

Catching Permit 101

The Permit is one of the most highly esteemed fish in the sea, known for both their excellent sport and delicate meat. They are also notoriously known as one of the most difficult fish to catch, but we're here to help you with that. Although not the most migratory fish in the sea, Permit do undergo some annual migrations events, so you need to know where the fish are as they move through the sea. They also have an incredibly keen eye, which makes artificial lures and flies difficult to use, and also makes the choice of line very important. The Permit also may be one of the spookiest fish in the sea.



When to Find Permit

Since Permit are a warm-water species, they can be caught year-round in the warmest parts of the states, namely within the Florida Keys. During the summer months from June through September, you can find Permit in very good numbers much further north, all the way up to the central Florida coasts on both sides, but they will be gone by the time the cool fall weather starts to set in.

Where to Catch Permit

Permit occupy a range of different habitats in south Florida, but perhaps the best one to catch them in is in shallow seagrass flats. Although very large, Permit spend a large amount of their time searching these shallow areas, often going in water less than two feet deep. This is where you have the best chance of stealthily sneaking up on a large school of Permit, and having the ability to cast either live or artificial baits or flies at the fish. During certain parts of the year, such as during the summer spawn and in the coldest winter months, Permit will also be found offshore over shallow reefs, artificial reefs, and wrecks. Here they will be aggregating near the structures, where they will be constantly on the move.

You can catch big permit on the very shallow flats of the Florida Keys, but you can also catch bruisers around any wrecks and artificial reefs and natural structure in the Gulf, too. They generally circle around the outside - the outside, not directly on top - of the structure. To catch them, get outside of about 100 yards from the edges of the wreck and start watching the area directly over the wreck. You will see them in small groups circling the wrecks, dorsal fins out of the water. Cast a pass crab in front of them rigged on a cork bobber and hang on. They are among the strongest of all the fish we ever catch.

Tackle for Permit

Reaching up to 80 pounds, Permit aren't exactly small fish. They are also members of the jack family, and they have that typical 'jack fighting ability.' What this means for you is that the tackle required for Permit is generally on the heavier side, especially when fishing offshore where they can pull you into structures resulting in line cutoffs. Inshore, you can utilize the drag a bit more and let the fish run, allowing you to use a medium setup.

Spinning Tackle for Permit

Spinning tackle is generally recommended because of its simplicity and effectiveness. A solid spinning reel is highly effective for fishing the shallow flats for Permit, where you can work the fish on the drag system, letting it run itself out. A medium reel is desired here, because you want to use at least 15-pound test line. These aren't small fish, so you want to use a lot of line, and using the lowest recommended strength line will fit more of it on the spool. Of course, spinning tackle can also be used offshore, yet does not have the leverage that conventional tackle has, which may lead to the fish pulling you under structures.

Conventional Tackle for Permit

We generally use Spinning Tackle for permit, as the distance casting - on the flats especially - is a critical factor. While conventional tackle - the kind of casting tackle we tend to use for Kingfish - is OK to catch permit with, the advantage of increased leverage that you get from conventional gear is not so important it is worth the distance we get from good fast-action spinning tackle. If you are gonna use conventional tackle because these fish are too strong for you, lean towards longer rods - 7'6" is a good starting point and even eight foot and fast action would work. Casting far is worth a lot, and you can cast quite a distance with a long stick if you're good at them. But practice before you try to lose one of these rare beasts on the wrong tackle.

Flyrods for Permit

Permit are another one of those species that have a relatively small mouth compared to their body size, making them extra fun on a fly-rod. To catch Permit on a fly, you must be able to cast far – remember, these fish are as spooky as they come. A long rod, between 7'6 and 8 feet in length, will allow you to get a farther cast than a short rod. A heavier weight rod -- we recommend between 10 and 12 weight -- will also allow you to cast further, because you'll be able to use heavier line and flies, which cast by momentum. Those heavier leaders and flies will also come in handy for actually catching the fish, as you want the fly to sink at a naturally fast rate.



Baits for Permit

Permit eat a diet composed of crabs, snails, urchins, and other small invertebrates among seagrass beds and reefs. Although some of their natural diet is not widely available from bait shops or by catching as live bait yourself, some of them are. These include small blue crabs, mole crabs (sandfleas), shrimp, and fiddler crabs. When choosing a bait, remember that Permit do not have the largest mouths. Keep the baits around 2 or 3 inches in length, especially the blue crabs and shrimp. Sand fleas and fiddler crabs are just smaller than the perfect size for Permit, but you will be surprised at the size fish you can catch on a small sand flea.

