

How to Fish a Popper

It's hard to deny popper fishing is the most exciting form of bass fishing. Poppers incorporate the visual elements of dry fly fishing that people love, while providing the opportunity for enormous fish on a daily basis.

So, let's breakdown the most popular methods to help give you some direction.

COMMON FISHING METHODS

CHUG 'Em Away

Most beginners tie on a popper and want make it do what the name implies - poppit.

Chugging away with the popper usually works best in the evenings or mornings, especially in the summer. The retrieval tempo is consistent smaller "chugs". Give it a solid foot or less tug that gets the fly moving, but not so crazy that the "glug" sound echoes through the forest. A lighter, consistent pop is where you'll dupe the most fish.

Some of the patterns that are excellent for this retrieval style are Frog patterns, crease flies, and cup-faced poppers. It's no coincidence that the flies that work best chugging away imitate things that naturally swim in the water.

When bass are keying in on moving patterns, this style of fishing is awesome. It's the head-on collision of streamer fishing with the visual aspect of dry fly fishing - how can you not love that?

But, is this the best way to bring numbers?

Nope.

Here's the more consistent producer.

Let 'Em Sit

Cast out your popper and let it sit. Don't move it. Don't twitch it. Let the popper stay perfectly still. This is agonizing for people. It seems completely unconventional and people always as "Does this actually work?". IT DOES.

As fish see insects plop and chill on the water, they get conditioned to dead-drift presentations. Cicadas, hoppers, beetles - really, all sorts of insects and animals that fall on the water - don't actively move around immediately after they hit the

water. Typically, for the first few seconds after that creature whacks the water, they chill out trying to get their bearings. Hoppers will chug back to shore after landing, but they still sit there for a few seconds first (typically).

If there's bass around, they will usually come quickly to inspect the floating object and, if they're hungry or there's competition around, they will launch like a bullet to eat the object in a few seconds. If they come up really slowly like a brown trout rising to dries, you can assume that there's not many other fish around or they may not like your fly. If the rejection happens fish after fish, swap patterns for something smaller or a different colour.

If they don't eat after a few seconds of letting the popper sit, move on to the next method.

Give 'Em a Twitch

When you combine the "Let 'Em Sit" philosophy with the twitch, you'll be using your net a lot more often. Now, a twitch is not an active retrieve. It's a jiggle of the rod tip or a slight lifting of the rod. This is where you will entice a lot of picky fish.

Here how it's done. Let your bug hit the water, pause it for a few seconds (approximately 5 or until the ripples leave). Then wiggle the rod tip or slightly lift the rod to give a little bit of action to the fly. Then, wait a bit longer. If nothing eats or is underneath staring down the popper, recast to your next target.

The twitch works really well when you have an "inspector". You'll see her staring down the fly and then turn as if she doesn't want it. As soon as the bass turns off the fly, either lift the rod tip or give the rod tip a slight jiggle to give that fish a little more affirmation that the bug is "alive". Sometimes that twitch action is enough to make her whip around at a mind-boggling speed and obliterate your fly.

This combination of "let it sit" and "give it a twitch" is deadly in summer months. In fact, it's how most successful anglers fish throughout the summer for smallmouth.

Conclusion

Now it must be said, when fish are fired up they'll eat almost anything anyway. There are always exceptions to the "rules" try to put in fishing. On top of that, there are always stupid fish that defy logic and all general expectations. This short description of ways to fish a popper is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to give you three of the general ways to fish poppers.