

# Rigging Soft Plastics For Striped Bass

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The number of surf casters and light tackle enthusiasts casting soft plastics for striped bass is increasing each season. Whether the application is a weedless bait on light tackle in the early season or rigged on a jig head for a summer night in the surf we see more use of soft plastics now than ever. Along with the advances in soft baits themselves have come innovation in rigging soft plastics for striped bass.

## A Nearly Infinite Variety of Shapes and Sizes

The popularity and innovation stem in large part from the versatility of soft plastics. There are a wide variety of profiles with soft, pliable bodies that produce a life-like action. Some argue that the supple materials also give soft plastics a better mouth-feel than hard lures. The benefit being that the gamefish would be less likely to let go immediately after striking. Also, many manufacturers impregnate their soft plastics with scents of bunker and sand eel when creating baits to target striped bass and other northeast gamefish.

In the simplest terms there are three designs used in saltwater:

- Jerk Baits with inline tails of various shapes. When fishing jerk baits the rod tip creates the action, and it is more subtle.
- Paddle Tails with a wide flat tail oriented horizontally to the body of the bait. Paddle tails are a much more active bait, and the design of the bait creates the action.
- Grub Tails or pigtails also have a lot of action and are used in smaller soft plastics and to enhance a bucktail jig. Very popular in freshwater.

Beyond this point, there are a dizzying amount of options and would require a series of articles to scratch the surface.

## Pre-Rigged Options

Anglers can purchase some soft plastics pre-rigged on a jig head; examples include the [Storm 360 GT Searchbait](#) and [Joe Baggs Patriot Fish](#). Also, some baits like [Tsunami Swim Shads](#) that have the weight molded into the bait. If you are just getting into soft plastics one of these

options might be the place to start. These baits are optimized for action and casting efficiency and eliminate the trial and



error of matching hooks and heads with different baits. The scope of this article will focus on rigging options for those interested in rigging their own soft plastics for striped bass.

## Rigging Options

[Centering pin springs](#) are a simple way of attaching the hook to the head of a soft



plastic bait. Rigged right these can be tossed in skinny water and are effectively weedless. The Owner Beast Hooks are popular for this application as are the center pin hooks developed for [Albie Snax](#)

[Oversize worm hooks](#) also create a weedless presentation through simple rigging, and the length helps stiffen the body of the lure which allows for better casts. So anglers will make a few turns with tying thread behind the hook eye to create a surface to apply [Zap A Gap Thin](#) just before they permanently seat the hook in the bait. The [Mustad Big Bite Soft Plastic Hook](#) is a popular choice for this application.

Additionally, there is an assortment of jig heads on which to secure your bait, you may prefer one or another based on hook strength, size, the preferred method of attachment or color. [Joe Baggs SPJ Jig Heads](#) have been among our more popular due to its heavy 8/0 hook and with a ridged collar designed to provide a secure attachment. The Joe Baggs design works better with larger soft plastics. The [Mustad Elite Bullet Jig Head](#) has built a strong following in short order in part because the rear of the jig head is flat allowing a flush fit with the bait. This improves durability, and the flush fit positively impacts castability. With any jig head, it's a good idea to super glue the area used to secure the soft plastic to the jig. The [Owner Ultra Bullet](#) and Owner Inshore are good options for schoolies and other similarly sized gamefish and shallow water applications.

## Soft Plastic Rigging Tips

Let's address a common challenge when rigging soft plastics for any gamefish regardless of the hook and method selected. That is "Where to enter the bait to ensure it swims properly?" (to page 37)

