

Drop Shotting for Largemouth Bass

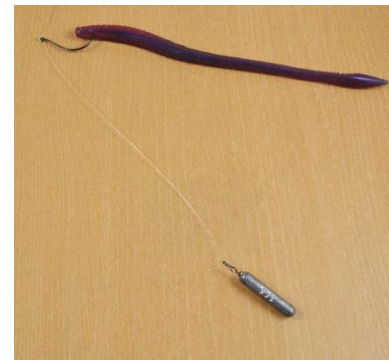
... My New Favorite Technique ...

If you have never fished for largemouth bass using the Drop Shot technique, then you are missing out on one of the most effective ways to put bass in the boat. The more I throw it, the bigger fan of the Drop Shot technique I become. Drop Shotting flat out catches bass. This isn't news to many of you. But it might be news to some. I always have a Drop Shot rod rigged and ready to go every time I go out. And it is usually the first one I grab.

For years, Drop Shotting was largely considered a technique reserved for suspended fish in deep holes. Or a finesse technique for inactive fish. While the Drop Shot is certainly effective for fish holding in deeper water, it also shines in shallower water. And you don't have to fish it slowly either. Let's talk about all the reasons you should have a Drop Shot set-up in your boat at all times.

What is the Drop Shot technique?

The Drop Shot technique refers to a set-up that positions [the hook](#) above [the weight](#), allowing your plastic lure to sit up off the bottom. The distance the hook sits above the weight depends on how far you want your bait to work off the bottom. Generally, a distance of 6" to about 18" is used by most anglers, but you can change that as your situation requires. Use a length that gets your bait out of the weeds and into the direct line of sight of the fish you are targeting.



Why is the Drop Shot so effective?

There are probably many reasons that contribute to the success of the Drop Shot when fishing for bass. But I am going to highlight what I think are the 3 most compelling reasons. The first reason is that the Drop Shot set up positions your bait in the strike zone pretty much 100% of the time. The rig is designed to keep your bait just off the bottom and right in the fish's face. This gets you more strikes. Second, the action of your lure is improved by not being incumbered by a weight attached or adjacent to it (unlike a jig or a Texas rig, for example). Your offering is able to swim, twitch, fall, and rise freely and more naturally, like it was intended to do. Thirdly, if those two reasons alone aren't enough to sway you, then consider that the hook-up percentage with the Drop Shot is very high. You hook and land most of the fish that hit your lure. Baits are generally on the smaller size (3" to 5"), so bass engulf them and swim off, making the hook set a piece of cake.

When should I throw a Drop Shot?

There is rarely a bad time to throw a Drop Shot. It will be easier to list the few situations a Drop Shot might not be ideal. I avoid using the Drop Shot around docks, as the trailing length of line going to the sinker can easily get tangled around posts and supports, possibly costing you a fish. It is also not a good set up for extremely weedy locations. But absolutely use it in and around sparse weeds and on weed edges. It is far more weedless than you might think. It is probably not your best option for very shallow water (< 2') although I have caught fish with it in 1 foot of water. However, a Drop Shot should be considered as an effective presentation in many situations.

Working your Drop Shot.

The Drop Shot was originally conceived to be fished slowly. But it is also deadly when fished with a faster cadence. I have developed a retrieve that I call "hopping". It has been absolutely the most effective bass technique for me over the last 2 summers. I cast it out and let it sink to the bottom on a slack line. I get a lot of hits on that initial fall, so watch your line for twitches as your bait sinks. Once the sinker hits bottom, I wait a couple of seconds, then shake the tip of the rod while the line is still slack. This imparts far more action in your lure than you might imagine. Then I begin "hopping" the lure back to the boat. I use a "Hop-Hop-Pause" sequence. By "hop" I mean hopping the sinker up off the the bottom. Some days you need to pause longer than other days. Or some days your hops need to be more vigorous. Let the fish dictate your retrieve cadence. For whatever reason this retrieve technique proves irresistible to bass.

How you set the Hook matters!

When fishing a flipping jig and you get a bite, you have really lean into it to set the hook. Not so with a Drop Shot rig. The most important detail when setting the hook in a Drop Shot set up is to first make contact with the fish. When a bass takes your bait, they often swim toward you or to the side, so when you get a bite, reel in and lower your rod tip until you have direct, positive contact with the fish (meaning that your line doesn't have any slack or bows in it). Once you have "found" the fish and can feel its weight, lift your rod in a controlled, firm way while continuing to reel in. Keep reeling and that will keep your line taught and the fish securely hooked. The hook will easily penetrate, and you won't have torn a large hole in the fish's mouth which could allow fish to throw it. Practice this controlled hook set and you will boat many more fish! Over-zealous hooksets will lead to lost fish.

How to set up a Drop Shot rod.

