



- **Waterproof Torch/Strobe:** Even if you are going out during the day, always take waterproof torch and/or a strobe. Ideally keep it with you.



- **PFD knife:** I always carry a knife on my PFD – but use one with a single edge blunt point. Make sure it is close to hand in case you fall off the kayak and need it to cut yourself free from fishing line/rope.



- **Drogue/anchor:** A drogue or anchor can be useful in an emergency situation to stop you drifting onto rocks etc.
- **Clothing:** Always wear clothing appropriate for the conditions/time of year – remember that conditions can and do change whilst you are afloat. This should include: Wet suit/dry suit, hat, glasses and shoes/boots.

- **Mobile phone:** Not so important, given you have a VHF radio, but useful as a backup – make sure it is in a waterproof bag and it is programmed with emergency numbers/coastguard contacts.

Risk Reduction

There are also a number of other items which are worth including when you go kayak fishing....

- **Tow/throw line:** Always useful if you need a tow, or you need to tow someone. If you cannot afford a shop bought one, then a long piece of bungee with carabiners on both ends is a useful backup (you can also use it to moor up to pot bouys etc whilst fishing).
- **First aid kit:** The small kits designed for motorcycles are very useful – make sure it is placed in a small dry bag.
- **Bailer:** You can make a cheap bailer by cutting a plastic milk container in half. You can also buy hand operated bilge pumps for kayaks.
- **Duct tape:** Always useful for repairs etc.
- **Spare batteries:** For GPS, VHF etc – always carry batteries in a waterproof bag.

- **Food and drink:** Always take enough food and drink when you are planning a trip.
- **Sun cream:** Always protect yourself from the harmful effects of the sun reflecting off the water.

There are also a number of simple things you can do when kayaking to make it safer...

- Add reflective tape to the top and underside of the kayak's hull. This will make it highly visible at night, even if the kayak is in a capsized state.
- Add a buoyancy bag inside the hull of the kayak. If the kayak does start taking on water, this will give you much more time to raise the alarm and effect a rescue.
- If you are fishing in a rocky location, consider wearing a kayaking helmet.
- In the UK, CG66 is a voluntary scheme run by the UK Coastguard. It encourages owners of small vessels (including kayaks) to register the details of their craft. In the event of an emergency, it makes it much easier for the Coastguard to locate your details, which could improve your chances of being rescued. I would recommend this scheme to all kayak fishermen in the UK: <https://mcanet.mcga.gov.uk/public/cg66/>

Safety Advice

Over the years, I have been given a lot of good advice, much of it from kayak fishermen much wiser and more experienced than myself. Most of it has held me in good stead, and I would like to share the best bits with you. A lot of it might seem obvious, but it is all good...

- Always check the weather forecast before going out. Take particular note of wind strength and be very careful if it is blowing offshore. If you contact the coastguard before you go, you can get an up to date forecast, and also lodge a paddle plan with them, which will tell them where you are going and what your plans are. Remember to tell them when you return from your trip. Also tell a friend where you are going, and what time you are going to be back.
- Try not to fish alone – If you are with someone else, and something does go wrong, things are much easier. And besides, kayak fishing is quite a social sport – you have to have someone to shout abuse at, when they catch more than you do!
- Keep an eye on wind, waves and tide whilst you are out on the water – conditions can, and do change rapidly. Also listen into the weather forecasts using your VHF radio.
- Launching and exiting the surf can be dangerous – stow as much equipment as possible inside the kayak or strap and secure rods to parallel to the side of the kayak. Also remember the kayak fishing mantra; **“Leash it, or lose it!”** – if your equipment is not leashed to the kayak, sooner or later it will be lost to Davy Jones locker!
- Regularly practise kayak re-entry (self rescue) and practise capsize drills, so that if you do capsize for real; righting the kayak and getting back on, will become almost second nature.
- If you do have an accident whilst at sea, always stay with kayak. Also, hold on to paddle in the event of a capsize (the paddle should be leashed to the kayak, and that is your lifeline). Do not be tempted to swim for shore – swimming whilst wearing a PFD is not easy and the wind and tide can easily sweep you away. It is also much easier for a search and rescue team to locate you if you are with your kayak.

And probably the most important thing to remember...

“If in doubt, don’t go out!”

Buying/Choosing a Fishing Kayak

Before getting into the technicalities and attributes of the kayak you want to purchase, you first need to take a good look at yourself, and your own physical limitations. Now, it has to be said, that in general, most kayak fishermen/women are usually fairly long in the tooth. So you need to consider the following...

- **Your Fitness Level.**
- **Your Weight/Size.**
- **Your Age.**

None of these attributes in themselves should prevent you from enjoying the sport in some shape or form; kayak fishing can be a great way to get into shape, but you must remember to know your limits and stay within them – exercise a bit of common sense.

If you think that kayak fishing is for you, then sooner or later you are going to start looking for your first kayak, or indeed, you may already own a kayak and you may be looking at upgrading.

The type of kayak which is most popular as a fishing platform is known as a Sit-On-Top kayak or SOT. With this sort of kayak, you sit on a seat on top of the kayak's deck, rather than inside an enclosed cockpit with a spray deck (these sorts of kayaks are called Sit Inside Kayaks or SINKS). SOTs have many advantages over SINKS when it

comes to fishing. They are generally more stable, and easier to self rescue should you fall out or capsize. For the purposes of this guide, we shall assume that we are talking about Sit-On-Top kayaks (SOTs).

Several properties of the kayak will determine your purchase and you need to understand how they impact your choice. They are...

- **Length**
- **Weight**
- **Material**
- **Stability**
- **Windage**
- **Speed**
- **Capacity**
- **Colour**
- **Price**

Length: Generally, the longer the kayak, the faster it will go. A longer kayak also tracks better ie. it's easier to paddle in a straight line without veering off to one side. The flip side is that longer kayaks are more difficult to turn and manoeuvre. Conversely, you can turn a short kayak much more easily. The other thing to bear in mind (see below), is that the longer the kayak, the heavier it is. Fishing kayaks vary in length from 8 feet to

15 feet long. In general, for sea fishing 13 feet is the most popular length for a fishing kayak. But in rivers, a much shorter kayak is easier to manoeuvre and much more suitable for fishing in tight spaces. Also remember that a long kayak might present storage problems if you have a small garage!

Weight: The weight of the kayak has a bearing on many things. The materials used in the construction of the kayak and its length will make the biggest difference to the weight of the kayak. Most SOTS are made from rotomoulded plastic (See below), some are made from fibreglass or even carbon. The latter 2 materials are lighter than plastic – but the length still makes a bigger difference. The other things which make a difference to the weight of a kayak are the fittings and extras. Things like rod holders and rudders and fish finders all add to the weight. Once you have tried to lift a kayak onto the roof of your car or you are trolleying it up a hill, then you appreciate that the unladen weight of the kayak is very important indeed. A lighter kayak is also easier to paddle for long periods.

Material: As stated previously, the materials used in the construction of a kayak have a bearing on its overall weight. But there are other considerations which you need to be aware of. Plastic rotomoulded kayaks are generally quite tough and can take a fair amount of punishment. When launching and being dragged over stones etc – they do get scratches and scrapes. Glass and carbon sit-on-tops feel altogether more hi-tec and they are definitely lighter in weight, but generally they have a gel coat to protect the surface – so they do need a bit more looking after and will not take kindly to being dragged over stones. Plastic kayaks are also a bit easier to “pimp” with your own fitments for things like fish finders and rod holders – they are a bit easier to drill.

Stability: Stability and speed generally go hand in hand. Usually the wider the kayak, the more stable it is going to be ie. it will be more difficult to capsize and more stable to fish from. Conversely, the wider a kayak, the slower or more difficult it will be to paddle. Compromise on this property for fishing kayaks – don’t go for a narrow or a wide kayak – but something in-between.