Lures for Permit

The Permit is notorious for being one of the most difficult fish to catch using artificial lures, especially flies. Fortunately, each year we get newer and better lures, each looking and behaving more and more like the real thing. Soft plastic baits that mimic crabs or shrimp are best for a realistic display, whereas heavy jigs are great for catching the eye of tailing fish. Presentation is the key when getting the fish to actually bite, and it all depends on the behavior of the fish at the moment. If a school of Permit is on the move, you want to cast a realistic-looking, soft-plastic lure right in front where they'll see it, and hope for the bite as the lure descends. If the school is tailing however, and rooting through the sand for food, bounce a jig through the school, kicking up small puffs of sand that will look like a crab or shrimp burying into the sediments.

- See more at: <http://theonlinefisherman.com/permit#sthash.NZsAfgak.dpuf>

10 Permit Tips and Tricks

On the top of almost every tropical angler's list is the Permit. Strikingly similar to an oversized pompano, the Permit is a member of the jack family, known for their fast, powerful nature. Already having the power of jack, the Permit can reach lengths of four feet long, and weigh up to 80 pounds, making it one of the best fighters in shallow water. The Permit is known for being a difficult catch for many reasons, from sneaking up on the school to actually getting the fish to bite. The top 10 tricks presented here try to cover these difficulties, and provide ways around them.

10 Things to Remember When Fishing for Permit:

1. Fish where the fish are:

Knowing where the fish are is the most important step in catching a Permit. Certain times of the year, the fish will be in different places, so you don't want to be fishing the wrong area. In general, the fish will be primarily inshore or nearshore on shallow seagrass beds in spring and fall, and will be frequenting the offshore reefs in the summer and winter.

2. Be quiet!

3. Use the right bait.

3. Diversify your bait.

5. If going natural, use live.

6. Present it well.

7. Fish the springtime "pre-spawn."

8. Use a fluorocarbon leader.

9. Use braided line.

10. Use medium tackle.

As we mentioned before, the Permit is not known for being easy to catch. Quite the contrary, it is one of the most difficult fish to find, sneak up on, and catch, especially for the die-hard artificial fishermen out there. Although they certainly aren't all of the tricks in the book, and every locality will have its own finer details, we hope that the 10 tips presented here will give you what you need to start catching more Permit today.

- See more at: <http://theonlinefisherman.com/permit/10-permit-tips#sthash.wDaNiNJZ.dpuf>

Line and Leader for Permit

Line and leader choice is pretty simple when it comes to Permit because these fish are members of Carangidae, the Jack family, and thus swim like any other jack – powerful and fast! So not only are Permit very powerful swimmers by design, they are also one of the largest jacks, growing up to four feet long and 80 pounds. Generally, higher pound-test line than you would normally use inshore or on nearshore reefs will be required if you want to successfully land these big fish. Fortunately, Permit do not have any sharp teeth, so wire leaders are out of the question, and the leader strength is only dependent upon the size of the fish.

Fishing Lines for Permit Fishing

For line, you want to use at least 10-to-15 pound test inshore, and around 20-to-30 pound test offshore. Inshore fish can be allowed to run, tiring out the fish using the drag system on the reel. However, offshore fish are usually associated with structures. If you let an offshore fish run too much, it will likely result in a cut-off from running you under a sharp object, and so the higher pound test line will allow you to pull the fish out faster. As mentioned above, Permit do not have sharp teeth, and so the leader strength is only influenced by the size of the fish. A 20-pound leader inshore, and a 30-to-40 pound leader offshore is appropriate.

Monofilament Line for Permit fishing

Monofilament line is an O.K. choice for the main line on your reel because a good one will cast well, and is essentially clear underwater. Since it is basically clear, it can also be used as a thick leader, however it does not come close to the invisibility of fluorocarbon line as a leader choice. The downside to using monofilament line for Permit fishing is that it stretches, and the stretch is more problematic the more line you have out. Since Permit fishing requires far casts in order to not spook the fish, the stretch in the line when it is very far out will sometimes result in too little power for setting the hook, resulting in a weak hook-set and a lost fish.

Using Braided Line for Permit fishing

A good alternative to monofilament line for Permit fishing is braided line. Braided line has essentially no stretch at all, and so has excellent hook-setting power even when the line is casted hundreds of yards out. Braided line also casts farther and allows more line than either monofilament or fluorocarbon lines, because it has a thinner diameter. The only downside to braided line is that it is quite visible to fish underwater, and since Permit have excellent vision, a very long fluorocarbon leader is required to overcome this.

