

Braid Stretch vs Lost Fish

As an angler, you've read or heard about line stretch. You've noted that the pros and fishing industry experts say that it's not good to use monofilament in some applications because of that stretch. But do you really believe them? Have they convinced you that braid is the best line for some methods? Or is it all just hype?

Braided Fishing Line: Stretch vs Lost Fish

Like many, maybe you think that mono works fine for you and you see no reason to complicate your fishing with a new type of line that often is more expensive. So what if your mono line stretches a bit? It's not breaking on you. You catch fish. How bad could it be?

In many ways, the finest braided line you pick to fish with can be traced back to hand-wrapped and essentially braided hemp line. That's hemp, as in medically farmed in western states and sold to people with anxiety. And four hundred dollars or government health care.

Former pro and lure designer Troy Gibson had his doubts too. But after testing the stretch properties of mono, copolymer, fluorocarbon, and braid for himself, he doesn't anymore.

"Oh, my gosh, was I surprised at what I learned," said the Alabama angler. "After I did this and switched to braid (for some applications), my hookup rate went way up. I was able to transform all of my setting energy from the pole into the bait. I've hooked more bites, and I've caught more fish."

And now that he's a convert, Gibson also is a vocal disciple. "Other anglers really need to try this too, to see for themselves," he said.

Testing Stretch on Monofilament Fishing Line (or any line)

His recommendation: Tie a 20-foot length of line to a pole or wall. Attach a pencil to the other end. Then pull the line out as straight as possible, without stretching it, and make a mark on the ground or floor.

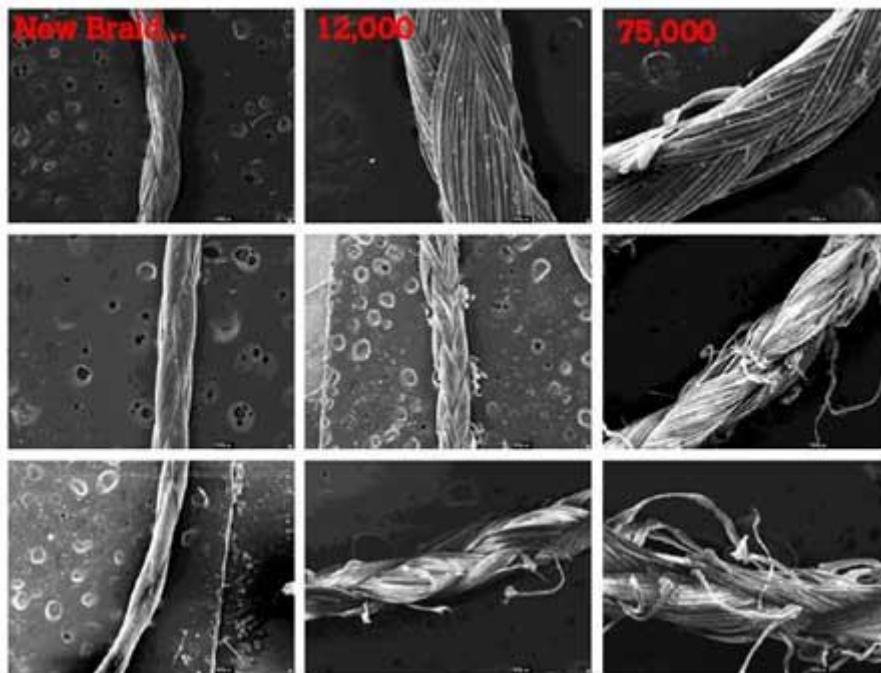
Now stretch the line as much as you can and mark that spot as well.

"Once you do this, you will understand about line stretch," he said. "It will open your mind and make you a better fisherman."

"Line companies really are missing out by not doing a better job of putting out this information."

What Gibson discovered is that mono typically stretches 1 inch per foot, copolymer $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, and fluorocarbon $\frac{1}{4}$. Braid, of course, doesn't stretch.

To put that discovery into angling context, imagine that you've made a 20-yard cast with mono and a bass strikes the bait before you begin a retrieve. That means your line will stretch 60 inches --- 5 feet! --- as you set the hook. That translates into both lost speed and power. And lost fish.



This comparison was originally done for Courtland braided line. The column at the left starts with their product, and steps down in cost and quality with rows two and three representing all other line tested. Column One is the new line(s). Column two are the three lines twisted 12,000 times, and the Third showing the three lines wrapped 75,000 times. An advantage of braided line is that on a spinning reel the line can twist and not get out of control like monofilament does, Braid does not stretch, either. But it frays much like it brakes when it's twisted all week.

Monofilament, Stretch, and Lost Bass

"When a bass chomps down on a bait and closes its mouth, your hook is not going to penetrate if you have too much line stretch," said Kent Kelly, a member of Arkansas' Jonesboro Bass Club. "But when they lose that fish, most people don't equate it with line stretch."

According to Kelly, another way to see for yourself about stretch is to tie mono to a full milk jug, back up about 10 yards or so, and then try to turn over the jug with a hookset. "You won't even shake the jug with less than 20- or 25-pound test," he said. "This really opens people's eyes when they try it."

There's more. Mono has even more stretch than informal field tests reveal, according to Clay Norris, senior product manager for fishing lines at Pure Fishing (Berkley).

Reflective of the industry, Berkley's series of monofilaments have an "ultimate elongation" of anywhere from 18 to 30 percent. That means a 20-yard piece of mono can stretch from 3.6 to 6 yards before it breaks.

"It's like you're pulling on a rubber band," said Robby Gant, product manager for Shimano and Power Pro. "You stretch and stretch and stretch, until finally it pulls back. At first, you're just pulling on the line, and then, finally, you have the hookset."

Additionally, Gant explained, line stretch equates to reduced tensile (pound test) strength and abrasion resistance as well. That's because the diameter of the line diminishes.

All of this is not to say that monofilament is inherently a bad fishing line. Rather it is to point out that it is not the best for some methods.

"Mono has plenty of applications," Gant said. "With crankbaits, it's good to have some stretch and give in your line. And it's the same with topwater." Norris added, "Mono gives a great cushion, especially for weekend anglers who might not have their drags set properly or are using rods that are really stiff."

But today's braid is much better for specific applications and some anglers even are going to it full-time, especially in saltwater.

Clear Advantages of Braided Fishing Line "Braid is everywhere. Pike, musky, and walleye fishermen are using it, as well as bass fishermen. But more than 50 percent of our business still is mono," Norris said. For bass anglers, heavy cover is one of the best places to use braid, Gant explained. "With mono, you lose pulling power and that gives the fish an advantage to stay stuck in that stuff," he said.

"With braid, you are driving that hook home and moving that fish out at the same time." Norris added that braid "always is an advantage" in grass. "Weeds create a barrier that stretches mono," he said. "With braid you can keep constant pressure on the fish because it actually cuts through the grass."

If he's using mono to throw a jig or frog in grass, Gibson said, an angler "just can't stick that fish. All it will feel is a little nudge. "A lot of times, you will think that you've stuck a fish and it's coming to the boat. But when it gets close, it comes unbuttoned. Well, that fish wasn't hooked at all. It just opened its mouth and the bait came flying back at you, along with the sinker."

Even in open water, braid can produce better than mono if long casts are required to reach the fish. But braid, because it doesn't stretch, does require some adjustment, like loosening the drag or going to a softer rod.

"Beginning users pull a lot of hooks out of fish," Gant said. "That's because braid doesn't have that little lag time that comes with mono. With braid, you sometimes have to hesitate a fraction of a second on the hookset. "But once you understand how to use it, braid can make all of the difference in the world."