Windage: The higher a kayak sticks up out of the water when you are paddling it, the more it will be affected by wind, conversely it will be a drier ride. A kayak which sits lower in the water will be less affected by the wind but you will get wetter as more waves will splash over the sides. When the wind catches the sides of a kayak, it will tend to turn it around in an effect known as weather cocking. It can make it very difficult to paddle in a side wind, and will require you to constantly make corrective strokes to compensate. Again, go for a compromise – and don’t pick a high dry ride – because I can tell you from first hand experience that high sided kayak (at sea) is not fun to paddle in a cross wind.

Speed: As mentioned above – speed is tied in with the width, length and the shape of the hull (as well as the weight of the kayak). Don’t lose sight of what you wanted to use the kayak for. Generally if you are fishing, then a bit of stability is better than an out an out speed machine.

Capacity: Always check the stated weight capacity of the kayak and remember that all of those things which you are going to “pimp” it up with, are going to add weight (not to mention

all those fish you are going to catch!). Also remember that the capacities are made for calm conditions. If you are anything like me, then you will take too much gear with you – remember this when looking at the capacity on the specification sheet and obviously take your own weight into consideration.

Colour: I prefer a yellow kayak when fishing at sea – I believe that it offers a better chance of being spotted by other water users. On rivers, many people prefer darker colours or camouflage patterns on their kayak reasoning that the fish will spot a bright kayak. All I can say on this one, is that I have a bright yellow kayak which I fly fish from, and I have had trout swim right up to the side of the kayak and take a fly. So I can’t see how a bright kayak deters fish.

Price: This is always an important consideration, usually, you get what you pay for – the more you pay, generally the more features you get. My advice on this one would be always get the best kayak you can afford. Remember that kayaks hold their second hand value quite well too (tell your other half it’s an investment!).

Now that you understand how the properties affect performance, you can make a better informed choice. When buying a fishing kayak the first question to need to ask yourself is...

- **Where and what sort of kayak fishing are you going to be doing most often?**

There is no generic “one size fits all” kayak which is great at everything, and anyone who tells you there is, is lying. There are kayaks which are good at a lot of things, but as with all things in life, those same kayaks are not great at specific things.

The “Where/What” question is important, generally your choices will be...

- **Rivers.**
- **Lakes.**
- **Sea.**

Generally shorter kayaks (8 to 11 feet long) are much better suited to rivers – they are easier to manoeuvre and turn, and easier to manhandle/portage. They do not have to cope with the wave conditions commonly experienced at sea. To a certain extent, the same applies to lakes, although some lakes are quite big and can get quite choppy. For kayak fishing at sea, a longer

kayak (13 to 15 feet long) is preferable, unless you are going to fish very close inshore in calm conditions. The most popular length for sea fishing kayaks in the UK is 13 feet.

I use a 9 foot long SOT when fishing in rivers, lakes and sometimes at sea if it is calm. It is so light, that it is a joy to use, and allows me to launch in places that would not be possible with my bigger kayaks. I generally use a 15 foot SOT when fishing at sea – it’s a bit of a beast, but I feel safe in it, and it makes a great fishing platform.

There are also a number of other features to look out for when choosing a fishing sit-on-top kayak...

Hatches: Hatches are great. But they must be secure and watertight. There are different types – some of them screw in, some are held in place by webbing snap locks, and some have twist and lock cams. Some hatches have small lift out buckets/cat bags which are great for storing spare clothes/drink etc. Also look out for extra large/long hatches which allow you to store your fishing rods and reels inside the kayak. This is especially handy for stowing gear when launching/landing in surf. Remember with that sort of hatch, you have to be able to open/close it quickly and simply. I

also like to have a front hatch big enough to store my kayak trolley/cart inside the kayak. If there are hatches near the seat, make sure you can open them whilst seated.

Tankwell: The well at the stern of a fishing sit-on-top kayak is called a tankwell. A tankwell is important on a fishing kayak, it allows you to store fishing equipment which will not fit in the cockpit area. Many people fit plastic crates into the tankwell and secure them to the kayak with elastic and clips. These crates can be used to carry cool bags (for bait/food/drink), anchor systems, fishing tackle bags etc. Some kayak manufactures produce crates which are specifically designed to fit in the tankwell. Be aware that it can be quite difficult to reach items which are at the back of the tankwell, without sitting side saddle (it is difficult to twist around – especially when wearing a drysuit and PFD). If you are buying a kayak, try sitting in the cockpit and twist around to see how easy it is.

Rod holders: Some people don’t use rod holders. Personally, I could not live without them. Usually, fishing kayaks come with at least 2 flush mounted rod holders located either side of the cockpit. These factory fitted flush mounts are angled away from the kayak and towards the

stern. This is fine for trolling, and storing fishing rods/nets. But if you want to fish at anchor then you need a rod holder which allows the rods to be angled towards the bow of the kayak. Some fishing kayaks have a second pair of forward facing factory fitted flush mounted rod holders (try saying that after a few beers!) which do the job. But very often, they are set too far forwards – and this makes it difficult to reach your rods when seated (again, check this by sitting in the kayak and reaching forward to see if you can reach the forward flush mounts). Most people tend to fit their own custom rod holders. The 2 most common systems are made by Scotty and RAM. My favourite are the RAM tubes – they can be set up close to the cockpit and allow the rods to be moved around to almost any angle – they also allow the rods to be pushed back parallel to the kayak when exiting in surf.

Rudders: The use of rudders on kayaks, always divides opinion. Most SOT kayaks have a small keel or skeg built in on the underside of the hull at the stern. The purpose of this, is to keep the kayak tracking in a straight line when paddling. However, when it is windy, the kayak will tend to turn into the wind when moving forward –

this is known as “Weathercocking”. As already mentioned, the higher the windage the worse the effect will be. The effect can be corrected by using a stronger paddle stroke on the windward side of the kayak, but with some kayaks, the effect is so pronounced that you almost have to paddle exclusively on one side. When this happens, I would fit a rudder. It adds weight to the kayak, but can make things a lot easier. Think of a rudder as an optional extra only to be fitted if needed.

Eye pads: Eye pads are great for attaching all types of accessories to the kayak. They are really useful.



Family/Kids: If you are looking to go kayak fishing with the family, then there are a number of important considerations you must take into account. The first one of these is whether to buy a tandem kayak (a single kayak with multiple seats) or separate kayaks. Having been through this process myself, I hope to offer some advice which may be of use. The first thing to take into account is the age, confidence and ability of the paddlers. If they are young or inexperienced, then a tandem kayak will almost certainly be the best option. With a tandem kayak, you are not reliant on your passenger to paddle – if a youngster gets tired then they can have a rest and you can continue paddling. Also, if you intend to fish, then it is easier to help them out when you are close at hand. The downside of a tandem kayak is that they can be quite heavy and thus difficult to load/unload from a car and move.

The other alternative is purchase 2 separate kayaks. This is a great option if you have kids which are a bit older, and are eager to learn under close supervision. The kayak needs to be small enough that they can control and manoeuvre it by themselves – so a short kayak of 9 or 10 feet long is best. If you get 2 identical kayaks then

check that they stack on top of each other – it makes them much easier to transport them on the roof of the car. Make sure that you take them somewhere safe until their confidence builds up. I took my son to the local river (I would suggest a river or lake is ideal). Start off with basics – how to turn and go backwards and forwards – once their confidence builds, check that they can get back into the kayak when in the water – above all make sure things are fun and safe. Also take a tow line in case they get tired and you have to tow them back!

And finally, things to check before you buy a kayak...

The one piece of advice I would give anyone buying a kayak, is to try it before you buy it. That is sometimes a lot easier said than done. Many sales outlets are situated by rivers/canals, so take the opportunity to try the kayaks out on the water. Failing that, get in touch with other kayak fishermen using on-line forums and tell them where you are based. You will usually find someone who has the same kayak you are thinking of buying and would be happy to let you try it out. Its also a great way of making new friends and learning from other people's

experience. It is easy to look at glossy brochures and technical specifications and convince yourself that this is the kayak for you. But you need to check that the seat fits and you are comfortable paddling. If you can, try out several kayaks, it makes it much easier to decide when you have comparisons.

If you are buying a second-hand/used kayak then check the following...