Using Fluorocarbon for Permit Fishing

Fluorocarbon line is the perfect material for Permit – it is virtually invisible underwater. Permit have such good eyesight that even the slightest things such as the visibility of fishing line can spook them. Since fluorocarbon line on an entire spool is rather expensive, the most efficient method for using this great material is to use it as a leader, which is the part that the fish mainly sees anyway.

Fly Line for Permit Fishing

Fly-fishing for Permit requires two things – getting the fly to the fish, and sinking the fly in a natural way. In regards to getting the fly to the fish, the heavier the line you use, the farther you can cast without spooking the fish. The greatest chance you have of catching a Permit on a fly is on the initial drop after the cast. To mimic the way an actual crab or shrimp would sink, use a fluorocarbon leader, as fluorocarbon has the greatest sink rate, with a small crab fly to get a steady sink.

Final Notes about Permit Lines and Leaders

Permit are powerful, large fish, requiring generally heavy line for landing. When choosing line, remember that these fish have one of the keenest eyes of all fish, and fluorocarbon is a must for leader material. Otherwise, braided line is preferred over monofilament because of the farther casting abilities and greater hook-setting power from far distances.

- See more at: <http://theonlinefisherman.com/permit/best-line-leaders-permit#sthash.1Y5SAt0L.dpuf>

Natural Baits for Permit

Permit are one of the pickiest eaters in the sea. That is why there are only a few natural baits that work well for this fish, making the choices rather easy. The most difficult part about catching Permit is the hunt. If you can find the fish, get close enough for a cast without spooking it, then putting a live crab in front of the fish should result in a strike.

When it comes to choosing natural bait for Permit, keep it small. Even though fish over 20 pounds can be a norm, Permit have a very small mouth for their size. Baits ranging in size from two-to-three inches are perfect for catching even the biggest Permit.

The Best Baits for Permit

In general, the natural diet of Permit includes crabs, snails, urchins, shrimp, and other small invertebrates that they can root up in the seagrass flats or offshore sandy reefs. Since snails and urchins are not easy to find in bait shops, that leaves a variety of crabs and shrimp as the best bait options. Since Permit are very picky, live bait is always the preferred method over dead.

Pass Crab

The Pass crab is hands-down the most effective bait for catching Permit. When it comes to size, you have to go small. For a good frame of reference, try to use crabs the size of a dollar coin – about two-to-three inches in diameter. To find blue crabs, you can check your local coastal bait and tackle shop, or find them on your own. To find them, get a small dip net, and catch them as they drift in-and-out with the tides at night, especially during full moons. You can see them swimming along right at the surface of the water. One trick when using small blue crabs is to pinch off the two back swimmerets (legs), so that they cannot bury themselves in the sand.

Shrimp

The second most effective bait for Permit has to be the shrimp. Shrimp of course also come in a range of sizes, so choose the smaller ones around three inches long. Hook the shrimp under the horn, and either under a floating cork to keep the bait in view, or with a small splitshot above a long leader if the fish are tailing.

Sand Fleas

Sand fleas are often thought of as the go-to pompano bait. Although that is true, many anglers overlook these small crabs when it comes to other fish. As mentioned above, Permit have very small mouths, and love to dig out small sand fleas from the sand. Sand fleas can be caught right at the beach where the waves break on the sand. Look for the small trails as the sand fleas jet back into the water after they get pushed onto shore.

Fiddler Crabs

Although the blue crab is the top bait, fiddler crabs will work pretty well for Permit, especially when the blue crabs are hard to come. Fiddler crabs can often be caught by the million – O.K., by the hundred – and stay alive well in a cooler full of moist sand. If you are going to keep the crabs for more than a day however, the sand will have to be

completely changed every day, as the ammonium waste built up in the sand will kill them over time.

Other Baits that Will Catch Permit

There aren't too many baits besides the ones presented above that will catch Permit in great numbers, but there are a few that will work. There are other species of crab out there that work great if you can find them, including those small mangrove tree-crabs you see all over the mangroves, as well as a small calico crab found in the surf. Since Permit eat primarily invertebrates, it is also possible to catch them on small clams or chunks of squid, especially when fishing them over reefs or in deep inshore channels.

- See more at: <http://theonlinefisherman.com/permit/natural-live-bait#sthash.Ejd6vgUj.dpuf>

Artificial Lures for Catching Permit

When it comes to difficult fish to catch on artificial lures, the Permit takes the cake. With superb eyesight, and a picky appetite, Permit have been frustrating anglers for years – heck, sometimes you can even throw a perfect live bait in front of a school of 20 of them with no response! With proper knowledge, skill, and patience however, you can catch this awesome fish on artificial lures.

