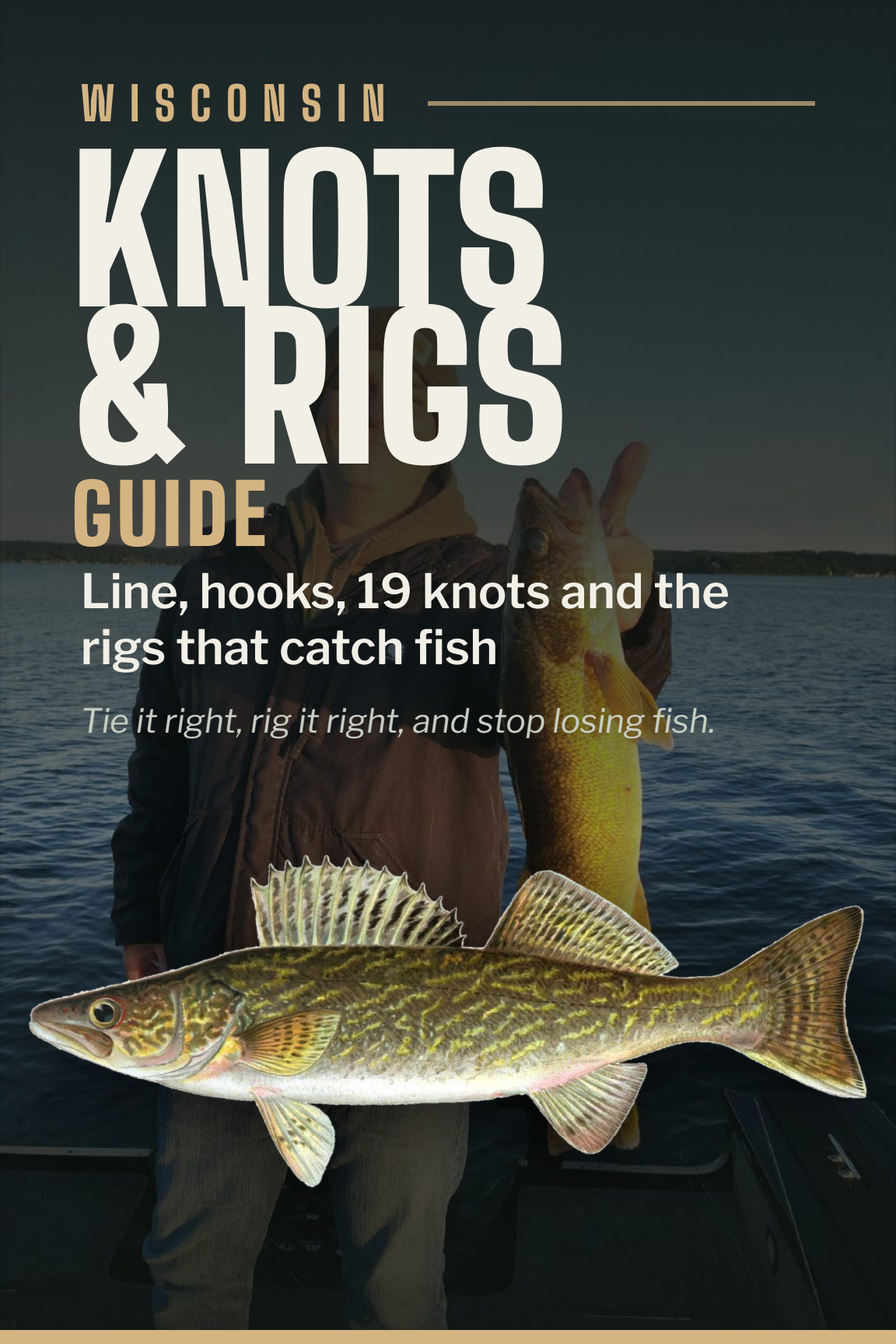
WISCONSIN

KNOTS & RIGS GUIDE

Line, hooks, 19 knots and the rigs that catch fish

Tie it right, rig it right, and stop losing fish.