- Are there any deep scratches in the hull (a few are to be expected but they should not be too deep).
- Open up the hatches and check inside the kayak – look around the pillars (scuppers) for any cracks.
- Check the quality of the fittings and pay special attention to any areas which have been modified. You are looking for a good job. That means quality marine grade stainless steel nuts, bolts and penny washers and silicone sealant.
- Take a few steps back and see if the hull is warped/deformed in any way.

Essential Hardware for Fishing Kayaks

Before you can think about going fishing, there are a number of essential items which you need to sort out. These include:

- **Kayak Seat.**
- **Trolley/Cart.**
- **Anchor system.**
- **Paddles.**
- **Roof bars/transport.**
- **Storage.**

Kayak Seats: Fishing can be a waiting game, and if you have ever tried to sit in a fishing kayak without a padded seat for any length of time then you will appreciate how important a decent seat is. There are lots of different styles and types. They range from simple foam pads to fully padded seats with backrests and gel inserts which can be converted into camp chairs. The majority of kayak fishermen go for a seat with a decent amount of padding underneath and a backrest which provides enough support for your back, both when paddling and when sat fishing. An important consideration when purchasing a seat is how it will fit when you are wearing your PFD. If you have a bulky PFD, and the seat back is quite high, then things can get a bit uncomfortable – so try one out when you are wearing your PFD to see how comfortable it is.

You also need to check...

How easy is the seat to adjust: The seat may be comfortable, but it also has to be easy to adjust and have a range of adjustments. Ideally you are looking to be able to adjust the tension of the back rest in several places so that it provides support to your back and stays in place once adjusted.

How easy is the seat to fit/attach: You are looking for a seat which is easy to attach and remove. There are several methods used to attach the seat to the kayak. One involves brass snap links, which are heavy but quick. The other involves cord and Velcro, which is lighter and a bit slower. I prefer the Velcro, but it is down to personal choice.



Kayak Trolleys/Carts: Whilst some small fishing kayaks are light enough to be carried short distances, the vast majority of fishing kayaks (especially when rigged with fishing equipment) need a cart or trolley in order to transit them from the car to your chosen fishing location. There are lots of styles to choose from, including...

Plug-in trolleys which attach to into the scupper holes on the kayak. The advantage of these trolleys is that they are quick to fit to the kayak. However, always check how well the supports fit into the scupper holes on your kayak – there have been a number of cases where ill fitting support legs have split the kayak's scuppers.



Strap on carts – probably the most popular type of kayak cart. The kayak usually sits on top of 2 support feet, and nylon webbing is used to secure the cart to the kayak. They take longer to set up, but the advantage is that the wheels and support feet can be broken down. This enables the cart to be stored inside the hatch of many kayaks. This is a real plus when entering/leaving the surf as it is one less thing to worry about losing. There are several types of strap-on-carts, the most notable being the C-TUG. Others double up as aids to help load the kayak onto a car roof. They are quite expensive, and the wheels generally do not contain bearings, so the plastic axle spindles can wear after a while. Then again, you do not



have to worry about saltwater corrosion.

Dollies: A dolly is a type of cart similar in design to a trailer. Often, they are used by owners of sailing dinghies. The design is usually based upon a pair of wheels on an axle at the rear of a long central frame or support. The support contains feet which hold the kayak in place. The front of the frame emerges at the bow of the kayak and enables it to be pulled along. Many of the dollies are foldable and can be made to fit in the hatch of the kayak. If you own a very heavy kayak, then a dolly is probably the easiest way of transporting a kayak a long distance.

Another popular and much cheaper option, is to make your own kayak cart. Many people have done this by modifying cheap sack carts. There are plenty of articles on the web on how to do this, just make sure that you make the cart from materials which will not rust.

Wheels/tyres: There are many different types of configurations for kayak carts on the market.

- Plastic wheels.
- Pneumatic wheels/balloon tyres.
- Foam wheels.

The type of wheel you use on a kayak cart makes a big difference depending on the type of terrain you will be dragging the kayak across. Plastic wheels are light and are very good at crossing solid terrain, but they tend to be thin, so they dig into soft sand or shingle making things very difficult. Balloon wheels are very wide pneumatic tyres which spread the weight of the kayak across a wide area – they are great on soft terrain like sand or shingle. Pneumatic (inflatable) tyres are a great all-rounder – they cope with most terrain – but they are generally a bit heavier than plastic wheels; they are also prone to punctures and valve leaks – but still probably the most popular option. Foam wheels are a good compromise (if you can get them) – they are similar to pneumatic tyres, but are filled with foam instead of air – this avoids punctures, but they are heavier.

Anchor System: In the UK, fishing at anchor is very popular. However, its not just a case of chucking an anchor line over the side of the kayak and tying it to a pad eye ! Anchoring in a kayak can be very dangerous, especially if you don't do it properly. What makes it difficult, is that wind, tide and waves will try to turn the kayak – and the pivot point will be the location on the kayak where the anchor line is attached. If the attachment

point is not at the end of the bow or stern, then the kayak will be turned broadside onto the wind/waves – risking a capsize. So now you understand why the anchor line has to be attached at the end of the stern or bow. This presents another problem, in that when seated in the cockpit of a kayak, you are not able to reach either the bow or the stern (unless you are Stretch Armstrong!). In order to attach the anchor line to the end of the bow/stern, those clever kayak fishermen use a pulley system called an anchor trolley. There are many other important things to know and learn about anchoring when in the kayak which are beyond the scope of this guide.

For more information on anchoring whilst kayak fishing, see the guide below:

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk/anchoring-in-the-kayak-ultimate-guide/>

Paddles: Obviously, you are not going to get very far without a paddle ! There are lots of styles to choose from and they range in price from very cheap to incredibly expensive (some costing as much as the kayak itself!). My advice would be to buy a mid range paddle with a fibreglass shaft and asymmetrical curved polypropylene/plastic/fibreglass blades. You can always upgrade later if you feel you need a better paddle. As for

the correct length of paddle – this is a difficult question to answer. General kayaking knowledge suggests that you should just be able to wrap your hand around the top of the paddle when stood up with the paddle next to you. However, you have to bear in mind, that most sit on top kayaks sit much higher in the water than SINKs, so you might find you need a slightly longer paddle. My advice on anyone choosing a new paddle for a SOT would be – TRY BEFORE YOU BUY.

Roof Bars/Transport: Unless you are lucky enough to live within a stone's throw of the water, the chances are, you are going to need to transport the kayak to your chosen venue by loading it on the roof of the car/van. The majority of kayak fishermen in the UK use commercially available roof bars. This still leaves the issue of how to lift the kayak onto the roof of the car, which may not be easy if your kayak is very heavy. Get someone to help you, or invest in a loading system such as Karitek if you struggle. I have combined a commercially available roof bar with a simple loading arm to solve the problem – see below if you are interested...

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk/diy-car-loading-bar/>

Roof bars provide a safe and stable platform to load the kayak on to, many people use roof bar

pads to cushion the kayaks. Again you can make your own...

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk/diy-roof-bar-pads/>

I always load the kayak on the car roof so that the bottom of the hull is facing up; this is because the deck side of the kayak has a much flatter surface which helps when securing it to the roof bars.

Make sure that the kayak is securely attached to the roof bars. I use thick cam locking webbing straps. I always put the webbing through the scupper hole on the kayak. My theory is that it should stop the kayak from sliding off the car in the event of an emergency stop/accident. I use at least 3 separate straps (sometimes 5) and I also tie a fluorescent orange rag to the end of the kayak because it sticks out behind the car.

Hints:

- Put a half twist in the webbing and it will stop the humming noise which occurs at higher speeds.
- Cut a slit in an old tennis ball and thread the end of the webbing strap through it – this helps when you need to throw the webbing over the top of the car and the wind blows it back in your face!

Storage: If you have the option, then it is much better to store your kayak inside a garage or out-house. If not, I would suggest you put some form of cover over it. If you are like me, and have a garage full of junk, then fitting 15 foot kayak is not an easy task ! In my case, the kayak would not fit in the garage unless I removed the rudder, and even then, would only fit diagonally across the garage. With this in mind, storage options are needed.

