



## **Pete Lamb Fishing Ltd - Wellington, New Zealand**

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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 but are harder to put in maximum pressure when on a big fish. A shorter rod will enable to apply more pressure on a big fish (10 to 12ft).

13 to 14ft rods offer maximum cast as long as they are high content carbon fibres (graphite) but the 12ft is still a very popular rod for a mixture of rock and surfcasting.

2 or 3 pce are preferred for easy transportation and hardly reduce your cast from having a one piece rod.

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. Nano resin is the latest development for stronger bigger casting rods.

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 rods 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 or cut the line.

For a free spool rod the guides are on the opposite side of the rod compared to a fixed spool rod (eggbeater style). You need more guides on a freespool (overhead) rod so the line never touches the blank (otherwise the line will fray when under pressure of a big fish)

Reel seat – wash this after every days fishing so it doesn't get jammed up sand and grime.

Butt – If you are rockfishing you may like to wrap duck tape (or similar) around the base of the rod to protect the blank

### **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. The distance casting record in NZ is was 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 \$300 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.

Most brands have good carbon fibre rods and now we are seeing nano technology which is also pretty good. These rods go for around \$150 - \$300.

### **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 made up 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)

It's easy to bind on guides and glue the reel seat, grips and butt on. All you do is mix super strength araldite and bind the guides (you can copy a rod from the shop for spacing). Where the blank bends more that's 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 inox or similar anti salt product which won't 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. I normally run about 3-4kgs of drag pressure (using 10kg line) and make sure my beach spikes are very solidly placed in the ground so the rod will double right over before giving line. You can set the pressure using scales or a litre water bottle tied onto your line for each kg of drag pressure

## 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.

Being thinner you can get more capacity on your spool as well. Most anglers top shot a half spooled reel with 150 – 200mtrs of braid. 20 – 30lb braid is good for surfcasting and 50lb braid is good for rockfishing.

**Nylon or monofilament** is a darn site cheaper and may be a better option for the really big casts and for novice anglers until they get proficient with casting. It stretches 15 – 20% which sometimes can be an advantage if a big fish takes off. 10 – 1lb breaking strain is good for the big casts in clear ground. 20 – 30lb is good for rough ground. 25Lb is a good starting breaking strain

## 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 upside down pyramid is invaluable with windy or swelly conditions. This sinker grips into the shingle and helps you keep tight line and detect bites. For extreme conditions (often in the Wairarapa), breakaway sinkers grip into the sand really well. When you retrieve them the wires semi-detach allowing easy winding. Scud sinkers (like a spoon) do not snag up as much and are good for rocky terrain while still giving you a big cast. Berley cage sinkers are a very good way of berleying while doing big casts while surfcasting.

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.

If you tie a figure eight loop at the bottom of your trace you can change sinkers easy without cutting the trace

## 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. A clip swivel is handy to attach a trace.



## Hooks

Beak or octopus hooks are still a common surfcasting hook, but slowly recurves or circles are becoming more popular as they are self-setting. 1 to 3/O hooks are a common size for much fishing with 4 to 6/O better for bigger fish like large snapper and kingfish. 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 don't go too hard on a fish otherwise you risk pulling the hooks.



## Extra gear

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

Torch and spare batteries, headlamp, cotton x 2, knife (and spare), wet weather gear and spare clothing, first aid kit, water and food

hooks - #10 and #6 for bait fish (4 of each), 1/0, 3/0, 5/0 for standard fishing (10 of each), 10/0 for kingis or sharks (x2)

sinkers – 4 to 5oz. 6 x Breakaways, 6 x upside down pyramids, 6 x torpedo, 2 x scud

swivels - #1 or #3, traceline (30 – 50lb)

spare 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), deckchair, gumboots or waders

Try and keep you 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.

# Techniques

## Where the fish are found

Often fish can be out in the open or in a gutter, dropoff or edge of a bank but they can also be found on the edge of a reef. The fish can sometimes be in close to shore but generally further out especially if there is a bit of a sea running. Don't discount a short cast especially for kahawai, trevally, moki and tarakihi.

