

Musky Fishing Tips-by Doug Bournique  
these were first published in 1954.  
Doug was the founder of the Wis. Musky  
Club. These were sent to us by  
Larry Stolz.. Many of the ideas within  
are still up to the minute in 1979.  
Read and enjoy.....

### MUSKIE FISHING TIPS

1. Don't be in such a big hurry. When you come to a good-looking spot, spend some time there, making at least half a dozen casts in that area.
2. Sometimes long casts pay off, but generally speaking, it is the short cast, well placed, which gets the fish. Almost all of the muskies I have lost on the strike have been far from the boat.
3. When the muskie strikes, set the hook hard...not once, but 3 or 4 times. Once a Muskie has the bait in his mouth, it is very difficult to move it...once a Muskie knows he doesn't want the bait and starts relaxing the pressure on his jaws, that is the time to drive the hook home.
4. Make sure your hooks are sharp. Good fishermen sharpen them every day and may mean the difference between success and failure. Carry a file or hook home in your tackle box.
5. At the end of a day's casting, always cut off the last two or three feet of line. That part directly above the leader takes the greatest strain. At the end of the season always reverse your line on the reel or buy a new one. Don't forget, your tackle is only as strong as your line.
6. Try casting from the shore out. Work your boat up next to shore and then pole along while standing up. You can see much better that way and you will be able to pick your spots better. Always keep looking ahead for a big fish may be lying in shallow water. Besides, all minnows, frogs, and any animal that falls in the water will swim for shore...a big fish knows this and will make a greater effort to catch it.
7. I do not believe in making noise while fishing even for Muskie. Some fishermen like to roar around with their motor wide open over a good Muskie hole....that is against all the precepts of good fishing sense. The quieter you are the better.
8. Try working your baits in different ways. Try fast retrieves, slow retrieves, and jerky ones. Sometimes let the bait (surface) sit right where it has been cast for about a minute. Then start it coming for the boat in a hurry. Every bait was designed and built to be fished a certain way. Action is what counts, and the more you can make it look alive the better.

9. If a Muskie follows your bait there are three things you can do.
  - a. Work it right up to the side of the boat at a constant speed then swish it along the side of the boat in a figure "eight". Sometimes this induces the Muskie to strike. However, I recommend it only for the experienced fishermen.
  - b. If you have a friend or guide on the oars and you see the fish in time, have him row out into the lake at a pace equal to that of your retrieve. I have known of a Muskie which struck after the boat had gone a quarter of a mile.
  - c. The third and best, at least for me, is to stop the bait about ten feet from the boat....just for a fraction of a second...then start reeling furiously. This induces the Muskie to dash for the bait as he thinks it is getting away. You must be ready for the strike.
10. Once a Muskie is hooked...Don't try and horse him in. Some fishermen get buck fever and tighten up on the reel.....Just keep a tight line....snug might be a better word....when he wants to run...let him go...The deeper he gets under the boat the lower your rod should be, the further away from the boat, the higher your rod should be. Do not, under any circumstance rest your rod on the gunwhale of the boat.
11. Frankly, fishermen who keep their rods under water to prevent a fish from jumping, are about as far away from being sportsmen as you can get. You should hope that the fish does jump... that is the fun of fishing.
12. Always carry at least a 31" rule in the boat. Don't keep just the 30 inches....you won't really be satisfied with your catch.
13. The most dangerous time of all and the one time you will need all your wits about you, is when you are about to land the fish. There are 6 ways.
  - a. Beaching
  - b. Netting
  - c. Shooting
  - d. Clubbing
  - e. Gaffing
  - f. Lift in to boat with hands (only for experienced fishermen)

The most important thing is to play the fish out....until he is on his side....then you have given him every chance to win his freedom and you have exercised your ability as his master.

I wonder how many fishermen take pride in telling you that they landed a particular fish in less than five minutes. It was either a sick fish or they horsed him in, afraid that they didn't have the ability to fight him as an angler and sportsman.

My recommendation for landing a large Muskie, is to beach him if at all possible. We beached seven muskies, all over 25 pounds in Canada, and did not lose a one: Always net a small one, if you are not sure it's legal.

13. (cont'd)

If you have played a Muskie out, then it is a simple matter to bring it along side and tap it on the head...just above the eyes. Do this with vigor and he will stiffen out. Then place your thumb and forefinger in his eyes and lift into boat. After he is in the boat hit him again. A Muskie, thrashing around in the boat can make quite a fuss and break equipment.

Gaffing a Muskie should be done right or not at all. In New York State they do not allow a gun or gaff in the boat. The Muskie should be brought to the gaff, not the gaff to the Muskie. It should be held down into the water, point up, and the Muskie's jaw then brought over the point. The upward thrust of the gaff should be quick and decisive...driving the point through both jaws if possible, and the fish brought into the boat, all in one motion. Indiscriminate gaffing of fish is criminal and many fine Muskies have been lost and killed by slashing at the sides of the fish in hopes of hooking him.

Shooting a Muskie is only for those who are desperate, or who do not know or are afraid to land him any other way. Guns should be restricted to hunting, a loaded pistol in a boat, an excited fisherman, a tippy boat, are all ingredients for disaster.

14. Once you have chosen the bait you want to use...close and snap shut your tackle box. If you tip over, you won't lose your baits and may be able to retrieve everything intact. Also, if you get a thrashing fish in the boat, you will want all loose hooks out of the way.

15. Once a Muskie is in the boat, the fishermen must disengage the hooks. This can be dangerous. If you are going to keep the Muskie, make sure he is stunned or dead. Then use a pliers, or fishermen's long-nosed pliers to get the hooks out. If, however, the fish is undersize, then I suggest you hold the Muskie's head with one hand and clamp the body of the fish between your knees and don't let up on the pressure. They have a surprising amount of strength.

Possibly a better way is get down on your knees in the boat, again holding the Muskie firmly clamped between your knees and with one hand on his head, take your pliers and gently remove the hooks....Don't tear them out.

16. Once you arrive at a lake you don't know too well, either ask where the weed beds are, if there is somebody around, or spend 30 minutes looking things over. First, you can be fairly certain that there will be deep water if bluffs lead up directly from the lake; however, if there is a swamp, marsh or low ground leading away from the shore, then you know that there will be shallow water off that shore. Fish around logs and in the mouths of rivers or streams....fish both sides of a point and around weed beds. You can waste a lot of time fishing where they "ain't". If the day is sunny, carefully stand up and look down in the water. Frequently, you can see weed beds you might otherwise have passed over.

17. My recommendations for Muskie tackle are as follows:

ROD: Bamboo or glass..medium to stiff action..take one of each and use the heavier plugs on the heavier rod.

LINE: I buy not less than 18# test and not more than 30. 24# test is a good all around line.

REEL: I like one that will hold 100 yards of 18# test. \$10 is about the minimum you should pay for a decent reel. Be sure it will seat itself firmly on your rod. Then oil it every day you use it.

BAITS: My favorites are: Mud Puppy, Suick Thriller, Jointed Pike (perch finish), Bucktail Spinner in black or brown, red, yellow color combinations.

18. Except on occasion, start the bait back the instant or just before it hits the water.

19. I prefer windy, cloudy days with the wind from the Northwest, and, as in all fishing, a rising barometer is choice.

20. Above all, be alert all the time, a Muskie will strike when you least expect it...get off the lake if you see a storm accompanied by lightning, be considerate of your fellow fishermen, and fish for sport, not for meat.