I created a DIY kayak hoist using a pulley system...

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk/diy-garage-kayak-hoist/>

This allows me to lift the kayak off the garage floor and raise it to the roof (the pulley system makes the lifting easy), this saves a lot of space...

Space which I have filled with my other kayaks! There was not enough roof space to use hoists, so another method was needed. I created some support brackets which attach to the wall of the garage, these support the weight of the kayaks and allow me to stack them side on...

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk/diy-kayak-support-stoarge-brackets/>

Both of these storage solutions were cheap, and simple to create.



Fishing Tackle for Kayak Fishing

There is no need to buy specialist tackle designed for kayak fishing, but there are a number of considerations to bear in mind when selecting what sort of tackle to buy.

The most important thing to bear in mind is that sooner or later, your precious hard earned fishing tackle is going to get a dunking. Bad enough if it is in fresh water, but it could be fatal in salt water due to rust.

There are 2 main schools of thought on tackle selection for kayak fishing. Buy something cheap, and expect to replace it quite often or buy something more expensive in the hope that it will last a lot longer. I believe that there is a third way... a middle ground, where with a bit of research and thought, you can find reasonably priced tackle which is well built and will last a decent amount of time.

I would say that the choice of tackle is most important for reels. They receive the most abuse, and contain the most moving parts which are subject to saltwater corrosion. We will have a quick look at various items of fishing tackle.

Fishing Rods

There are several things to consider when choosing rods to take kayak fishing...

Price: Inevitably, this is the main driver for most people – but not to worry – there are plenty of rods which are very suitable for kayak fishing which don't cost the earth. A great example of this is the Rovex Integra Gold – they sell a 6 foot model which retails for around £20, also the Shakespeare Salt boat rod range can be found for under £30. Both very good rods for kayak fishing. If you want more and can afford to pay the extra, then there are some fantastic rods available from companies such as Conoflex, Fladen, Daiwa and Shimano – just use the criteria below to select the correct model for your style of fishing.



Length: A tricky one this, you will see lots of companies which market very short kayak fishing rods of less than 5 feet long. Whilst this is fine for youngsters and novices, if you want to progress and catch some sizeable fish, you will soon learn that a longer rod gives you more control over a hooked fish. Also, when a fish makes a powerful run under and across the kayak, you really need to be able to push the rod forwards and guide the line around the front of the bow to the other side. This is not really possible if you are in a 13 foot+ kayak unless you have a rod of over 7 feet long. The disadvantage of a longer rod is that it can make things awkward when landing a bigger fish. So I favour a compromise, my ideal length for a kayak fishing rod is 7 feet, but an 8 foot rod is also fine.



Action: Fishing rods come in all sorts of different actions. The action is determined by the taper of the rod and the thickness of the walls of the rod blank, as well as the materials used to construct the rod. You really have to decide what sort of fishing you are likely to be doing and what sized fish you are going to catch. If you fish open clean ground with few snags, then you can afford to have a really fast taper rod with plenty of action – this gives great sport. If you are fishing areas of reef or rocks with lots of snags, then a stiffer rod will be needed to wrinkle the fish out. I think that one of the benefits of kayak fishing is that you can generally use much lighter gear than normal and get the most out of the fish which you are trying to catch. The thrill is in the fight for me. I like to fish as light as I possibly can, without risking losing a fish. Most modern rods are made of carbon, which can be quite harsh – but Conoflex have recently brought out a range of Jedi rods which use a mixture of carbon and glass fibre to give some really bendy rods. They also make a specialist kayak fishing rod called the Jedi kayak QT which I had a bit of a hand in, so I am a bit biased – but I reckon it's a fantastic piece of kit. Fladen also seemed to have followed suit with their range of extra flex and total flex rods which look really sporty.

Storage: Storage or stowage can be a bit of an issue with kayak fishing – some fishing kayaks have areas inside the kayak where fishing rods can be stored. This can be a real benefit in a surf landing, having your rods stowed properly can make the difference between landing with a broken rod – not good. It is surprising how often I read that it has happened. Obviously, if you are going to store the rods inside the kayak then a shorter rod, or one which breaks down into 2 or 3 sections will be easier to store (but more difficult to set up!). When I take out the smaller kayak, I use a Shimano telescopic travel rod. When it is folded away, it is small enough to fit in the hatch – this is a real bonus. It also has a great action.



Fittings: Everyone has their own opinions on the fittings they like to see on fishing rods. Personally, I do not like too much bling! However, there are a few things I look for – I am not a big fan of the new ultra low profile braid rings – only because I don't tend to use braid much (most of the marks where I fish are very snaggy and you just spend your whole time trying to break the stuff!). I tend to use mono mainline and very often use a 15 or 20 foot leader of 35 lb mono. I do find that the very small braid rings tend to snag the leader knot when I am casting. Although, I have to say, when using braided mainline, the rings are great, and they do weigh a bit less too. One other thing I really like to see on my kayak fishing rods is a hook keeper. This is a small bit of wire where you can attach the hook when you are not fishing. It is really useful when paddling out to a mark or when you are dealing with a fish – it keeps the hook out of the way. It's the small things which can make a big difference I find.



Fishing Reels

If there is one item of tackle which you really need to rely on, it has got to be the reel. Due to the number of working parts and their construction, it is probably the one item of kayak fishing tackle which is most likely to be affected by saltwater corrosion and fail. I have been through a number of reels on the kayak, and I have realised that this is one area where you need to pay particular attention to build quality.

There are two main types of reel used in the UK for kayak fishing – the multiplier and the fixed spool. I tend to use fixed spool reels for lighter fishing or spinning, and multipliers for the tough stuff.

Fixed Spool Reels

I find that the fixed spool reels seem to suffer the most from saltwater corrosion – especially the bearings and drag assemblies (even more so on rear drag reels).

You can buy fixed spool reels which are designed to be saltwater corrosion resistant (eg. the Shimano SW range) and even reels which are waterproof, like those from Van Staal. However these reels have a hefty price tag, and I would say

this rules them out for general use of the kayak. A great compromise is the ABU Cardinal Saltwater range – particularly the 174SWi. ABU Cardinals have been around for years and have stood the test of time – this front drag reel is great value and will last a long time. Most of the components are stainless steel.



Multiplier Reels

The vast majority of my kayak fishing is done with multiplier reels. In general, these reels are tougher than fixed spools, and I just like using

them ! The good ones will last a long time if looked after, and if you look around, you can find good reels in that “middle ground” which I keep banging on about. For most kayak fishing you can get away with a 6500 or 7000 sized reel (ie. something holding between 250m of 15lb mono to 300 yards of 20lb mono), and in many cases a much smaller bait caster will suffice.

These would be my recommendations for the middle ground multiplier reels – ie. ones which should last a long time and not break the bank...

Small/6500 sized reel – I would look around for a decent ABU 6500. The older ones were better made (when they were made in Sweden). Look out for the ABU 6500 rocket – you can still get hold of the older ones (not the newer flashy chrome ones). Talk to anyone who owns one, and they will tell you how good they are. They do come up on eBay, so grab yourself a bargain !

Medium/7000 Sized reels – These are the workhorses of the UK kayak fishing world. They need to be tough and strong, and luckily there are a lot of reels which tick all of the boxes and don't break the bank. I have owned and used all of these reels at one time and will give the pro's and cons for each one

ABU 7000 – I use the cheaper version; the ABU SEVEN – these can be had for £50 new if you shop around. They are not built as well as the proper ABU 7000s, but for kayak fishing, they are ideal. I have dealt out a lot of abuse to mine and they are still going. Lower retrieve ratio is good for kayak fishing – there is not much to be gained by having a 6:1 or higher ratio, as you are not dragging leads over reefs a long way out. Better to have a lower ratio and a bit more grunt. They are also easy reels to maintain.



Daiwa SLOSH 20 – Another great reel, better quality than the ABU SEVEN, but a bit more expensive. A 6:1 ratio is not really needed,

but this is a quality reel – graphite frame and centrifugal brakes.

