

“TEACHING SPOONPLUGGING”

Skills I have found Important to teach students to become successful Spoonpluggers:

- 1) **TROLLING THE SHALLOWS.** Contour trolling with the first 3 sizes of Spoonplugs. The student must learn to do this, preferably without the depth sounder, and checking speeds at the same time. Best accomplished on a lake with a weedline less than 4 feet.
- 2) **CASTING THE SHALLOWS.** Proper and thorough casting of both Spoonplugs and jump lures in the shallows.
- 3) **TROLLING THE DEEP WATER.** Using the larger lures with straight line passes on structure, ending with the final pass on the contact point.
- 4) **CASTING THE DEEP WATER.** Proper and thorough casting of larger Spoonplugs and heavier jump lures from an anchored position.
- 5) **HOW TO OBTAIN AND USE PROPER SPOONPLUGGING TOOLS.** The 10 most important should be gone over (rods, reels, line, boat, motor, markers, net, anchor, lures, and depth meter).
- 6) **OBSERVING TERRAIN.** Always start out doing this. Ask the student what he sees, then elaborate. Reservoirs are very good for this.
- 7) **MAPPING AND INTERPRETATION.** How to read a contour map, draw a map, find a contact point, follow a breakline, use markers, record what you learn, and identify 17 different structure situations from Bucks’ booklet on the water. This is what separates the “men from the boys” and can only be touched on in even the advanced classes. It encompasses a lifetime of learning.
- 8) **HOW TO PROPERLY ANCHOR THE BOAT.** Understanding mapping, markers, anchors, wind, and rope length to secure the boat for casting.
- 9) **TAKING ACCURATE LINE SIGHTS.** The use of and recording of line sights can be demonstrated by the instructor first and then the student.
- 10) **MISCELLANEOUS MECHANICAL SKILLS.** Tying good knots, checking for frayed line, tuning Spoonplugs, removing line twist, measuring water color, using a lure knocker, and the use of Bucks’ snaps are some skills quickly learned that can enhance the Spoonplugging experience.

NOTES:

---Skills #1 through #4 are the main mechanical skills Buck Perry recommended a Spoonplugger learn, and in that order. These require knowledge and other skills to execute properly, but mostly, time on the water learning them. An instructor can hasten the learning of these skills. If one cannot present lures properly (mechanically), no amount of knowledge will make him successful.

---Skills #6, #7, and #9 take a long time and considerable on-the-water experience to develop. The more and varied the situations that are fished, the better.

---How these skills are taught may vary with the student, instructor, and situation. The best learning occurs when the student uses their own boat, motor, and other tools, and the instructor guides them through the procedures. Each student has certain needs and abilities in training, so the time spent on each of the skills will vary. Instructors must realize that perfect performance is not to be expected and that doing it for them slows down the learning. Patient, kind, and gentle guidance seems to work best. The student should be advised which skills he needs to work more on in the future.

---The “Green Book” should have been read by each student before they take instruction. An exception might be a beginning one day student, in which case, the grey “Spoonplugging Lesson” pamphlet would be a minimal requirement. Any other written material that might help the student better understand Spoonplugging could be helpful. Advanced students should have and study Buck Perrys’ 9-volume Study Guide.

---A fishing log can be a good review and learning tool, and I have the student fill one out at the end of the training. My log includes spaces for date, other fishermen, fish caught, water color, season, weather conditions,

lake name, lake type, structure types, structure specifics, trolling or casting, depth, speed, lure type, and observations and lure specifics.

---During training I encourage students to take notes and draw maps. I give them a clipboard, paper, and pencil to do this.

---Wire line should not be taught except to advanced students showing considerable skill in trolling with mono, and when they use their own equipment.

---During the 1998 Jamboree in Chattanooga, I did some student on-the-water training under the guidance of Rocky Bridges and Terry O'Malley. Terry gave us a sequence of fishing procedures to use on a simple bar that worked well:

- 1) Observe terrain
- 2) Check the structure with the depth sounder. At what depth does it break (first major breakline)? Where is the deepest water?
- 3) Follow this breakline around the structure to determine its' form
- 4) Place a marker at about 8-10 feet on the most prominent feature with access to the deepest water to divide the shallows and the deep water.
- 5) Make shallow water contour trolling passes (first 3 lure sizes) inside this marker, and make deep water straight line passes with the larger lures outside the marker.
- 6) Determine where the sharpest break to the deepest water in the area is. That is the contact point. Cast it.

The above sequence was not written down for us but remembered from what Terry O'Malley instructed us. It is very close to what Don Dixon had recommended.

---An understanding of the basic movements of fish, structure, weather, water color, controls, and mental aspects is also important, and should be obtained from studying the "Green Book", preferably before on-the-water instruction. This understanding can be enhanced in the student through use of the instructors' slide shows.

---I am uncertain as to the day requirements of each class since instructors' methods and students' abilities will vary. Advancing to the next "stage" should be determined by skills demonstrated.

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