WISCONSIN

KNOTS & RIGS

Guide

Line, hooks, 19 knots and the rigs that catch fish



Knots & Rigs Guide
First edition, October 2026

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Read this first. Fishing rules change every year and differ by lake. Everything about seasons, sizes and bag limits in this book is for the 2026–27 season, checked 2026-10-08. Always check the current Wisconsin DNR rules and your lake's own rules before you fish. Depth maps are not for navigation. Ice is never guaranteed safe. You are responsible for your own safety and for following the law.

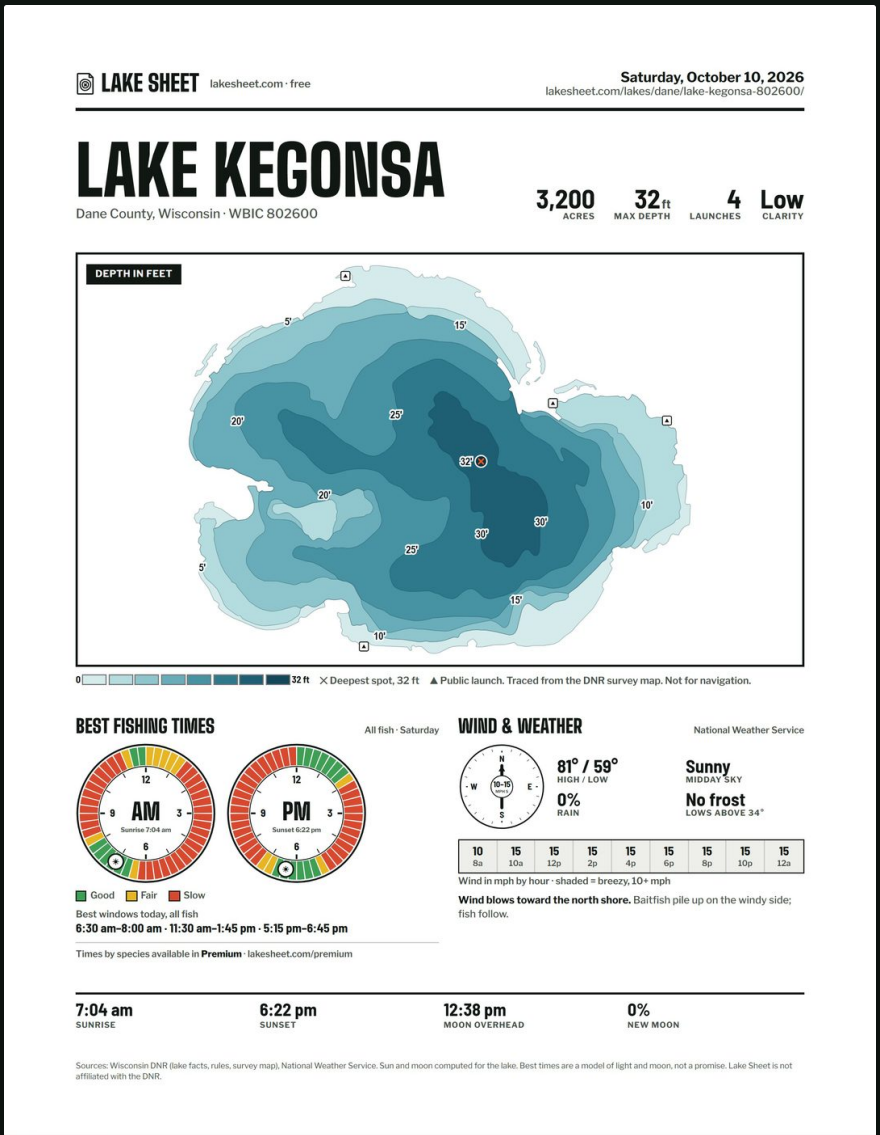
Lake Sheet is not affiliated with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Lake facts come from DNR survey and stocking records as published by Lake Sheet; see the sources at the back of the book.

lakesheet.com

FREE WITH THIS BOOK

YOUR FREE LAKE SHEET

Free for more than 4,600 Wisconsin lakes: two printable pages, made for the boat. This is the real sheet for Lake Kegonsa.