Penn 525GS – Forget the 525 Mags (they are great reels, but cost a lot more); if you look around, you can still get hold of the original centrifugal braked 525GS reels. They are basic and strong and built to last – exactly what you want from a kayak fishing reel. Graphite frame, stainless pinion gears, bronze main gears, stainless sealed bearings. The other plus is that they are easy to maintain.

Reels with a level wind mechanism, make the task of retrieving line much simpler, especially when you are playing a big fish (out of the list above, the ABU SEVEN is the only reel which has a level wind mechanism).

I also own a couple of the old Shimano Speedmaster II FSC reels. Shimano stopped making them years ago, but you can still get hold of them on eBay occasionally. They make great kayak fishing reels. They are small, lightweight, but incredibly strong.

Sundries

There are lots of odds and ends which are needed when fishing. These include...

- **Sinkers:** A selection of different sizes, including some small drilled bullets for spinning or float fishing.
- **Line:** Useful for making traces.
- **Hooks:** Again a selection of hooks in different sizes, depending on the sorts of fish you are after.
- **Scissors:** Useful for snipping line, and cutting up small baits.
- **Pliers:** A decent pair of pliers always come in handy – especially for getting the hooks out from any toothy critters you might catch! Make sure that you get ones with stainless steel jaws if you are sea fishing. Otherwise they will last a matter of months before corroding.



- **Beads/Swivels:** Useful for making traces. Beads also make great attractors for flatfish.
- **Old towel/rag:** Great for cleaning and drying your hands.

Gaffs/Nets

I release a lot of the fish I catch these days – so don't use the gaff very often. I do take it when I am going cod fishing as you never quite know what is going to turn up! A net does come in handy – and I have to admit that I have lost a couple of nice fish on the occasions when I have left the net behind (always the way).

As for the gaff – they are simple to make – you can buy the gaff hooks from tackle shops, and simply lash it to a short length of wooden dowelling. My favourite gaff was made from a section of carbon from an old fishing rod butt – sadly, one of the many things Neptune has claimed!



Nets come in all shapes and sizes. I have several. The two I use the most often are a small folding travel net made by Daiwa (Wilderness). This folds into a very small bag which makes it very easy to carry on the kayak – its great for fly fishing (Flyaking). The other is a much bigger net which I use for pike fishing. It also folds, but is much bigger and stronger.



If you do invest in a net, make sure that it is stowable and it is quick to get at when needed. There is no point in having a net unless it is close to hand.

Leashes

There is a well know saying in kayak fishing circles... “Leash it or Lose it!”

I have seen so much gear lost to Lord Neptune over the years (and some of it was mine to be fair). Now I leash just about anything which is of any value to the kayak.

One item of gear which **MUST** be leashed, is your paddle (the only possible exception to this is when exiting in heavy surf as there is a danger the paddle leash could get wrapped around your neck in the event of a capsize). Also, always leash your VHF radio to your PFD – that is where you will need it, in the event that you are separated from the kayak in an emergency.



I make my own leashes, so there really is no excuse. I use a jetski kill cord and a section of thin Velcro. Rods and reels should always be leashed, and I always leash expensive electronic gear such as cameras and GPS's.

Tackle Box/Bag



You need some kind of container to carry all of your items of fishing tackle; sinkers, hooks, traces, beads, swivels and the like. Its personal preference, but it needs to keep the items safe and also be easy to grab when you are fishing. I use a zipped bag, which I leash to the rear crate, but I know a lot of people use plastic snap lock

boxes which are also great. The biggest problem I find, is to try to minimise the amount of gear you take – I like to cover every eventuality, so space is always at a premium for me !

Cool bags

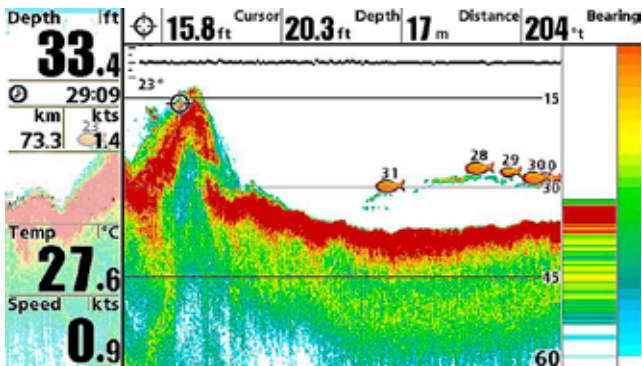
I always carry a cool bag to keep my bait in top condition. The bag fits exactly in the rear crate and also carries my food and drinks. A lot of people use rigid cool boxes and some of the newer fishing kayaks even have the option of a customised ice box to keep fish fresh.

Big Boys Toys for Kayak Fishing

I love big boys toys! At first glance, a kayak at sea is not the ideal platform for electronic gadgets. But search around, and you can find gear that is designed for the extreme conditions we fish in. There are a whole range of cool and groovy gadgets to choose from. Here are some of my favourites...

Fish Finders

Electronic fish finders use sonar to locate shoals of fish, but I have to be honest, their real worth is in being able to see the make up of the sea bed underneath the kayak. You can identify reefs and wrecks and sand bars – learn to find these features, and you will find the fish. Fish finders are not a gimmick, they really do work – even just knowing the depth of water underneath you is a real advantage.



There are many different types of fish finders available and you can pay as little or as much as you want. The most important thing to check

when purchasing a fish finder, is how robust it is – especially from a water proof and salt proof perspective. There is little point in purchasing a fish finder for a fishing kayak if it is not completely waterproof. Not only does the unit need to be waterproof, but also check the robustness of the connectors – some makes are a lot better than others.

The quality (resolution) and size of the display can also be quite important – with a very small screen and low resolution, it is very difficult to pick out detail. The flip side is that smaller units (or ones with a black and white rather than a colour display) will draw much less current – so your battery will last a lot longer.

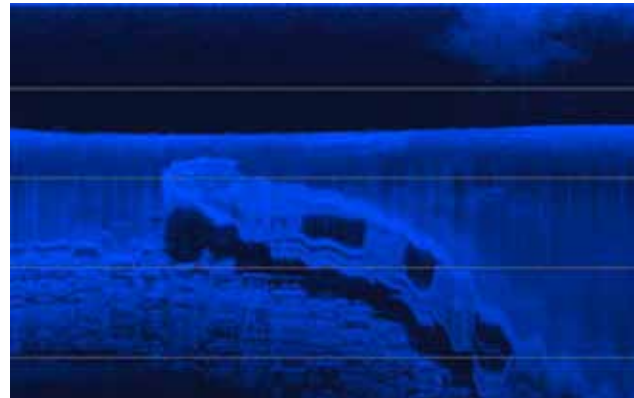
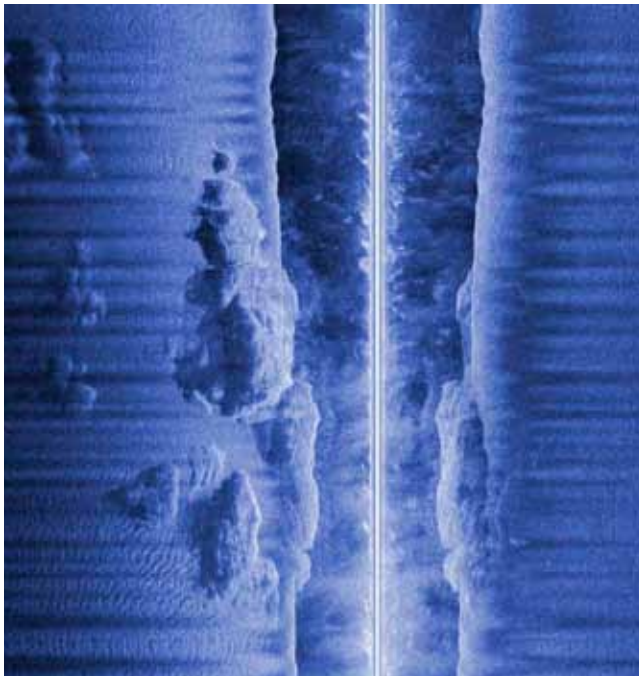
Some units come with built in GPS capability and the option to display nautical charts. This is very useful, but more expensive, and you have to realise that if the unit malfunctions, you have lost your fish finder and your GPS.

