

Best Time to Fish Low or High Tide

When planning a saltwater fishing trip, familiarize yourself with the tides in your area to choose the best time to go fishing. The movement of ocean water is controlled vertically by tides and horizontally by currents. Each day has two high tides and two low tides, and neither of them are good times to fish.

High and Low Tides:

True high tide and low tide are probably the worst times to fish. When the water level reaches high or low tide, there may be no movement in the water for several minutes or several hours, depending on the tide schedule and the time of year. When water isn't moving, fish are less likely to be feeding. This is because the bait fish that fish feed on are not in movement. During this slack period, many burrow into the mud or sand.

Falling Tide:

Because water is in movement when a tide is changing, these times are the best times to fish. A falling tide occurs when a tide changes from high tide to low tide and is the best time of the day to fish. The best time to take advantage of a falling tide is two hours before low tide. As the water changes from high tide to low tide, the water slowly begins to push out. The rate at which the water is pushing out increases. The faster the water is moving out, the better the fishing; game fish are used to taking advantage of this time to feed on the smaller bait fish being pushed out to sea.

Rising Tide:

A rising tide occurs when the tide is changing from low to high tide. Although it may not be nearly as favorable to fish in a rising tide as to fish in a falling tide, fishing is very good thanks to the movement of the water and the feeding activity of the game fish. As with a falling tide, try to time

your rising tide fishing about two hours before full high tide to make the most of fishing in a rising tide.

Location:

Although nearly all ocean fishing is best done during a period of falling or rising tides, consider where you'll fish and the habits of the fish you hope to catch when planning your fishing trip. For example, a shallow area might prove to be a good area to fish during high tide but may not even have water, let alone fish, during low tide. However, a fishing area with a slough, a deeper section, is a good spot to fish for bottom-feeding flounder during low tide but a poor choice for high tide flounder fishing.

Moon Phases:

Tides are controlled by the moon, and certain moon phases produce better fishing conditions. Full and new moons create better fishing conditions because they produce lower low tides, higher high tides and as a result faster currents between the tides.

The Best Tides to Fish

Understanding when the best tides are is extremely important for fishermen, unless of course, these individuals are not concerned with catching any fish. You might think that understanding tides is very simple; however, it really is a rather complex process involved in the situation.

Basic Information:

You might be convinced that whether the tide is high or low is really the only factor that matters. Other important factors to consider are the base point, where you plan to fish in relation to the base point, the time span between each tide stand, the movement of the water, the time of the year and the wind. Exploring these components will help you see when the best tides to fish occur.

Tide Stands and Base Points

Look at tide table adjustments, such as those published by the Gulf Coast Fisherman website. Look at the adjustments to determine how successful your fishing trip will be. If the adjustments are listed as hours apart, avoid going fishing that day. However, if there are only a few minutes of adjustments, you will not have issues.

Wind and Time of Year:

You will consult with the Gulf Coast Fishermen if you are in the Gulf of Mexico region; however, sometimes unexpected winds will blow in that the chart will not be able to account for. Therefore, winds can make water levels drop a few feet. When this situation occurs, you will need to find deep holes if you want to find fishing. Furthermore, you also need to find deep holes when the weather is very cold. When you get a warm winter, though, good fishing is found along bay flats.

Other Factors to Consider:

While high and low tide are not the only factor to consider, that does not mean that they do not have significance. An hour before and after both high tide and low tide are primary fishing periods. Furthermore, you will also find great fishing shortly after the sunrise and the sunset. A hatch of mayflies or caddis flies is another positive sign that you can catch a lot of fish that day.

Where Do I Fish Today?

Deciding where to fish - often the last thing anglers do - should be the first

You've got the boat gassed up and loaded. All the tackle is ready and you are headed to the boat ramp. So - where do you fish today? That question must cross the mind of at least a few boating anglers as they head out in the morning. If you live on the coast and you fish from a boat, it's a question you really ought to have answered for yourself the night before. But, suffice it to say, many of us get in the vehicle or the boat and say - where do I go first?

I've written a number of pieces describing areas you should fish and when you should fish them. So how do you decide your game plan for the day?

You need to look at four basic things that will make or break your fishing that day.

Weather

Now, this sounds ultra-simple, but it is an important part of the decision. All of these weather factors will or should drive you to a decision on where to fish.

Is the wind going to blow; if so, from what direction?

Wind direction and force play an important roll not only in where the fish will be but simply where you will and will not be able to fish. Windy days put you into creeks and smaller backwater areas - those places where the water won't be whipped to a froth by that wind and where you can actually get a line in the water. Fish are smarter than we give them credit for, and they will generally move out of dirty, muddy water.

Is a cold front approaching?