LAKE SHEET lakesheet.com · free

Saturday, October 10, 2026
lakesheet.com/lakes/dane/lake-kegonsa-802600/

LAKE KEGONSA

Dane County, Wisconsin · WBIC 802600

3,200	32 ft	4	Low
ACRES	MAX DEPTH	LAUNCHES	CLARITY

DEPTH IN FEET

5' 15' 20' 25' 32' 20' 10' 30' 30' 25' 5' 15' 10'

0 32 ft · ✕ Deepest spot, 32 ft · ▲ Public launch. Traced from the DNR survey map. Not for navigation.

BEST FISHING TIMES

All fish · Saturday

AM — Sunrise 7:04 am

PM — Sunset 6:22 pm

Good · Fair · Slow

Best windows today, all fish
6:30 am–8:00 am · 11:30 am–1:45 pm · 5:15 pm–6:45 pm

Times by species available in **Premium** · lakesheet.com/premium

WIND & WEATHER

National Weather Service

81° / 59°
HIGH / LOW

0%
RAIN

Sunny
MIDDAY SKY

No frost
LOWS ABOVE 34°

10	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
8a	10a	12p	2p	4p	6p	8p	10p	12a

Wind in mph by hour · shaded = breezy, 10+ mph

Wind blows toward the north shore. Baitfish pile up on the windy side; fish follow.

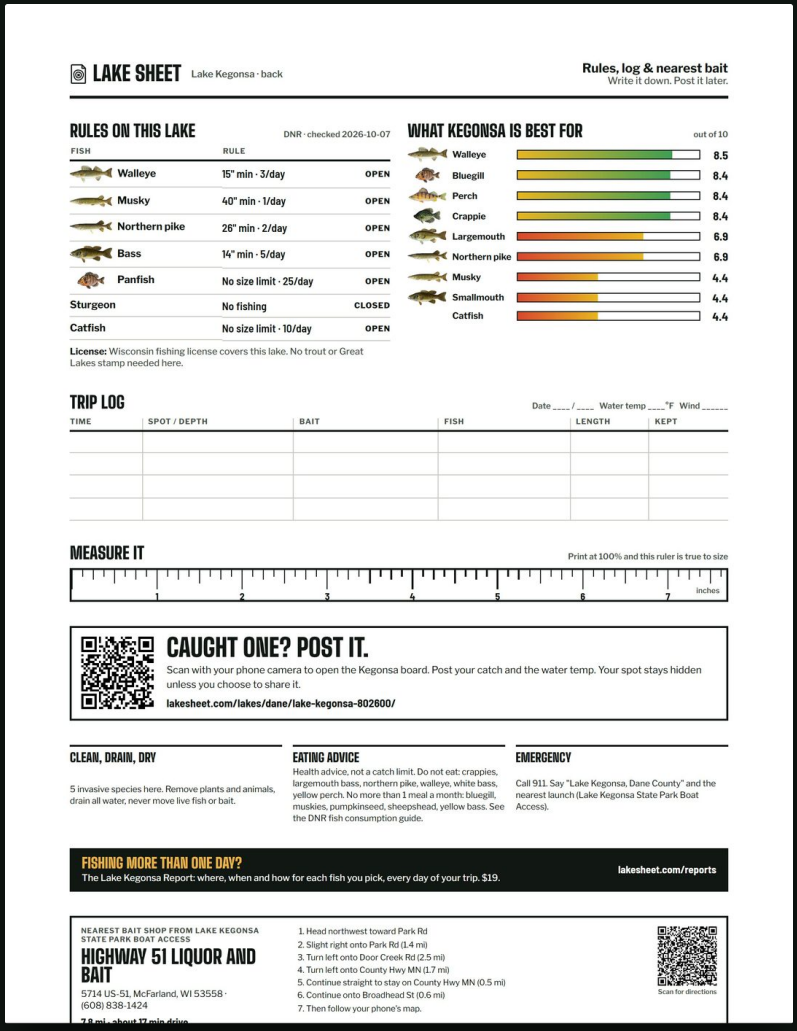
7:04 am	6:22 pm	12:38 pm	0%
SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON OVERHEAD	NEW MOON

Sources: Wisconsin DNR (lake facts, rules, survey map), National Weather Service. Sun and moon computed for the lake. Best times are a model of light and moon, not a promise. Lake Sheet is not affiliated with the DNR.

