

Lake Trout Techniques for Open Water Trolling

If you troll the open waters of Michigan's Great Lakes you have no doubt caught Lake Trout. They can be found near shore in spring and fall or miles off shore during the summer. Sometimes you catch them fishing near the surface while targeting steelhead, or often near the bottom on drop-offs and structure. For many of us Lake Trout are often an incidental catch while fishing for other species. The purpose of this article is to help anglers target these fish with some proven techniques and advise the pro's use.

Rigs: Start with a small dodger (6 inch, metal) or flasher (8 inch, plastic) in a variety of colors or patterns. Behind the dodger attach an 18 to 24 inch leader using 30 pound to 40 pound monofilament or fluorocarbon line. Add a small bead followed by medium to large Spin & Glow, add one or two more beads, and last tie on an 1/0 treble hook. (see examples)



Experiment with color patterns and size to determine combinations that work in your area under various conditions. Lake Trout are known to be aggressive feeders and tend to be attracted to bright or even gaudy combinations so you can have fun designing these rigs.



Trolling Techniques: Once you have some rigs to try you will find they can be fished with most of your traditional trolling gear including downriggers, divers, lead-core or copper line set ups. Off the downrigger run your rig about 20 to 25 feet behind the ball. Lower the ball until it hits bottom and bring it up only two or three feet. You want your presentation close to the bottom and even occasionally bumping the bottom. Do not run this on your probe downrigger in case you hang it up on the bottom.

For use with diver rods, begin with the large size divers designed to go deep and attach your dodger rig behind the diver. Set the diver on #2 and let line out until you see the diver begin to gently tick bottom. Once that is achieved place the rod in the holder. Lead-core and copper line rods can be used if there long enough. Ten color lead-core can be used in 50 to 60 foot of water and 300 foot copper line rods can be used in 80 to 100 foot of water.

The key with all types of gear is to keep the bait near the bottom where trout are found. All of these techniques require monitoring and adjusting the gear to make sure it's near bottom but not continuously digging bottom. This will foul the bait with algae and mussels resulting in no bites.

Target Areas: Deciding where to fish will be determined somewhat by the time of year and the water temperature. In general from May through September the best depths will be from 60 to 100 foot of water. Areas known for structure or pronounced drop-offs are good spots to try as Lake Trout will use structure.

Speed: Controlling your speed is important with these techniques. Lake Trout prefer slow presentations from 1.7 to 2.0 mph. Trolling or drift socks or a trolling plate can help achieve this.

Now you're ready to target and catch Lake Trout with this basic information. For more information and examples of things to try simply search this topic on the internet. A plethora of information is available along with current fishing reports from some of the most productive locations found around Michigan's Great Lakes!



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