Fishing ahead of a cold front is, in my opinion, the very best time to be fishing. Fish feed up as the pressure drops before the front before the winds blow.

Will it be a blue bird sky following a front?

The high pressure following a front will usually have fish in a stagnant mode where they become lethargic and tend not to feed. On days like this, my experience has been to look for fish in the warmest part of the day, and in general in deeper water.

Tide

While there are places you can fish where the tide really does not matter, most of the time the tide is extremely important. You almost always need moving water - a current. I do catch fish on the dead high tide - tide runners - and the dead low, but I really want the water moving.

I have locations where I do best on an outgoing tide down to low, and I have some places I do well on an incoming tide. But, by far I do better on that outgoing tide.

So check what the tide times will be and plan to be in those locations where you have caught fish in the past on the same tide. Keep a log to help put you on those spots.

Season

Sounds simple, but lots of fishermen don't pay attention. "I caught blues all day here, and I can't catch one today." Well, perhaps the day you caught them was a nice fall morning, and you are there in mid-April. Lots of fish are migratory, even if it's simply from estuaries out to offshore waters and back. Know which fish should be in the area and which fish should be gone. It's hard to catch a bluefish when they have all migrated south!

The Guide Factor

Guides will complain to me, but here goes. Lots and lots of anglers can fish just as well as a guide. The difference is - guides catch fish while we don't. The reason is they know where the fish are located. Some of their knowledge is based on logs and the previous three ingredients. But, a large part of their success comes from being on the water every day. As fish move around daily the guides can move with them. They can keep a finger on them and find them more easily than the once a week or once a month angler.

Why does this matter? Look for the guide boats! Don't encroach; don't get in their way; but, take note of where they are and what the situation is. Chances are, you can find fish in that location under the same circumstances in the future.

Bottom Line

It takes a good mix of factors to produce a good fishing day. But it also takes some intelligent decisions to take advantage of those factors. Pay attention - plan your trip before you get to the water! Doing that homework makes you much more likely to be successful.

Fishing Florida Gulf Coast Tides

Knowing how to fish Florida gulf coast tides is essential when targeting Florida gamefish. If you are going fishing in saltwater and want to catch fish, you must check the tides for your area.

Florida gulf coast tides effect the feeding habits of fish and where the fish will be located depending on the stage of the tide. Fish like to use the tide to their advantage in their hunt for food.

Many anglers argue about the effects the tide has on offshore species. Some prefer a slow moving tide or even a slack tide, this allows the bottom fisherman to present their bait more naturally. In my opinion the tide does effect offshore species somewhat but nothing like it effects the behavior of inshore fish.



Inshore species such as redfish, snook, trout and tarpon move from place to place depending on the tide phase. Many offshore species will stay in the same vicinity during any stage of the tide.

When fishing for snook and redfish on high tide you should concentrate your search very close to the shoreline (mangroves and grass). Most likely redfish and snook will be within 50 ft or so from the shoreline during the high tide stage. Many times they will be well under the mangroves almost out of reach. But during high tide, don't forget about potholes and just out in the open, fish can be anywhere.

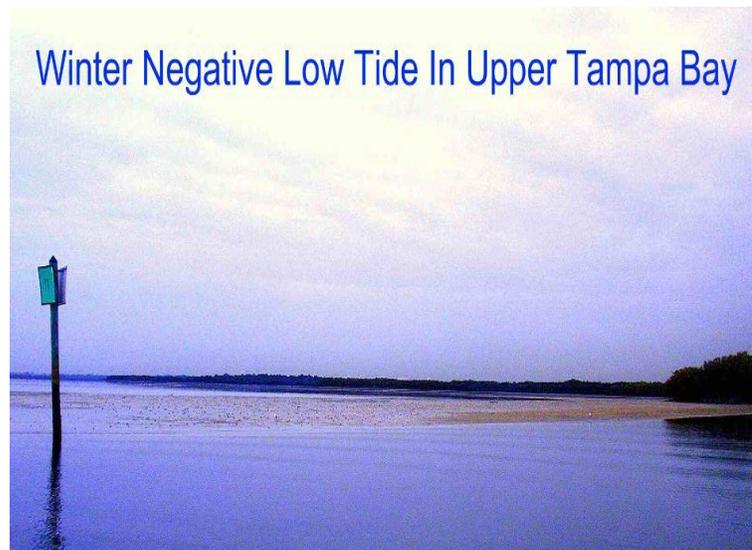
Drifting the grass flats is a great way to target trout during the high tide phase. Look for grass flats near a pass or other areas where food might be plentiful.

The outgoing tide is the favorite tide phase for many fisherman. In this stage of the tide the fish move out from under the mangroves and into the potholes and other areas such as dropoffs, ledges and channels.