Installation is also another thing to explore. All fishfinders require a transducer. This is a wedge shaped piece of plastic which sends and receives

the sonar signals through the water. Some kayaks come with specially designed scupper holes which allow the transducer to be mounted on the outside hull of the kayak. You need to check the scupper and the transducer are compatible. Failing this, it is possible to mount many transducers inside the hull of the kayak. The transducer has to be enclosed in silicone (and no air bubbles must be present). The head unit (screen) also needs to be mounted on the kayak – and some are easier to add than others. A quick release mount does make things a lot easier.



There are also different types of fish finders – the most common produce a 2D display or slice through the water, but it is also possible to get fish finders which scan the seabed either side of the kayak and build up a detailed 3D display of the terrain and any fish in the water column. This is called side imaging or side structure sonar. It is very expensive and quite specialised, and to be honest, probably not ideally suited to kayaks – but I have such a unit and I love it. Some of the images it produces are amazing.



GPS

GPS or Global Position System provides your latitude and longitude (location) to within a few feet. You can buy handheld units which will display your position on a map background and allow you to plot and follow routes and store waypoints. These units are incredibly useful for 2 reasons:

1. They help you to navigate back to a safe position if you get lost, or report your exact

position to the rescue services in the event of an emergency.

2. They allow you to store and recall positions where you caught fish – so you can go back to the same point and hopefully catch more fish.

A few things to bear in mind with GPS units:

Battery life: Some units eat batteries – it is worth checking in the technical specification, how long a set of batteries will last when the unit is on and the backlight is on.

Water resistance: Make sure that the GPS is completely waterproof – anything less is a waste of money.

Display: The bigger the display size, the better – but also remember that a large display will use up battery life much more quickly. Also pay attention to the screen resolution of the display – there is no point in having a big display, if it cannot show detail.

Memory: How many waypoints, tracks or routes can be stored on the unit? A lot of newer units have a card slot which allows data be stored and transferred to a PC. Older units will rely on built in internal memory, so check how many waypoints etc can be stored.

Map detail: Many units have the option of displaying maps (either loaded into internal memory or stored on memory cards). For kayak fishing, the most useful maps are the nautical charts. These charts display depth contours and reefs and rocks as well as other useful information. Garmin units use Bluecharts, and Humminbird/Geonav units use Navionics.

Software/interface: Many of the handheld GPS units can be connected to a PC using a USB or serial cable. This is a really useful feature, because it allows navigational data to be transferred between the PC and the GPS unit (via the use of software running on the PC). Sometimes this software comes free with the GPS unit – check before you buy. If not, there is other software out there (much of it free) which allows data to be transferred. Much of the software allows you to view maps and plan routes before you go fishing – this data can be transferred to the GPS unit very simply and quickly. It also allows you to plot your favourite fishing spots using tools such as Google Earth.

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk/amazing-side-imaging-tool-view-your-sonar-images-in-google-earth/>

Cameras

**The most important thing to bear in mind when purchasing a camera for use on the kayak is...
Is the camera completely waterproof and saltwater proof?**

If the answer to this question is “No” – then look for another model ! In reality, there are loads of great cameras on the market which are designed specifically for action water sports. Stick to the following makes and you won’t go far wrong...

- Olympus – mju series.
- Pentax – Optio series.
- Panasonic – Lumix.
- Nikon – A relative newcomer to waterproof action cameras, but a company with a great record for producing quality cameras.

Look for cameras which have a waterproof rating of 10 meters if possible. Price is obviously very important, but again, the action compact camera market is quite competitive, so deals can be had.

Read the online technical reviews, and look for the cameras which come out top for optical/image quality and battery life. There is nothing worse than being on the kayak and catching the fish of a lifetime, only to find that the camera has run out of juice. I like taking self portraits – so I am always looking for cameras with a wide angle lens (at least 28mm) and a decent self timer or waterproof remote control. At the time of writing, the only compact camera which ticks all of those boxes is the Pentax Optio range of waterproof cameras.

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk/review-pentax-optio-w90-and-remote/>

Also check the tripod adaptor – the chances are that you will put it on a tripod at some stage. Some of the threads are made of plastic and don’t last very long. I also like to use the fill in

flash, also known as soft flash or balanced flash. I use this during the day when taking self portraits, it fills in shadows and makes the foreground subject (the fish!) stand out a bit more against the background. And is really useful when the sun is shining from behind the subject (directly into the camera lens) as in the image below.



Video Cameras or Action Cams

The growth of sites such as YouTube and Vimeo show just how popular video is becoming on the web. A picture tells a thousand words, but a video is a lot more interesting!

Although we fish in quite an extreme environment, I have always believed that kayak fishing is an ideal platform for videos. The kayak is a fixed platform with respect to the fisherman, and everything is close at hand – the dynamics make for interesting watching. But there are a few things to watch out for, and getting the wrong camera can be an expensive mistake.

Again, as with most equipment, the top of the list has to be how tough/rugged is the video cam ? It needs to have the following attributes...

- Rugged/tough.
- Waterproof.
- Saltwater proof.

Luckily, as with waterproof cameras, kayak fishermen are spoilt for choice when looking for a decent action cam. The trend is towards high definition (HD) video – in 720 to 1080 resolutions, although if all you are going to do is post on YouTube, then high definition is not essential.

Bear the following in mind if going down the high definition route...

- High definition cameras are more expensive.
- High definition video takes up more space – so you will need bigger memory cards – 16 to 32G cards are standard for this sort of recording.
- Many high definition cameras store their video footage in a format known as MPEG4 or MP4 – this takes up less space on a memory card, but can make it more difficult to edit on a PC (see below).
- Usually, the editing software needed for High Definition footage is more expensive – and MP4 footage may need to be converted before it can be edited (Note : some packages such as Sony's Vegas can edit MP4 natively).
- It takes longer to render (produce) your finished creation in high definition using the video editing software.
- It takes a lot longer to upload a high definition video to YouTube.

Despite all of that – High Definition footage does look great when viewed in full screen mode – I love it!

Be aware that a kayak does present certain issues when it comes to setting up the cam. By that I mean – where and how to position it. Positionally, there are 3 main options...

- **Video cam facing you:** Great to see footage of the fish once aboard (and to see your cheesy grin when you catch that fish of a lifetime). For this view, the cam is usually fixed on the actual kayak itself in front of you. Bear in mind that if the cam does not have a remote control option, then you will have to position it close enough to be able to switch it on and off.



- **Video cam on you:** Fisherman's eye view – the viewers can see what you are seeing if the cam is mounted on a headband. If you are only going to have one viewing angle – then this will probably be it. The downside is that it does not look great when taking self portrait still photos if you have a camera strapped to your noggin! Alternatives are attaching the camera to your PFD or to a chest harness.



The following link shows how simple it is to make a DIY PFD mount for your Go Pro camera...

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk/diy-gopro-pfd-adaptor/>

- **Video cam behind you looking forward:** This is my favourite viewpoint – a video camera mounted above and behind you looking forwards. It captures all of the action. You can see the rods, the kayak and the fish – the only downside (or maybe an advantage with my ugly mug) is that you only see the back of your head.

The following article explains how to make your own pole mounted Go Pro adaptor...

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk/diy-quick-release-bracket-for-gopro-hd-camera/>

In order to achieve these different viewing angles, you will need an assortment of mounting options for your chosen video camera. Check out what mounting options are available before you make your purchase, and remember that the surfaces of most sit-on-top kayaks have small dimples or pits which do not generally agree with self adhesive mounts. Also check how easy/quick it is to mount/detach your camera to the mount – you really don't want to be messing around with fiddly mounts whilst at sea.



Having invested your hard earned cash in a state-of-the-art high definition camera, the last thing you want, is to give it away to Davy Jones' locker. I always leash my cameras – a simple length of thin bungee will do – secure the other end to the kayak. Alternatively, add some foam to the camera to make it float (I still prefer a leash).

