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How to set up a slip bobber rig for catfish

The slip bobber rig is a staple catfish rig for many anglers for a variety of different species of catfish. They're especially popular for those who target channel catfish. Slip bobbers can be effective for blue catfish and flathead catfish also in some applications but for channel catfish, they're the "go-to" catfish rig for many anglers. I've used slip bobbers extensively off and on over my career as a catfish guide but I rely on the Secret Catfish Rig almost exclusively for channel catfish. The increased sensitivity helps my clients catch more fish and it outperforms slip bobbers every time. You need to know how to rig and fish with a slip bobber if you're going to fish for channel catfish. You might also find situations when fishing for blues and flatheads where you'll want to fish with slip bobbers as well. They're a very flexible and effective tool to have in your catfishing gear. The Slip Bobber Advantage For Catfish When you think of fishing with bobbers you may think of someone fishing lazily on the side of the shore with one of those big red and white plastic bobbers that clips on your fishing line, similar to the traditional bobber rig. The slip bobber rig is very different from traditional round fishing floats that are fixed on the line: They're traditionally much more sensitive than the traditional round fixed bobbers. They're usually much easier to cast. The depth is adjustable regardless of how shallow or deep you're fishing. They're the only bobber that can be easily used in deep water. Choosing The Right Slip Bobbers There are many options available when it comes to slip bobbers. I've used just about every style over the years and the keys to choosing the best slip bobbers are simple. I've paid as little as a couple of dollars (or less) for slip bobbers and as much as ten dollars each. My experience has always been that the worst performing and least sensitive slip bobbers are usually the more expensive models. The cheaper slip bobbers typically outperform all others for channel catfish and are usually much more sensitive as well. You're looking for a few key features when choosing slip bobbers: They need to be light They need to be streamlined They need to be inexpensive They need to be sensitive I've found the Comal Tackle Slip Stick float to be the top-performing slip bobber for catching channel catfish. Not only does it work better than anything else I've used but it's the cheapest option I've found as well. The Comal Tackle Slip Stick Float typically costs around fifty cents each and they're readily available in most sporting goods stores and fishing tackle shops. They're available in both 2" and 3" options (both sizes work fine). In the absence of fishing with the Secret Channel Catfish Rig I'd suggest picking up a big bag of the Comal Tackle Slip Stick Floats for targeting channel catfish with prepared baits. Items Needed To Rig The Slip Bobber Rig Here's what you need to get started rigging and fishing with this rig. Comal Tackle 2" Slip Stick float or your preferred slip bobbers Bobber Stops and Beads Split Shot Sinkers Preferred catfish hooks. For channel catfish use a size #6, 4x strong treble hook. You can get more information on the tackle and gear used in The Ultimate Guide To Catfishing Gear. If you plan on using slip bobbers and finesse fishing catfishing techniques you should also check out our guides on catfish rods and reels also to make sure you have the right tools for the job and they're set up correctly. Bobber Stops - The Critical Device Bobber stops are critical when it comes to the slip bobber rig and fishing with slip bobbers. They're also typically the piece of tackle that confuses everyone the most. The bobber stop slides on the fishing line before the float or any tackle and then the small bead follows. The bobber stop and bead are what sets the depth of the float and allows you to adjust how deep you're fishing. The bobber stop can be reeled onto the fishing reel so you can fish the slip bobber rig as deep or as shallow as you need. My experience has always been that traditional bobber stops like these traditionally outperform the new style bobber stops. How to Rig The Slip Bobber Rig Rigging the slip bobber rig is very simple. Slide the bobber stop on the fishing line. Slide the fishing line through the plastic tube of the bobber stop and then carefully slide the bobber stop off the plastic tube. Slowly pull the two strings so the knot tightens and cut the excess line from the strings with a pair of scissors. Slide the bead (included with the bobber stops) onto the fishing line. Slide the slip bobber onto the fishing line. Attach your preferred catfish hook to the fishing line using a Palomar knot. Add a split shot sinker 2-3 inches above your hook. The amount of weight you'll use will