

8 Steps to a Better Fishing Season

by TOM RICHARDSON



There may still be snow on the ground in many places, but the time to fish is quickly approaching.



It's time to ask yourself: Are my rods, reels, lures and other fishing gear ready for battle? Here's a quick checklist to make sure you're good to go!

Line

If you didn't do so at the end of last season, remove the old monofilament fishing line from your reels and replace it with fresh line. Don't try to squeeze two seasons out of old mono; it's simply not worth the potential loss of a big fish.



Braided line is a bit different. While you may be able to squeeze a couple seasons' worth of use out of braided line, it's a good idea to replace it too, especially if you fished a lot the previous season or fish around heavy structure. If you decide to risk it, test the line and remove the first 100 feet or so. You might also run the first 100 yards through your fingers to make sure there are no frayed spots.

Rod guides

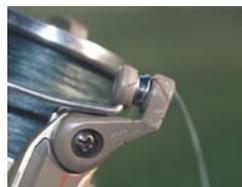
Check the guides on your rods for cracks and rough spots that could chafe or cut the line. If you have ceramic guides, passing a cotton ball through the guides will alert you to any cracks or burrs. Also, examine the guide feet to make sure they are properly aligned and not bent or broken, and check that the tip-top is secure. Lastly, make sure the roller guides on your big-game rods turn freely.



Watch a short video on cleaning roller guides at <https://youtu.be/FLgeO9Nba8s>

Reels

Make sure all the hardware on your reels is secure and that the drag is functioning smoothly. If the drag is jerky or the reel handle is hard to turn, have the reel serviced. Also take time to inspect the spool rim on your spinning reels for rough spots that could chafe the line.



Lastly, make sure the line rollers on your spinning reels is turning smoothly and that there are no gaps between the roller and the roller seat that could trap the line.

Lures

Go through your lures and replace any bent or rusty hooks. If the hooks are in good shape, make sure they're sharp by honing them with a file. Do this *before* you get on the water!



Watch a short video on how to properly sharpen a hook at: <https://youtu.be/jHGQsBT7YvM>

Tackle bag/boxes

Organize your tackle for maximum efficiency—and for Pete's sake throw out any lure you haven't used in the last five years!



Clean and lubricate any zippers, and make sure the bag is stocked with fresh leader material, spare hooks, sinkers, swivels, and other supplies for the coming season.

Tools

Make sure your pliers, hook-removers, line clippers, fish-grippers, knives, and other essential fishing tools are clean, sharp and functioning properly.



Nets

Inspect your net for any tears or holes that could lead to a lost fish. Replace as needed.



About the author...

Tom Richardson, a RISAA member and Massachusetts native, is passionate for the outdoors, including camping, hiking, boating and fishing. An award-winning writer, he was editor for Salt Water Sportsman for 15 years prior to becoming editor of the regional boating magazine Offshore in 2004. In 2009, he started the boating-lifestyle BoatingLocal.com. Three years later, BoatingLocal became New England Boating, a multimedia brand comprising the website, a glossy magazine, and a TV show, all edited and co-hosted by Richardson. In 2016, he launched New England Fishing magazine, website and TV show, which he also wrote and hosted.