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk/diy-go-pro-safety-leash/>



If you plan to fish at night or dawn/dusk, then also check out the low light performance of the cam before you buy (the technical product specification should specify the minimum Lux figure necessary in order for the camera to function).

Sail systems

Using a sail on the kayak is becoming more and more popular. There are several types to choose from.

The Windpaddle type sail has a design a bit like a child's pop-up tent. It folds flat and can be stowed inside a hatch, and is simple to set up and use. It works rather like a spinnaker sail, and is very good at sailing downwind. Great for youngsters and messing around.



Probably the most popular type of kayak sail, is the “V” shaped sail as used by Pacific Action. These sails are much more versatile than the Windpaddle type sails. They are a bit more difficult to stow and set up – but still quite straightforward. They are also a lot easier to sail across the wind. They are designed to spill the wind if you get a sudden gust, but will also zip you along at quite a pace.

Probably one of the most advanced kayak sails is the Kayaksailor. This system uses adjustable lee boards in order to sail upwind. The sail folds down neatly, and can be deployed quite quickly, although it does take longer than the other two systems to attach it to the kayak in the first place. It is very expensive, but it is very clever and efficient.

You can also make your own sailing systems for kayaks – a great way to find out more and much cheaper than buying one.

If you want to find out more about sailing systems for kayaks, then the following site contains some great information...

<http://www.topkayaker.net/Articles/SurfSail/Sail.htm>

6 Kayak Fishing Technique

So, you have bought your new kayak, got all the gear and got yourself trained. Now all you have to do is catch some fish... Easy, right?

Well, if you don't know what you are doing, then it could be a long wait. When you have been fishing for a long time, then you take a lot of things for granted, you have probably built up a lot of knowledge which you are not even aware of. Experience is a big asset when you are faced with a vast expanse of sea or a large lake – where do you start? After a while, that stretch of water can seem barren, and if you don't catch something soon, your confidence can start to waiver.

There are a lot of things you can do to improve your chances of catching some fish. Lets have a look at some of them...

First and foremost – local knowledge. Try to speak to the 'local experts'. Most fishermen are more than willing to 'talk shop' with newcomers and will offer good advice. Try to find out as much as you can about where to go and when. Even better, see if you can get someone to take you out kayak fishing with them and show you the ropes (and hopefully the fishing spots!).

Fish are creatures of habit. Their whereabouts are dictated by many things including...

- **Weather**
- **Tidal size/state**
- **Time of year**
- **Habitat**
- **Food (Bait).**

With so many different variables, it can be difficult to work out where fish are going to be – but as has already been stated, fish are creatures of habit, and if you catch fish in a certain spot, the chances are that you will catch them there again if the variables are the same eg. Tide, weather and time of year.

Many of these things are interlinked, and as you learn more about the fish and their habits, so you will catch more fish, and eventually find your own special fishing spots.

Learning about fish will tell you the sorts of ground they are likely to be found in ie. rocky, sandy, or muddy ground. It will also give you an idea of their location; if they are found close inshore or further out or in shallow estuary creeks

for instance. Learning more about your quarry will also tell you what sorts of bait they feed on ie. worms or fish, and what time of year they are likely to be caught.

Pretty soon, you can see that daunting list of variables has reduced, and your knowledge and chances of catching has increased. With local knowledge and fishing the right spots at the right time – you have answered the “WHERE” and “WHEN” questions. Now you need to answer the “HOW” question...

What sort of fishing methods should you use?

The first thing you will need to decide is do you anchor (stay in one place) or fish on the drift? In the UK where I fish, most of our fishing is done at anchor, but in other countries fishing on the drift is the norm. Very often, fishing for pelagic species which swim in mid water, can be performed on the drift, whereas anchoring can be more productive for fish which feed on the bottom. If the tide is quite strong, this may also dictate that you anchor up (otherwise you will drift away!).

I have deliberately not included advice on how to anchor – as its beyond the scope of a beginners guide. Anchoring in a kayak, is a specialised subject in its own right and can be dangerous. Its always best to seek advice before trying to anchor, but you can read up about the subject and do some homework using this helpful guide on my website...

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk/anchoring-in-the-kayak-ultimate-guide/>

If you do decide to anchor rather than to drift, then there are two methods you can use to fish for bottom feeding fish... downtiding and uptiding.

Uptiding is a method perfected in the UK for fishing fast flowing shallow water. The method uses grip leads which are cast uptide, but it is quite specialised and not normally practised amongst kayak fisherman.

Downtiding is the norm; this is where the sinker is cast downtide from the kayak (the kayak is normally anchored from the stern). The stronger the tide flow, the heavier the sinker needs to be in order for the bait to stay on the sea bed.

Downtiding whilst at anchor in the tide.



Drifting can be a productive method for fishing from the kayak, particularly if large shoals of fish are encountered. The speed of the drift can be controlled using a drogue or sea anchor. This is a device which looks like a small parachute. It can be attached to the kayak from the stern or the bow via a length of cord. It acts like a brake, the drogue opens up like a parachute and slows the drift of the kayak against the wind. Drogues are quite easy to make and come in really useful, especially when it is breezy. Learn how to make your own DIY drogue with the link below...

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk/diy-drogue/>

Now you are almost ready to fish (I promise we are almost there !). What method do you actually use. Well, there are several popular methods...

- **Ledgering.**
- **Float fishing.**
- **Spinning/plugging/trolling**
– all involve move the bait (real or artificial).
- **Fly fishing.**
- **Trolling.**

Ledgering

Ledgering is a method which basically uses a weight or sinker to anchor the bait statically to the bottom of the sea (or river) bed. Usually, you are trying to catch fish which are feeding on or near the bottom. Hooks can either be tied to traces (line) above the sinker (this is known as a paternoster) or below the sinker – the running ledger is probably the most popular example of this. With a running ledger rig, the sinker is free to run along the mainline using a clip such as a zip clip...



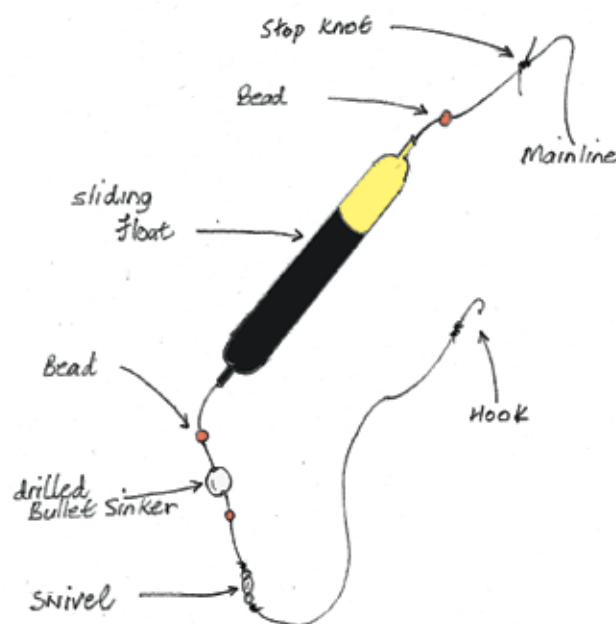
Below the zip clip, the main line is connected to a swivel which is tied to a length of line ending in a hook or hooks.

The running ledger is a simple rig to make and is very effective when duntiding.

Float Fishing

There is something very satisfying about watching a float bobbing away and (hopefully!) disappearing as a fish takes your bait. I love float fishing, and at times, it can be a very subtle and rewarding method to use. The float can either be fixed so that it does not move (usually only if you are float fishing in very shallow water). But the most

versatile method is to use a sliding float. This allows the bait to be fished at any depth using a moveable stop knot.



It is quite difficult to set up a sliding float rig – things have to be done in the correct order and before you do anything, you need to select the correct weight for the size of float you are using. Too heavy and it will sink the float, not heavy enough, and the float will not cock properly and will lie flat on the surface of the water.

The order in which you set up the sliding float rig (once you have the correct weight for the float) is...