1. **Depth map** traced from the DNR survey, deepest spot marked (traced lakes)
2. **Lake facts:** acres, max depth, launches, clarity
3. **Best times** from the sun and moon on AM and PM dials
4. **Wind and weather** by the hour, and which shore the wind hits
5. **Sun and moon** times for the lake
6. **Sources and date** on every fact

THE BACK OF THE SHEET

RULES, LOG & NEAREST BAIT



LAKE SHEET Lake Kegonsa · back

Rules, log & nearest bait
Write it down. Post it later.

RULES ON THIS LAKE

DNR · checked 2026-10-07

FISH	RULE	
Walleye	15" min · 3/day	OPEN
Musky	40" min · 1/day	OPEN
Northern pike	26" min · 2/day	OPEN
Bass	14" min · 5/day	OPEN
Panfish	No size limit · 25/day	OPEN
Sturgeon	No fishing	CLOSED
Catfish	No size limit · 10/day	OPEN

License: Wisconsin fishing license covers this lake. No trout or Great Lakes stamp needed here.

WHAT KEGONSA IS BEST FOR

out of 10

Walleye	8.5
Bluegill	8.4
Perch	8.4
Crappie	8.4
Largemouth	6.9
Northern pike	6.9
Musky	4.4
Smallmouth	4.4
Catfish	4.4

TRIP LOG

Date ____ / ____ Water temp ____°F Wind _____

TIME	SPOT / DEPTH	BAIT	FISH	LENGTH	KEPT

MEASURE IT

Print at 100% and this ruler is true to size

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 inches

CAUGHT ONE? POST IT.

Scan with your phone camera to open the Kegonsa board. Post your catch and the water temp. Your spot stays hidden unless you choose to share it.

lakesheet.com/lakes/dane/lake-kegonsa-802600/

CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY

5 invasive species here. Remove plants and animals, drain all water, never move live fish or bait.

EATING ADVICE

Health advice, not a catch limit. Do not eat: crappies, largemouth bass, northern pike, walleye, white bass, yellow perch. No more than 1 meal a month: bluegill, muskies, pumpkinseed, sheepshead, yellow bass. See the DNR fish consumption guide.

EMERGENCY

Call 911. Say "Lake Kegonsa, Dane County" and the nearest launch (Lake Kegonsa State Park Boat Access).

FISHING MORE THAN ONE DAY?
The Lake Kegonsa Report: where, when and how for each fish you pick, every day of your trip. $19.
lakesheet.com/reports

NEAREST BAIT SHOP FROM LAKE KEGONSA STATE PARK BOAT ACCESS

HIGHWAY 51 LIQUOR AND BAIT

5714 US-51, McFarland, WI 53558 · (608) 838-1424

7.8 mi · about 17 min drive

1. Head northwest toward Park Rd
2. Slight right onto Park Rd (1.4 mi)
3. Turn left onto Door Creek Rd (2.5 mi)
4. Turn left onto County Hwy MN (1.7 mi)
5. Continue straight to stay on County Hwy MN (0.5 mi)
6. Continue onto Broadhead St (0.6 mi)
7. Then follow your phone's map.

Scan for directions

1. **This lake's rules** for every fish, from the DNR
2. **What the lake is best for,** rated by fish
3. **Trip log** and a true-size **ruler**
4. **Invasive species** and eating advice
5. **Nearest bait shop** we know of, with turn-by-turn directions
6. Scan to post your catch

lakesheet.com

Find your lake, print it, take it in the boat

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Most fish that get away are lost at the knot or the rig, not at the bite. A knot that wasn't wet when you pulled it tight, a leader too light for the rocks, a hook too big for a bluegill's mouth, a sinker in the wrong place. This book fixes those things. It is a field manual: read a chapter at home, then take the book (or your phone) to the water and tie along.

