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Surfcasting gear, tips and techniques

Rods

A long rod (14 to 15ft) will enable you to keep the line over the waves or weed.

A shorter rod will enable to apply more pressure on a big fish (10 to 12ft).

13 to 14ft rods offer maximum cast but 12ft is still a very popular rod for a mixture of rock and surfcasting.

2 or 3 pce are preferred for easy transportation and don't reduce your cast at all with glass to glass connections.

High content carbon-fibre (graphite) are the best for casting and applying pressure on the fish.

Fibreglass or e-glass rods are more robust but don't cast as quite as far. They are normally heavier to use depending on the blank thickness

Breakage – Be careful when transporting your rods that they don't get knocked or damaged. This will weaken the blank and they may break at some stage when you least expect it. A 'pvc' plumbing down pipe is good transportation tube and a material or canvas cover will protect your rod in transit too.

Guides – ceramic guides need to be checked for chips and breakage. A chip in the ceramic will cut through your line when casting or striking fish. In this case, cut the binding on the guide and take it off. You can still fish without a guide but it will need to be replaced asap. Quality hard chrome guides are good for rockfishing and generally tougher. Check them for grooves (especially if you are using braid) as this will also fray the line or cut it off.

For a free spool rod it needs the guides on the opposite 'spine of the rod' than for fixed spool reels (eggbeaters). You need more guides on a freespool (overhead) rod so the line never touches the blank when under full load – same with eggbeater rods.

NZ made rods

The kilwell powerplay series of rods are well known NZ made products and offer a wide range and good quality. Price range from \$250 - \$800. Many anglers buy kilwell blanks and make their own.

Composite developments also make a nice surfcaster called plumb-fibre

The distance casting record in NZ is now around 220 mtrs set by a kilwell 222. Casting 150mtrs now is pretty standard which is amazing considering 100mtrs used to be a good cast a decade or two ago.

Imported rods vary in quality and price. Prices start at \$45 and the sky's the limit. If you spend \$150 to \$200 you can get a high content graphite rod which has the capability to cast over 150mtrs. We do sell a lot of 12 to 13ft fibreglass rods for \$50 - \$85 which are good to get you started without breaking the bank.

The penn silverado and slammers and okuma solaris, axeon and predator rods are all big distance casting. The shimano beastmasters and daiwa elimimators are both tougher graphites with more robustness and a reasonably big cast. All these rods go for around \$150 - \$225.

Making your own rod

For the investment of a blank and some guides you can make up a rod and save \$100 - \$200 from buying madeup ones. You can make the rod to your own specifications with your kind of guides (depending on price or how robust you need the rod and if it is a freespool or fixed spool rod (or both))

Its easy to bind on guides and glue the reel seat, grips and butt on. All you do is mix super strength alryldite and bind the guides (you can copy a rod from the shop for spacing). Where the blank bends more thats where you need more guides. You need to find the 'spine' of the rod and then sellotape the guides on. Run some line through the guides and bend the rod to see if the line touches the blank anywhere. If it does then you need more guides there. Grab the rod and pretend to cast. This will tell you where to put the reel seat (where it is most comfortable for you). Some people like a long butt section and some shorter.

Reels

There are two main kinds of reel used by NZ surfcasters.

Eggbeater or fixed spools as they are called are good to learn how to cast and work well for distance casting too. They do suffer from line twist but are very good reels preferred by the majority of the NZ surfcasting fraternity.

Freespools or overhead reels are preferred by some for their line capacity gears and drag systems being more capable for larger fish (kingfish, rays and sharks) and also because the line does not twist like when using the eggbeater reels. They also have a louder clicker when a fish takes off and you are not watching the rod. However they are much harder to cast, especially long distance.

Some fixed spool reels have a XOS longcast spool which is common these days and gives about 10 – 15% bigger casts. Prices start at about \$100 for XOS longcast reels. For a standard eggbeater reel prices start at about \$45. I recommend spending \$150 plus on a reel to get reasonable quality which will last a long time with standard maintenance.

General maintenance

After a days fishing wipe off the salt and sand with a damp cloth. You might need to get an old toothbrush into the hard to reach places to remove sand. Make sure the bail arm roller is rolling. Back off the drag. Spray with innox or similar anti salt product which wont harm the line or drag washers etc. the eggbeater reels should have the spool taken off and grease the rotor (the bit that goes up and down) and remove sand and salt. Also unscrew the handle and lubricate.