vary depending on the type of slip bobber you use. You only need to use enough weight to make float stand up in the water, adding too much weight will cause problems. Once you've finished the slip bobber rig adjust the location of the bobber stop on the fishing line based on how deep you'll be fishing. Simply slide the bobber stop up or down the fishing line. The bobber stop will have little impact on casting and it can be reeled onto your fishing reel so you can fish the slip bobber rig as deep or as shallow as you'd like. If you're targeting channel catfish load your hook up with some good prepared catfish bait (like punch bait) or your preferred catfish bait (just make sure it's one of the good ones)and start catching fish. For an even better option for targeting channel catfish with prepared baits check out the Secret Channel Catfish Rig. Many anglers report catching as much as 500 to 600 percent more channel catfish using this rig. If you're putting your baits in the right area it's easy to catch 100 fish or more in a few hours. Want More On Catfish Rigs? Check out all of our tutorials on catfish rigs covering everything you need to know and more. You'll learn the essentials of rigging for different species of catfish and different catfishing techniques here on the catfishing rigs page. Punch baits are very popular baits for catching catfish and are very effective for catching channel catfish and an occasional blue catfish as well. Regardless of what species of catfish you plan to fish for, chances are you have heard of punch baits. One very popular way of fishing for catfish with these types of baits is to use a slip bobber rig. There are many different catfish rigs you can use for catching channel catfish but the slip bobber rig is without a doubt one of the preferred setups among catfish anglers. Slip bobber rigs offer a high degree of sensitivity and also allow the angler to have a visual bite indicator. Channel catfish often have a very subtle bite so the combination of these two elements makes the slip bobber rig a very effective way of setting up for catfish fishing. In this video from Learn To Catch Catfish we walk you through the process of rigging a slip bobber for catfish fishing with punch baits and also some of the advantages of using slip corks for catfishing. With all of that being said, the basic concept of your typical slip bobber is to slide a bobber stop on your line, followed by a bead and the slip bobber. After that, slide a sinker that will hold your bait down, slide on another bead and tie on a barrel swivel. Tie your leader on next and attach a hook to the end. Slide the hook through the back of a big, lively baitfish and you have an offering that will call catfish in from a long, long ways. The bigger the bait, the bigger the float you need. If you don't want to make your own, most tackle stores in catfish country carry bobbers sized for all but the biggest baits. As always, there is more than one way to skin a cat(fish). One problem I've ran into, and maybe a few of you have too, is while shore fishing. Sure, if you're in a boat, all you have to do is rig up a basic slip float rig like described above, and toss it out the back of the boat. If you're fishing on the bank of a river and try to do that, the current is going to push your bait on shore. This is where the Float Paternoster Rig shines. Sure it sounds fancy, but its actually quite simple. Instead of setting your sinker above your bait, you set it below the bait. There are a variety of ways to accomplish this. The easiest is to take a regular slip float rig that has already been discussed, put on a heavier sinker, and set the bobber stop so your bait is setting on the bottom. The bobber tugs on the bait constantly, causing it to struggle more and call in more catfish. The heavier sinker keeps the bait in the spot you want. If you want your bait off the bottom, there are other options. The traditional bobber rig is probably one of the most well known fishing rigs but it's often overlooked when it comes to rigging for catfish. For many people the traditional bobber rig is the fishing rig that they think of when they start to think of rigging a fishing rod. Images of a lazy stream or river with a large red and white plastic bobber and a big bucket of worms come to mind for many anglers. An experienced angler has an entirely different view of the traditional bobber rig and it shouldn't be discounted as a "beginners" or "basic" fishing rig as it can be deadly when it comes to catching catfish in some scenarios. Most catfish anglers are aware of the effectiveness of slip bobbers or slip bobber rigs. They're much better adapted for many catfishing techniques, much more versatile and also easier to fish with. If you don't need a bobber or float you're likely to find other catfish rigs like the Santee Cooper rig or slip sinker rig more effective but