Chapters 1 and 2 cover the parts: line, hooks, sinkers, swivels, floats and leaders. **Chapter 3** is how to tie any knot well. **Chapters 4 and 5** are the 19 knots, each with numbered steps beside real step-by-step pictures, the mistakes that break it, and a "use it for" table. **Chapters 6 and 7** are the rigs Wisconsin anglers use, from a bobber and split shot to a quick-strike rig for pike. **Chapter 8** puts it all in one table by fish. **Chapter 9** is the Wisconsin rules that touch your tackle.

IF YOU ONLY LEARN FOUR KNOTS

1. **Palomar** (4.1) for hooks, jigs and swivels.
2. **Improved clinch** (4.2) for lures and snaps.
3. **Double uni** (5.1) to join braid to a leader.
4. **Arbor knot** (5.10) to put line on a reel.

With those four you can tie every rig in this book.

IF YOU ONLY LEARN FOUR RIGS

1. **Bobber and split shot** (6.1) for panfish.
2. **Slip bobber** (6.2) for walleye and crappie at any depth.
3. **Jig and minnow** (6.5) for walleye all year.
4. **Texas rig** (7.1) for bass in weeds and wood.

How to read a knot page

Each knot starts with what it is for and what line it works on. The pictures come next. Most show the knot tied in thick rope or cord, because you can see every turn in rope; your fishing line goes the same way, just smaller. The numbered steps match the pictures. Then come the common mistakes and a "use it for" table.

Knot strength: you will see claims online like "95% knot strength." Those numbers come from tests with one brand of line, one size and one way of

pulling, and they change from test to test. This book doesn't print knot-strength percentages. It tells you which knots are known as strong, which are known as weak spots, and how to test your own knot (3.4).

> **THE BOOK AND YOUR LAKE SHEET**
> The rigs in Chapters 6 and 7 depend on depth: how far to set a slip bobber, how long a drop-shot leader should be, where a Lindy rig should crawl. Your lake's free Lake Sheet at lakesheet.com shows the depth map (on more than 200 traced lakes a color map with the contour lines labeled; on others the DNR survey map or the outline), the rules by species, the launches and the nearest bait shop. Print it, and write your rig depths right on the map.

The rules. Rules in this book are for the 2026–27 season, checked October 8, 2026. They change every April 1, and many lakes have their own. Always check the current DNR rules and your lake's rules box on its Lake Sheet.

The pictures. Every knot and rig picture in this book is a real photo or a diagram drawn by another person and shared under a free license (public domain, CC0, CC BY or CC BY-SA). Each one is credited by name, license and source in the back of the book.



CHAPTER 1

FISHING LINE

Line is the only thing between you and the fish, and the three kinds of line behave very differently. Pick the right one for the job, the right pound test for the fish and the cover, and the right way to join two lines together.

1.1 The three lines · **1.2** Which line for which fish · **1.3** Pound test and diameter · **1.4** Leaders · **1.5** Joining two lines · **1.6** Spooling a reel · **1.7** Line care and when to replace it

1.1
THE THREE LINES

Monofilament ("mono") is a single strand of nylon. It stretches, it floats or sinks slowly, it is easy to tie and it is cheap. The stretch is both good and bad: it forgives a hard hook set and keeps small hooks from tearing out of soft mouths (crappie, perch), but it makes you feel less and set the hook slower at long distance. Mono soaks up a little water and gets weaker and softer with age and sunlight.

Fluorocarbon ("fluoro") is a single strand of a denser, harder plastic. It sinks, it stretches less than mono, and it is harder to see underwater because light bends through it more like it bends through water (its refractive index is about 1.42, water's about 1.33). It resists scrapes from rocks and zebra mussels better than mono. It is stiffer and springier, so it can jump off a spinning reel in coils, and it needs extra care when you tie: wet every knot and pull it tight slowly. Most anglers use it as a leader rather than a main line on spinning gear.