Setting the drag

It's personal preference to fish soft drag and tighten it up before striking a fish or to fish medium to heavy drag so you can strike the fish without altering it. Bait-runner eggbeater reels are good because you can have light drag set and as soon as you turn the handle it goes into medium to heavy drag

Line

Braided line is good because it has minimal or no stretch and enables you to feel bites are hard to detect in nylon. It also has a very thin diameter and you can get more line on your spool. Personally I prefer using braid for these reasons.

Special casting braid like fireline, matrix pro, titanium has a little more memory and casts better (comes off the spool easier than other braid). Also being thinner you can get more capacity on your

spool. Being thinner it can get freyed easier on the rocks.

Braided microfibre 'spectra' or dyneema braid can tangle when putting in a big cast but is tougher on the rocks, especially the braided microfibre or 'specta' braid.

Nylon or monofilament is a darn site cheaper and is still at the present time more popular for surfcasters. This may well change with prices coming down on braid and special braid developed for casting. It stretches 15 – 20% which sometimes can be an advantage if a big fish takes off.

Sinkers

It depends on how long you are fishing and the terrain you are fishing for how many sinkers and the sizes you need. For big casts the torpedo sinker is good 4 – 5oz, the gripping the bottom (to keep tight line and detect bites) the upside down pyramid or breakaway sinkers are good.

Running sinkers are good in some locations but a sinker at the bottom enables a better cast.

Connecting the sinker on with lighter line will help it snap off in a snag. Too lighter line and you will lose too many sinkers. The scud or stealth sinker (like a spoon) do not snag up as much and are good for rock terrain while still giving you a big cast. Berley cage sinkers are a very good way of berleying while doing big casts while surfcasting.

breakaway sinkers grip in to the sand then the wires detach when retrieved

Swivels and clips

You certainly need swivels to stop line twist with fixed spool (eggbeater) reels but they are not as important on freespool reels. Personally I prefer to keep the metal bits to a minimum but it can be handy to clip on traces

Hooks

Beak or octopus hooks are still a common surfcasting hook, but slowly recurves or circles are taking over as they are self setting. 1 – 3/0 hooks are a common size for much fishing with 4 – 6/0 better for bigger fish like large snapper and kingfish.

Extra gear

It pays to be prepared. This list is a guide only

Torch, Spare batteries and bulb, cotton x 2, knife (and spare), wet weather gear and spare clothing, first aid kit, water and food, spare hooks, sinkers and swivels, traceline, spool of line (in case you lose the line on your reel), Chilly bag or bin - to keep bait frozen and fillets fresh. Spare tip and rod guide, multitool, insulation tape, matches, beachspike (x2)

Try and keep your gear to a minimum if you are carrying it in. also use waterproof containers or bags so the salt or rain water doesn't get into everything.

A good robust pack is a great way of transporting your gear to location. The good ones are more comfortable which 'ergonomic' straps and frame. A 10 litre bucket with lids is good for gear, bait or fish storage and a good seat.

How to read a beach (where to fish)

Some parts of the beach are better fishing than others. To find these you need to find if there are any reefs, rocks, weed, channels and gutters out there. The fish often hang out on the edge of a reef or weed bank or on the edge of a drop-off, in a deeper channel or where there is food (ie shellfish, crabs, small fish).

1 You might be able to see some darker water indicating rocks or deeper water, you might be able to see a different colour of water (fish sometimes like the cleaner bluer water, sometimes the stirred up greener or brown water might be full of food and a good place for the fish to hang out.

2 By climbing up a hill and looking down with polaroid glasses you can see the reef, weed or deeper or shallower water. A gut is a deeper hole or area where the food source can be.

3 Watch where the waves build up and disappear, this will show you the shallower or reefy areas (where the waves build up) and the deeper or non reefy area where the waves disappear or get smaller.

4 Throw a sinker out at different places along the beach and slowly wind it in. If it gets stuck or snagged this will indicate a rock or reef or weed.

How to get a bigger cast

1. Use a XOS long cast reel (with longer spool).
2. Spool up with 6-8 kg (quality) nylon or 8 - 10kg casting braid and a tapered casting leader.
3. Use a high content graphite rod 12 – 14ft
4. Use a 4 – 6oz sinker (aero-dynamic shape)
5. Use a bait clip, impact shield or imp clip to stop the bait from flying around
6. Use a aero-dynamic shape bait
7. One bait rather than two will give a better cast
8. Improve your actual casting technique.

Rigs and terminal tackle and gear

With wind or swell running an upside down pyramid sinker grips into the shingle and helps you keep tight line and detect bites. Small hooks between #1 and 2/O get more hookups than using larger 3 to 4/O hooks. You need to use strong hooks and dont go too hard on a fish to risk pulling the hook.