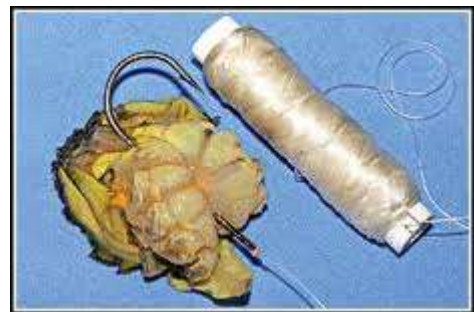
With the rising tide the swell stirs up the decaying weed and sandhoppers anywhere on a shingle beach. This is where fish often feed. Smaller hooks and bait can be more effective here

Big resident fish are more likely to feed around a particular rock and be susceptible 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 strip 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 protruding. Small baits seem to work better when the fish are hard to catch. Cottoning on your baits for bottom fishing is a must.



## 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. I use crushed up kina and mussels or mashed up tuna and mackerel mostly. If you're using a berley sinker make a mix of 50/50 breadcrumbs and berley mix. This makes a dough that will not fly out of the cage in the cast.

## 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. Sometimes the fish just feed at a random time of the day or night which can be influenced by barometric pressure, weather changes and good bait or berley.

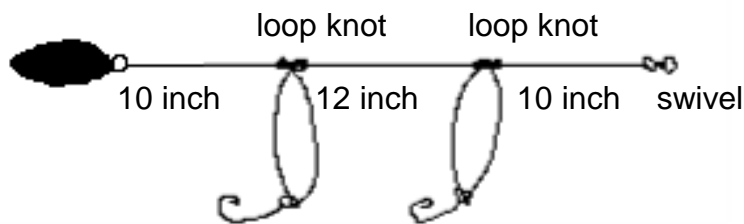
## Rigs (traces)

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

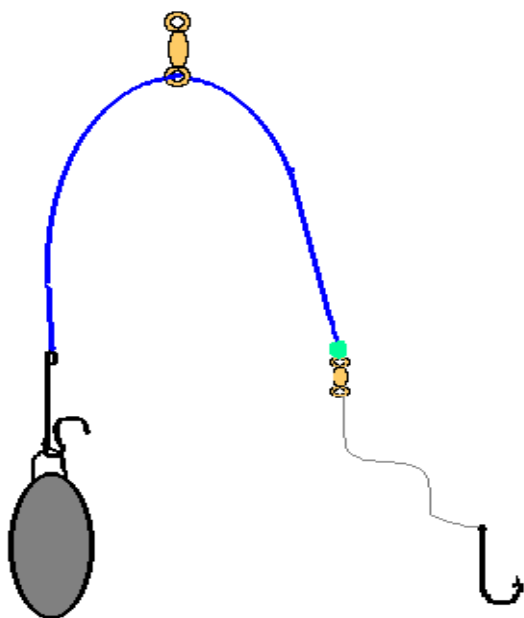
Line - 40Lb trace line is a good breaking strain but some folks use lighter line for clear ground (25lb) and targeting fussy or small mouthed fish like moki and tarakihi. Heavier (60lb) line is preferred when there are barracouta, sharks or even kahawai around as they all frey the trace with their teeth. Fluorocarbon trace line is harder for the fish to see but is more expensive than

standard trace. Suffix or Rovex brands of nylon are good middle of the road brands of line to use for mainline and trace.

**The ledger rig** with one or two hooks is the most common rig for most surfcasting in Wellington. 4 - 5oz sinker. A torpedo or bomb sinker for rough ground or upside down pyramid or breakaway for clean ground – they grip into the bottom enabling you to keep tight line) 1/0 - 4/0 hooks. And 4 – 6 inch droppers.