there's are certainly instances where a bobber is the best option and even times where the traditional bobber rig will outperform all others. Why Use The Traditional Bobber Rig The slip bobber has an advantage of being easily adjustable. You can quickly and easily adjust the depth you're fishing by moving the bobber stop. They also have the benefit of working in really deep water since the bobber stop can be rolled up on the fishing line within the reel. There's situations though that having a larger more bulky float is desired and that's where the traditional bobber rig is used. Anytime you need to fish shallower depths less than a few feet and also need the added benefit of a larger bulkier float that makes a good "splash" when it hits the water. It's common knowledge that catfish feed by smell but they feed by sight and sound also, that's one of the top catfishing tips we pass along to others. There's instances where a big load splash of a round weighted foam float can actually help you catch more fish because it allows the catfish to hone in on the sight and sound of the food they're feeding on. Often times, in the right area, making a loud "plop" on the water will draw the fish in to strike. There's countless examples of this but cormorant catfishing is probably the best. When catfishing with these techniques the sound of the float hitting the water helps draw in fish and gets them to strike. Using a streamlined float that doesn't make a good "splash" in the water would actually work against you so the traditional bobber rig is preferred. Items Need For The Traditional Bobber Rig Weighted Round Foam Float: I like to pass the traditional red and white plastic floats though and use a weighted round foam float. The weighted round foam floats are significantly more durable than the traditional plastic bobbers. The added weight makes them much easier to cast and allow for much longer and more accurate casts as well. Split Shot Sinkers Make sure you have a good selection of small split shot sinkers for this rig. You don't have to add much weight but you'll need to add a small weight a few inches above the hook to help with casting, eliminating tangles also. Preferred Hook: This rig can be used with any of your preferred catfishing hooks. For my suggestions check out the Ultimate Guide To Catfishing Gear. When fishing with the traditional bobber rig I'm typically using "punch bait" a form of prepared bait or "stink bait" so my preferred hook is a Size #4 or Size #6 4X Strong Treble Hook, Barrel Swivel. Your preferred barrel swivel, ball bearing swivel or crane swivel will work with this rig. I generally use a #6 barrel swivel or a #4 ball bearing swivel. Leader Line: You'll need a short piece of clear monofilament or fluorocarbon leader line in forty to fifty pound test. This helps with additional abrasion resistance and helps serve as a "shock absorber" when larger catfish strike. Rigging The Traditional Bobber Rig For Catfish This catfish rig is about as simple as it gets. Cut a piece of leader line about twelve inches long. Attach your preferred catfish hook to one end of the leader line and a swivel to the opposite end using a Palomar knot. The open end of the barrel swivel is then attached to the main line using a trilene knot. Affix a split shot weight to the leader line 2 to 3 inches above the hook. Attach the weighted round foam float to the main line, adjusting the float based on where you want your bait to be in the water column. This can range anywhere from ten to twelve inches all the way to a few feet. The fishing knots used in this and all of the other catfish rigs are covered here. Fishing With The Traditional Bobber Rig The disadvantage of this rig is you're limited to how deep you can fish. If you needed to fish with a traditional bobber in deep water you wouldn't be able to retrieve the fishing line on your reel beyond the float. This rig is ideal for water that's is a few feet deep or less or when you want to keep your catfish baits in the upper portion of the water column in deeper water. This is best suited for anchored fishing or finesse fishing and can be used for blue, channel and flathead catfish if desired. Due to the fixed nature of the rig the applications are limited but if you find yourself needing to make a "splash" to get a strike the traditional bobber rig is often your best choice. Want More To get more in depth details on how I use the traditional bobber rig to load the boat with blue catfish and even catch trophy class blue catfish as well check out the Splat Fishing Techniques book, one of the Catfish Edge products. Check out all of our tutorials on catfish rigs covering everything you need to know and more. You'll learn the essentials of rigging for different species of catfish and different catfishing techniques here at the catfish rigs page.

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