A one or two hook ledger rig or a pulley rig are the preferred rigs for our coastline.

Extra gear - a sturdy beachspike, spool of cotton or bait elastic x 2 (for tying on baits), headlamp and torch (or lantern) for nightfishing, 2 x knives, bait board, chilly bag or bin.

Techniques

Where the fish are found

Often fish can be on the open or in a gutter, dropoff or edge or a bank but they can also be found on the edge of a reef. The fish can sometimes be in close to shore, dont discount a short cast especially for kahawai, trevally, moki and tarakihi

With the rising tide the swell stirs up the decaying weed and sandhoppers anywhere on a shingle beach. This is where fish often feed. Smaller hooks and bait can be more effective here

Big resident fish are more likely to feed around a particular rock and be suseptable to bigger baits.

Bait

Crayfish, crab, paua gut, tua-tua, prawn or mussel all tied on with cotton and are good baits for fish like moki, tarakihi, snapper and trevally. Pilchard, bonito (skipjack tuna), blue mackerel, trevally are all baits used as cubes or stip baits and are good on snapper, kingfish, kahawai, trevally, gurnard and other fish

key points - The fresher the better. Cover the hook with bait and leave the barb pro-truding. Small baits seem to work better when the fish are hard to catch.

Berley

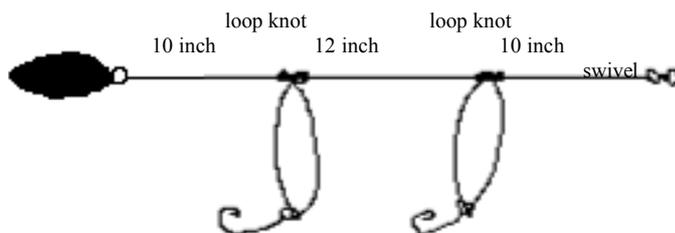
Berlying up a spot certainly helps. You can throw it in, use berley cage sinkers or put a dispenser into the water (on outgoing tide) or into a nearby stream.

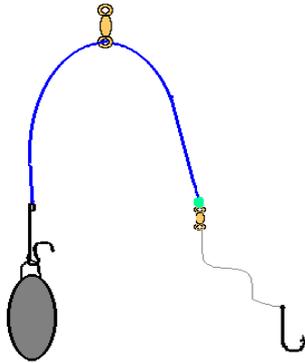
Best times of the day

Primarily the turn of light or after dark are the best times on shallow beaches. Deeper beaches and rocks or wharfs can produce good fishing during daylight hours. A rising tide can be good and the midpoint between moonrise and set can also be good.

Rigs

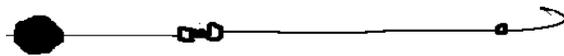
The ledger rig with one or two hooks is the most comon rig for most surfcasting in Wellington. 4 - 5oz sinker (either torpedo for rough ground or upside down pyramid or breakaway for clean ground. 1 - 4/0 hooks, 25lb line is good but some folks use lighter line with a shock leader (for a big cast), or fish heavier line for real snaggy country. Cottoning on your baits for bottom fishing is a must.





The pulley rig – the hook clips into the bait clip (just above the sinker) prior to casting and detaches when the sinker hits the water. This is one of the best rigs for big distance. The bait clip can also be an impact shield or imp clip.

The running rig – The sinker can sit on top of the sinker or the swivel and can be 1/4oz up to 6oz depending on conditions



mainline 20lb sinker swivel trace (50lb) hook

The sinker runs backwards and forwards along the main line on top of the swivel. You can also use a running rig with no swivel or get rid of the sinker completely and just strayline with a hook on the end of you line

- **The running rig is good for shorter cast surfcasting, rockfishing and boatfishing.**

- Sinker weight can vary from 1/8th oz up to 20oz depending on casting, current and water depth

- You can have a 2nd hook running on top the main hook or have it fixed with a snood knot a inch or 2 up from the main hook

Species of Fish

Blue moki - short casts just behind the breakers – caught on shingle beaches on the edge of a reef – bait cray, crab, paua gut, tua-tua, prawn or mussel all tied on with cotton. Fish the turn of light or after dark.

Spotty sharks – Fish after dark. Crab, prawn or crayfish baits, long casts on the shingle away from rock and reef.

Gurnard – fish the sand, 3/o hooks, fillet baits, Normally bigger cast produce more fish.

Red cod - are caught mainly after dark on the sand

kahawai and couta are caught anywhere, Pilly or skipjack tuna bait is the best for these fish

Trevally – skipjack tuna ad pichard baits, prawn or cray. Winter can be good as well as summer

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