A good way to get a starting point during this stage of the tide is to look and see where the mullet are jumping. Use the mullet to get an idea how far out from the shoreline that the fish might be.

When fishing bridges during an outgoing tide, the fish will be upcurrent of the bridge waiting for an easy meal to pass by. Tarpon and snook are notorious for this.

At low tide you should change your approach to target cuts, passes, sandbars, potholes, the mouth of a canal or river, edges of flats and docks are also good choices. Low tide is a great opportunity to find the "Fish Highways" (deeper parts of a flat that hold water on low tides, fish often use these areas to move around the flat) of a particular flat, especially winter low tides.



When planning a day of saltwater fishing you must check the Florida gulf coast tides for your area if you want to consistently catch fish.

If you know where to target the species of fish you are after according to the stage of the tide, your chances of being able to catch them goes up substantially no matter what stage of the tide you are fishing.

Finding where the fish are is the most important step to catching them.

Best Times for Saltwater & Freshwater Fishing

When to Fish

Experienced anglers will tell you that there ARE "best" times to fish. These "best times" can be related to the amount of sunlight, to warming trends, to depth at which fish are found, to storm and weather patterns, to wind, and to tidal flows when saltwater fishing. Thus, WHEN to fish can also affect and be affected by WHERE to fish. Too many hot days during the summer can adversely affect fishing in shallow lakes, ponds, and rivers since the higher water temperatures can reduce oxygen in the water and cause fish to become sluggish.

VARIABLE WEATHER PATTERNS

Wind

Wind can play a large role in fishing success. Wind pushes bait to the far shore, with bait followed by game fish. If fishing from shore on a windy day, fish where you have to cast into the wind. If fishing from a boat, cast with the wind on a sheltered shore.

Fronts

Storms and changing weather patterns affect fishing success since fish are keenly attuned to changes in barometric conditions. With many fish, feeding increases during the hours immediately before a cold front, but slows during and after a storm or front hits. Fishing after a cold front is poor and continues to be poor for a day or two.

Warm fronts cause surface water temperatures to increase. Such fronts often put fish into a feeding mode. This can be particularly true in the winter, when a warming trend can cause otherwise sluggish fish to start feeding actively. Most of this feeding activity is on or near the warm surface.

Cloud Cover

Cloudy days improve fishing since the clouds prevent light penetration. Overcast skies cause fish to cruise for food more than they would during bright days when they tend to hide and stay close to structure. On overcast cloudy days, fish are less likely to be on specific structure spots or areas and more likely to be scattered throughout a waterway.

Rain

Another good time to fish is during a light rain, especially a warm spring or summer rain. Rain can help you hide from the fish since the rain breaks up the view that the fish has through the water surface. This is true whether shore, wade or boat fishing. Rain also washes insects and bait into the water, with this extra food creating a feeding binge for fish. Warm rains quickly warm the water to cause these feeding periods.

Hard rain conditions are a poor time to fish since heavy rains can muddy the water, make it difficult for fish to find bait or lures, and also cause heavy runoff which can clog their gills. The increased water flow in rivers from any rain increases current flow and makes it difficult for fish to maintain a comfortable position in the river. High water levels can also create rapids, waves and unsafe fishing conditions. If there is any lightning or possibility of lightning, you must get off of the water in your boat or immediately away from the water if wading or fishing from the shore. Safety must come first in any fishing situation.

SALT WATER AND TIDES

Saltwater Tides

In salt water, tides affect water level so that a shallow area that might hold fish and be a very good spot to fish during a high tide might be a bare mud bank during low tide conditions. Similarly, a slough – a slight depression in the bottom - that might be perfect for bottom feeding fish such as flounder during a low tide situation might be too deep and difficult to fish on a high tide. Running tides (rising or falling) are best since they cause bait to move and provoke active feeding among coastal fish.

Brackish Water Tides

Checking changing tides and the best times and areas to fish is also important when fishing in brackish water – coastal water that is a mix of salt and fresh, yet still affected by tides. Brackish water is found in most tidal creeks and rivers along all coasts and can affect both saltwater and some freshwater species.

Planning Ahead

Since tides and movements are so important in saltwater and brackish water fishing, check for daily tide information in your local newspaper or at your local fishing shop. Tides raise and lower the water level approximately two times per day and affect where fish are located and how they feed. The timing of a high or low tide changes daily and is also different for each coastal area. The best fishing is almost always on a rising or falling tide – not the dead low or dead high when there is little or no water movement.

Determining the best time to fish requires checking on many fishing factors and outdoor conditions. The key to fishing success is to learn about fish and how they live. Try different tactics in your fishing to make each day of fishing a great day.