Lures for Catching Permit

As with most fish, the lures that catch permit simply mimic what the fish naturally eats; this may include small soft plastics or flies mimicking crabs or shrimp. The key to the success of these lures is that they have to be as realistic as possible, both in the physical appearance of the lure, and the movements of the lure. Permit have excellent eyesight, and will shy away from anything they see suspicious. What this means for you is that if you're throwing an artificial crab, you have to think like a crab.

There are however, some lures that just seem to work for another reason. These include many jigs that don't realistically look like anything that exists in the wild, but for some reason, they just work.

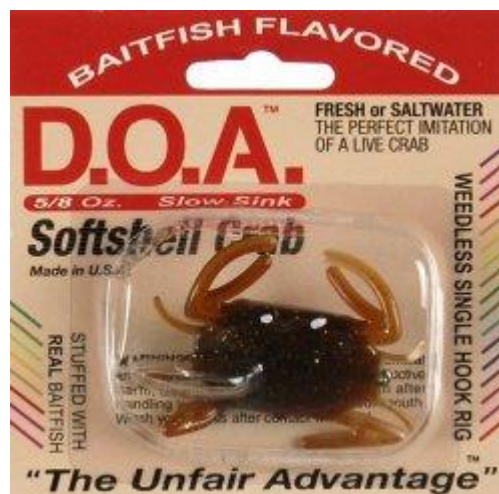
Soft Plastics for Permit

The soft plastic lures available on the market today would fool many humans as the real deal. Permit however, have a better eye than us when it comes to food, and they can spot even the slightest inconsistency when a lure is trying to mimic a natural prey. That is why some of them work -- and some of them don't -- you have to choose the lures that not only look like prey, but act like them too. For Permit, many of the strikes you will get will be on the initial drop of the lure, as it sinks down from the cast. Plastic crabs and shrimp from companies such as Berkely® Gulp!® and D.O.A.™ have mastered a realistic animal as it sinks to the bottom. Simply cast the lure in front of the school (in the direction the school is heading) and hope that the sinking bait looks real enough for a meal.



[Berkley Gulp! Saltwater Peeler Crab](#)

Berkley Gulp!® and D.O.A.™ are two companies that make excellent soft plastic baits, but there are many more coming into the market each year.



[DOA Softshell Crab](#)

Jigs for Permit

A jig basically just mimics the behavior of a certain animal, such as a crab or shrimp, because, well, just take a look at their design. They don't actually look anything like an animal. When worked correctly however, they can be used to kick up small puffs of sand along the bottom, looking like a crab burying under the sand, or jigged in the upper water columns like a shrimp flicking away.

The best circumstance for using a jig for Permit is when the fish are tailing in the shallow flats. Whether they are in the seagrass beds, sand, or mud flats, Permit will be searching the bottom for crabs, snails, and other invertebrates for dinner. If you bounce a jig along the bottom, creating those small puffs of sand described above, it will initiate an instinctual strike. If you throw a jig in front of a swimming Permit however, they will likely just say, "hmm, that's an odd-looking stick," as they swim right by.

Artificial jigs basically just mimic the behavior of an animal such as a shrimp or crab, and can be bounced along the bottom to kick up small puffs of sand to catch a hungry Permit's eye.

Artificial Flies for Permit

The Permit is another one of those species with a small mouth for such a big fish, making it a blast to catch on a fly. The only problem however, is that it's not so easy! Permit are notorious for being one of the most difficult species to catch on fly. This may be due to their keen eyesight, or it may be due to their general pickiness. Whatever the reason, catching them on a fly takes great skill and patience. Fortunately, some of the best flies out there are designed perfectly for the job – small blue crabs or shrimp that work great for just about any species that lives close to shore. The trick to getting strikes on flies is to master the perfect sink rate – not too fast and not too slow. You want to mimic as close as possible how fast a small blue crab can actually swim to the bottom.

Crab and shrimp flies are readily available from most fly-fishing suppliers and are prime baits for permit.



Dale's Permit Assassinator
Fly #2



NFC Crabby Patty
Olive #1



Merkin Crab



NFC "Manchy Flats Crab"
Tan



Permit Crab



NoCrab

[Crab - Permit Flies Assortment](#)

A General Statement about Permit Lures

Overall, Permit are very difficult to catch on artificial lures, but it can be done with some good success if you know how to do it. Remember that these fish seem to have some of the best eyes in the fish world, and that they can be very picky when eating. You have to make sure that your lure either looks, behaves, or preferably both -- like the real thing.

- See more at: <http://theonlinefisherman.com/permit/artificial-lures-jigs#sthash.eHNVlbOj.dpuf>