Rigging a Drop Shot is straightforward. I use a 7" mod-fast action rod with a 2500 series spinning reel. If you are fishing with braid as your main line, you will need a fluorocarbon (or Co-Polymer) leader. I recommend a relatively long leader length, about 4 to 6 feet in length. See knots section below for best knots to use. Once your leader is on, you are ready to add your hook and weight. Tie on your [Drop Shot Hook](#) leaving a tag end long enough to run down to your [Drop Shot Weight](#). There are several knots that can be used to tie on your hook and the jury is still out for me as to which one is best. They have all failed me at one point or another and all seem to have their pros and cons. I'm still searching for that perfect Drop Shot hook knot. Finally, attach your [Drop Shot Weight](#) to the



bottom of the tag line, adjusting the distance from your hook to your liking. I usually place my weight about 12" down from the hook to start with, occasionally going to as short as 6" and as long as 18". Remember that the bigger the gap, the harder the rig is to cast effectively.

Hooks, Weights and Line for Drop Shotting.

I use braid as my main line (PowerPro 30lb to 40lb) and Fluorocarbon as my leader line (Seaguar 12lb to 14lb). I stay away from the lighter tests as I have little patience for fish breaking off. If I am fishing highly pressured fish or gin-clear water, I might be forced to downside leader test. But if the fish are biting with my current set up, why tempt fate with ultra-light line? Losing a big fish can haunt you for days! As for [Drop Shot Hooks](#), there is a wide variety to choose from. Some anglers prefer a [worm hook](#) and rig the bait Texas style. If you are fishing very heavy cover, this could be advantageous as it is the most weedless set up. But in my opinion, Texas rigging affects the baits action, nullifying the biggest asset of the Drop Shot set up – the natural presentation. I prefer nose hooking with a Drop Shot Hook, and hiding the point in the bait to reduce line twist and to make it a little more weedless. I use hook sizes #1 up to about a #2/0 mostly. Match the hook size with the bait size you are using. My favorite hook style is the [Gamakatsu 504](#), but there are many options, and they all work well. As for weights, I strongly recommend the sleek pencil style weights that don't get hung up very often (amazingly) like the wider weights do. Choose [tungsten](#) for better sensibility or [lead](#) for cost savings. Both work and the bass sure don't care. Go with the lightest weight you can get by with. I usually start with a 1/4oz or 3/16oz size.



Best Plastic Baits for Drop Shotting.

There are literally dozens, if not 100's of Drop Shot plastic lures on the market. How to choose from such a large variety? My suggestion is to purchase about half a dozen of the ones that look the most interesting to you and start experimenting with them. You will soon find colors, sizes and body styles that prove effective in your local waters. For starters, look for neutrally buoyant baits. Floating baits can be effective too. Slow-sinking baits will work if you are fishing the rig fast. If I had to pick my 5 top baits, these are the five I would go with: [The Big D Darter from LurePartsOnline](#), KVD's Dream Shot, the Roboworm, Missile Baits Bomb Shot and Zoom's Trick Worm. All these are deadly when fished on a Drop Shot set up. And there are many more good ones. The list goes on and on. My go-to colors are Morning Dawn and Green Pumpkin. I start with a lure in the 4"-5" length range and then upsize or downsize from there. There have been days that I could only get a bite on a small, 3" lure. Other days they are crushing anything and everything I throw out there. Be flexible and experiment.



Your Drop Shot Knots can make or break your day!

Good knots are extremely important! Learn to tie good knots and you will land the big one when it hits! I use 2 different knots to attach the leader to the braid. The best knot is the FG Knot*, but it can be hard to tie, especially in a boat. The other knot, one that is just about as good and can be easily tied in the boat, is the Albright Knot*. Both of these knots have a sleek profile and slide through your guides easily. As for tying on your [Drop Shot hook](#), I have used the Palomar Knot* for the last couple of years, but have had mixed results (several heart-wrenching breakoffs) and am actively searching for a better knot. I have tried several new knots and am not convinced my search is done yet. Each knot seems to have its pros and cons. To minimize the knot fatigue issue, I have to re-tie often. But re-tying is tedious and eats up a lot of leader line each time. And who has the discipline to stop fishing and re-tie when the fish are actively biting??



*These knots can be learned through tutorials easily found on You-Tube. Watch them, learn how to tie them and practice until you are good at tying them. You will be glad you did. If you lose a fish, it shouldn't be because of a bad knot.

Final Thoughts on the deadly Drop Shot technique.

If you have never thrown a Drop Shot for bass, maybe it's time to give it a try. I can honestly say that if I was going fishing and had to pick just one rod set up for bass, I would grab my Drop Shop rod. It has consistently outperformed other techniques over the last couple of seasons and has been the most versatile of them all. It is also extremely effective as a "follow-up" technique when you fish other presentations. In other words, throw a Drop Shot after your jig bite has stopped. You'll likely pull in a couple more fish from the same spot that would not bite the jig. I have caught these "bonus fish" on a number of occasions when the bite went cold. Even though the Drop Shot is considered a finesse approach, I've caught many of my biggest bass using this method. Drop Shot presentations might be smaller, but the bass that eat them are certainly not! Next time you are out chasing bass, try the Hop-Hop-Pause method to work your Drop Shot rig. You'll be glad you did!