- 1 Slide a bead up the mainline.
- 2 Slide the mainline through the inside of the float.
- 3 Slide another bead up the mainline.
- 4 Slide the weight on the mainline.
- 5 Slide another bead on the mainline.
- 6 Tie a swivel to the end of the mainline.
- 7 Tie a length (3 feet) of weaker line to the swivel.
- 8 Tie a hook to the end of the weaker line.
- 9 Tie a stop knot on the main line above the float. The position of the stop knot determines the depth at which the bait will fish.

Live baits such as prawns and sandeels can easily be fished using a float to suspend them in the water. Float fishing is a great method to use over really rough ground. If you were ledgering over such ground, then you would lose a lot of gear, but with float fishing, you can set the float to fish your bait just above any snags – and hopefully where the fish are lying in wait!

Spinning

Spinning covers a multitude of techniques, all of which involve casting and retrieving the bait. The bait can be real or artificial, but it is kept on the move by constantly reeling in.

Various artificial baits can be used. These include...

- **Spoons.**
- **Spinners.**
- **Plugs** (crankbaits).
- **Softbaits** – latex lures – shads etc.
- **Artificial eels.**



Don't be fooled into thinking that spinning is a lazy fisherman's method. There is a lot of skill and know-how involved with spinning. In order to get the most out of the method, you really need to think about a lot of things.

The type of fish you are after – and the type of prey they will be feeding on, should be uppermost in your mind. Try to match your artificial to the prey that fish will be looking for – in fly fishing this is called “matching the hatch”. When selecting an artificial think about the following...

- **The size and colour of the artificial:** Try to match this to the baitfish which the fish are feeding on or expecting to see.
- **The weight:** Heavier lures cast further which can be useful in strong wind, they also sink a lot faster – which can be good if the fish are feeding in deep water. But also remember that if the water is shallow, then a heavy lure is more likely to become snagged.

- **The action of the artificial:** One of the most important considerations when selecting a lure. Some artificial lures have great actions when they are retrieved, they wriggle and dive, and spit and pop in the water – it is easy to understand why fish find them so irresistible. Sometimes, the angler has to impart the action to a lure in order to induce a take from a fish. This can be done by flicking the rod tip or reeling at different speeds whilst retrieving the lure.

Real baits such as dead sandeels can also be used for spinning. At times, this method can be deadly, it combines the action of an artificial with the look and smell of the real thing.

Whether you use real or artificial baits, spinning can be one of the most exciting methods to use. It's great for youngsters, because it requires them to be a bit more active, constantly casting and retrieving. And there is nothing better than seeing the bow wave of a large fish appearing behind the lure as you are reeling in, before you get that explosive take!

Trolling

Trolling is a method which relies on a bait (live or dead) being towed behind a moving boat (or kayak!). This method is not widely practised in the UK, but in many countries, it is really popular, especially for big game fish.

Fly fishing

Fly fishing from a kayak is becoming ever more popular. Also known as 'Flyaking', the method allows the fisherman to get very close to the fish. Fish do not seem to be easily spooked by a kayak. Most kayak fishermen will tell you that they often see fish swimming around and under the kayak. This is probably because of the lack of engine on a kayak, and also because the kayak and fisherman cast a low profile, because they are seated.

I love Flyaking, its great fun, subtle, exciting and it can be frustrating. There are a few things to remember when fly fishing from the kayak...

Clutter: Avoid clutter on the decks of a kayak when fly fishing. Sods law says that if there is any kind of snag on the deck of a kayak, then your fly line will find it!

Rod holders: You will probably need a special type of rod holder for a fly rod and reel. They are easy to construct yourself using a section of PVC drain pipe, and they fit into most kayak flush mounted rod holders. The link below shows how to make a simple and cheap fly rod holder.

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk/diy-fly-rod-holder/>



Fly casting: It is definitely worth investing in some coaching to learn how to cast a fly line. Fly casting from a kayak is more difficult because you are sitting down (at least that is how we do it in the UK, in the States, things are a bit different!).

Drifting: If you are trying to fly fish whilst drifting in the kayak, you often find that the kayak drifts too fast and you almost overtake your flies before they have had a chance to sink! The solution is to slow the drift down using a device called a drogue or sea anchor. A drogue is bit like a parachute or bag. It is attached to one end of a line – the other end is attached to the kayak's anchor trolley. When it is thrown into the water, the drogue opens up, and acts as a brake, slowing down the drift of the kayak (a bit like the parachutes you used to see on jet fighters when they landed). Different sized drogues can be used to adjust the speed of the drift. Bigger drogues will slow the kayak down almost to a complete standstill. Drogues can be purchased, but they can also be made quite easily, the following link explains how to make your own drogue...

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk/diy-drogue/>

Tackle for Flyaking: You don't need specialist tackle to fly fish from a kayak – an ordinary fly fishing outfit will suffice. Do bear in mind, that if you are going to try saltwater fly fishing, then you should use tackle designed for the job which will not rust. Either way, it is not worth spending a fortune on fly fishing equipment for the kayak. The chances are that sooner or later, your precious Sage or Loomis is going to get a proper dunking. My suggestion would be to get a 9.5 foot, 7 or 8 weight rod and a cheap cassette reel. Buy a couple of weight forward fly lines – depending on the sort of fishing you are likely to do – either a floating line and a sinker, or an intermediate and a fast sinker. I would also strongly recommend a small folding net (I use a Diawa Wilderness net which is ideal). The article below will give you a taste of what to expect...

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk/fly-fishing-from-a-kayak/>

Don't leave home without it...

Checklists

Print these checklists and tick them off quickly before you go...

Safety Equipment Checklist: Do not go afloat before checking this...

Equipment	Location	Check	Tick (✓)
PFD	on you !	Buckles/straps are sound	
Compass	Kayak	Away from electronics	
GPS	PFD/Kayak	Fully charged battery	
VHF radio	PFD	Fully charged battery	
Flares	PFD	Not out of date	
Mobile phone	PFD	Charged & coastguard number in memory	
Whistle	PFD		
Knife	PFD	Check blade/sheathed	
Waterproof Torch/Strobe	PFD	Fresh batteries	
Drogue/anchor	Kayak		

Safety checklist: Before venturing out...

Check	Detail	Tick (✓)
Weather forecast	Do this on-line and on radio - check multiple forecasts	
Phone/VHF coastguard	Lodge your paddle plan with them and check conditions	
Inform	Tell someone where you are going and when you are expected back	

Numpy Checklist: Minimum to get afloat

You should always remember the safety list, but at one time or another I have forgotten each of the following items. If you can remember all of the items on the list, then you should at least be able to get afloat and fish...

Item	Detail	Tick (✓)
Anchor	SMB & reel	
Boots/footwear		
Dry suit/wetsuit/PFD		
Kayak seat		
Kayak trolley		
Paddle and leash		
Rods and reels		
Tackle - sinkers, hooks, line	Sinkers, hooks, line, swivels	
Bait		
Food and Drink		
Waterproof bag for car keys/Grab bag		

8 Kayak Fishing Resources

My Site:

<http://dizzybigfish.co.uk>

UK sites:

<http://www.anglersafloat.co.uk/>

<http://swka.org.uk/>

<http://www.northwaleskayakfishing.co.uk/>

<http://www.whitbyseaanglers.co.uk/>

The Trident Ultra 4.3 Fishing Kayak has a performance hull designed in conjunction with a top America's Cup engineer specializing in fluid dynamics

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Bungee for storage of equipment on deck

Transducer scupper hole designed to take a range of fish finder brands



Well proportioned deck area and foot well with fast draining deck

Multi-functional reversible hatch cover which rotates to store and protect fish finder and has mountings for accessories

Two forward facing flush mounted rod holders

Optional rod storage tube

Built-in carry handles

Bespoke seating system with built-in thick foam base and four position seat back

Built-in paddle keepers

Four rear rod holders

Nav light safety flag mount



5" hatch gives access under seat area for battery storage in boat's centre of gravity

Large tank well to take optional accessories such as the Ice Box Storage Pod



Solid built-in lifting handles

Optional rudder system with moulded-in insert points



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Chris from Canoe Shops Group Bass Fishing



Bob from Canoe Shops Group Pollack Fishing



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