Braid is many thin fibers woven into one line. It has almost no stretch, so you feel every tick of a jig on the bottom, and it is much thinner than mono of the same strength, so it casts farther and cuts through weeds. It floats, it is easy to see, and it is slippery: some knots that hold mono slip on braid (Chapter 3). Most anglers tie a mono or fluoro leader to the end of braid (1.4).



FIG 1.1 Fluorocarbon line: an 8 lb spool in its box. Small spools like this are what most anglers buy for leaders.



FIG 1.2 A spool of 10 lb braid (Berkley FireLine) in its pack. Braid is much thinner than mono of the same pound test.

	MONO	FLUOROCARBON	BRAID
Stretch	Most	Less than mono	Almost none
Floats or sinks	Floats or sinks slowly	Sinks	Floats
Seen by fish	Medium	Hardest to see	Easiest to see
Feel (sensitivity)	Lowest	Good	Best
Scrape (abrasion)	Fair	Good	Fair to good; cuts on sharp edges
Diameter for its strength	Thick	Thick	Thinnest
Easy to tie	Easiest	Needs care	Needs braid knots
Price (typical 2026)	$	$$	$$$
Best as	Main line for beginners, bobbers, topwater, crankbaits	Leaders, clear water, finesse rigs	Main line for jigs, weeds, long casts, trolling

1.2 WHICH LINE FOR WHICH FISH

These are starting points for Wisconsin lakes and rivers. Go lighter in clear water and for light-biting fish; go heavier in weeds, wood, rock and current.

FISH	MAIN LINE	LEADER	WHY
Bluegill, sunfish	4–6 lb mono	None	Light line lets small baits drift naturally

Crappie, perch	4–6 lb mono, or 6–10 lb braid	4–6 lb fluoro	Soft mouths: stretch helps; braid for deep jigging
Walleye, jigging	6–10 lb braid	6–10 lb fluoro, 2–4 ft	Feel the bottom; leader hides the line
Walleye, slip bobber or Lindy	6–8 lb mono	6–8 lb fluoro snell	Stretch keeps the hook in; long leader for live bait
Walleye, trolling	10 lb mono or 10–20 lb braid	10–12 lb fluoro with braid	Mono forgives; braid runs deeper for its size
Smallmouth bass	6–10 lb fluoro or 10–20 lb braid	8–12 lb fluoro	Clear water, rock
Largemouth bass	12–20 lb fluoro, or 30–65 lb braid in weeds	Optional	Pull fish out of cover
Northern pike	15–30 lb braid	Wire or 40–80 lb fluoro, 12–18 in	Teeth (1.4)
Musky	65–100 lb braid	Wire or 100–150 lb fluoro, 12–18 in	Teeth, big lures, long fights
Catfish	15–30 lb mono or 30–65 lb braid	20–40 lb mono	Snags, current, big fish
Trout (streams)	4–6 lb mono or fluoro	None	Clear water, small baits
Ice fishing (panfish)	2–4 lb mono or fluoro	None	Tiny jigs need thin line

Prices and line sizes are typical 2026 store shelves. Each species guide in this series has its own gear chapter with more detail.

1.3

POUND TEST AND DIAMETER

The number on the box ("8 lb test") is roughly the pull that breaks new, dry line with no knot. Your knot is weaker than the line, and line gets weaker with nicks and age. That's why you choose line for the cover and the fish, not just the weight of the fish: a 2-pound bass in thick weeds needs heavier line than a 5-pound walleye on open sand.

Two lines of the same pound test can have very different diameters. Braid is much thinner than mono for the same strength. That matters for three things: thinner line casts farther, sinks a jig faster and lets a crankbait dive deeper; it is harder for fish to see; and it fits more on the spool. Line boxes list the diameter in inches or millimeters. Compare those numbers, not just the pound test.

> **MATCH THE LINE TO THE ROD**
> Every rod has a line range printed near the handle (for example "6–12 lb"). Stay inside it. Line much heavier than the rating casts poorly; line much lighter breaks on a hard hook set because the rod doesn't bend enough to absorb it.

1.4 LEADERS

A leader is a short piece of different line tied between your main line and the hook or lure. You use one for three reasons:

1. **To hide the line.** Braid is easy to see. A 2–6 ft fluorocarbon leader puts clear line next to the bait. Use the double uni (5.1) or FG knot (5.2).
2. **To resist scrapes.** A heavier leader takes the wear from rocks, mussels and a fish's rough mouth. Bass anglers use a 2–4 ft fluoro leader; catfish anglers a heavier mono leader.
3. **To stop teeth.** Pike and musky bite through light line. Use a wire leader or heavy fluorocarbon at least 12 inches long. The DNR survey lists northern pike in 2,408 of the 4,630 lakes on Lake Sheet (October 2026), and pike grab walleye and panfish baits, so many anglers add a short leader whenever pike are around and accept fewer bites.

A leader also gives you a breaking point. Tie a leader a little lighter than the main line, and when you snag, the leader breaks at the hook and you keep your braid, swivel and sinker.

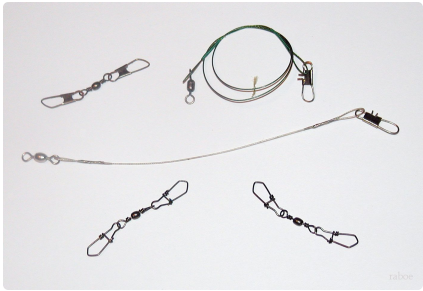

FIG 1.3 Wire leaders with snap swivels at each end. Clip one between your line and a spinner or spoon when pike or musky are around.

1.5 JOINING TWO LINES

JOIN	BEST KNOT	ALSO GOOD	PAGE
Braid to fluoro or mono (light to medium)	Double uni	FG knot (thinnest, best through guides)	5.1, 5.2
Braid to heavy fluoro (pike, musky)	FG knot	Albright	5.2, 5.4
Mono to mono, similar size	Blood (barrel) knot	Double uni	5.5
Mono to fluoro, different sizes	Double uni	Surgeon's knot	5.1, 5.6
Thin line to much thicker line	Albright	Nail knot	5.4, 5.3
Two loops (quick leader change)	Loop-to-loop with perfection loops	Surgeon's loops	5.8, 5.9
Line to swivel, then leader	Palomar each side	Improved clinch	4.1, 4.2

A swivel between braid and leader is the easiest join of all: tie each line to the swivel with a Palomar. It adds a little weight and doesn't run through the rod guides, so keep the leader shorter than your rod.

1.6
SPOOLING A REEL

1. Tie the line to the reel spool with an **arbor knot** (5.10). With braid, first put on a few turns of mono as backing, or a strip of tape, so the braid can't spin on the bare spool.
2. Put the filler spool on the floor so the line comes off the same way it goes onto the reel. For a spinning reel: label side up. If the line twists as it comes off, flip the spool over.
3. Hold the line between your fingers with a little pressure (a damp cloth works) as you crank.
4. Fill a spinning reel to about 1/8 inch below the lip of the spool. Too full and loops jump off; too empty and you lose casting distance.
5. Fill a baitcasting reel to about 1/8 inch below the top of the spool, and keep the line tight as you wind so it doesn't dig into itself.

1.7
LINE CARE AND WHEN TO REPLACE IT

- **Run the last 3 feet through your fingers** after every snag and every big fish. If it feels rough or flat, cut it off and retie.
- **Retie after every big fish,** and any time a knot has been pulled hard on a snag.
- **Replace mono every season** or sooner if it is kinky, chalky or coiled. Fluoro lasts longer but gets nicked; braid can last several seasons. Flip braid end for end on the spool after a year to use the fresh line underneath.
- **Keep line out of the sun and heat.** Don't leave spare spools on the dash of the truck.
- **Pack out every scrap.** Cut line tangles birds, loons and turtles. Put it in your pocket or a line recycling bin at the launch.

LINE TWIST

Twisted line comes from spinning lures without a swivel, from reeling while a fish pulls drag, and from spooling wrong. Let the line trail behind a moving boat with nothing tied on for a minute to untwist it, and use a ball-bearing swivel ahead of spinners and spoons.