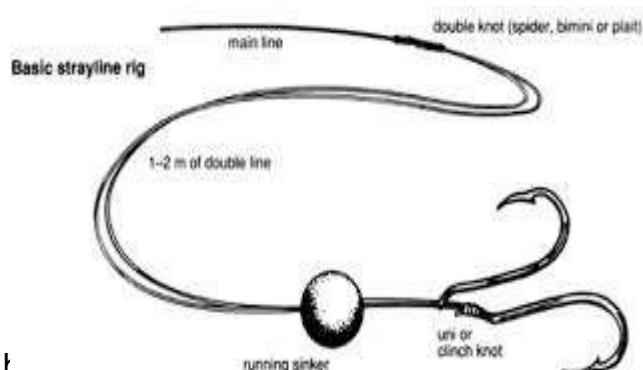


**The pully rig** – the hook clips into the bait clip (just above the sinker) prior to casting and detaches when the sinker hits the water. This is one of the best rigs for big distance. The bait clip can also be an impact shield or imp clip.



**The running rig** – The running rig is a straylining rig with a sinker running up and down the line. The sinker sits on top of the hook (up to 1 oz0 or on top of a swivel a meter or so up the trace (1 – 4 oz). Lighter sinkers are ok with a rough bottom but the heavier ones get fouled up to easily. The running rig is generally a sandy bottom rig.

You can have a 2<sup>nd</sup> hook running on top the main hook or have it fixed with a snood knot a inch or 2 up from the main hook. I prefer a single hook.



## Species of Fish

**Spotty sharks** - Fish after dark. Crab, prawn or crayfish t

away from rock and reef. A high or rising tide can be good. They bite during the day too on many Wairarapa beaches

**Gurnard** - Fish the sand with 3/0 hooks and fillet baits like trevally, mackerel and skipjack tuna. They are day time feeders preferring the 1<sup>st</sup> and last couple of hours before dark and after dawn. A bigger cast sometimes can be an advantage. They sometimes prefer cleaner water and the spring and summer time rather than the winter.

**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 and pilchard baits, prawn or cray. Winter can be good as well as summer



Wainui beach (above). The streams attract kahawai and sometime moki. There are rocks in the middle of the bay where the moki bite well. The spotty sharks hang out (after dark) in the middle of the bay in the sandy areas. Bluecod also hang out (during the day) in this area when the water is clean

**Blue moki** – Wellington's premiere sport and table fish for surfcasters

Moki fight incredibly hard for their size and are dirty fighters heading for the reef and weed once hooked. They can be caught all year round but after the annual spawning run they are in good numbers and can be caught much easier. October through summer to autumn is the best time. The legal size limit for blue moki is 40cms (this is when they mature). That is about a 1kg fish.

### **Casting**

Short casts just behind the breakers or next to a rock or reef structure.

### **Area they are found**

Shingle beaches on the edge of a reef. Moki come in close to shore around the turn of light and feed around patches of weed. The most common thing we have found in their stomachs are small paua, limpits and brown crunched weed with a sandhopper like creature mixed into it. They can also be found around wharf structures and rocks

With the rising tide the swell stirs up the decaying weed and sandhoppers anywhere on a shingle beach. This is where 'school' moki feed. Smaller hooks and bait can be more effective here. Big resident fish are more likely to feed around a particular rock and be susceptible to bigger baits.

## **Bait**

Cray, crab, paua gut, tua-tua, prawn or mussel all tied on with cotton. The fresher the better. Small baits seem to work better when the fish are hard to catch.

## **Berley**

Berleying 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 will help.

Crushed up crab, cray bodies, kina, mussel, prawn is all good product

## **When to fish**

Primarily the turn of light or after dark are the best times. Sometimes you'll catch them during daylight hours. A rising tide can be good and the midpoint between moonrise and set can also be good.

## **The bite**

Sometime moki suck the bait in and 'steam off' like a run-away freight train. Other times they pick and suck the bait.

## **Rigs and terminal tackle and gear**

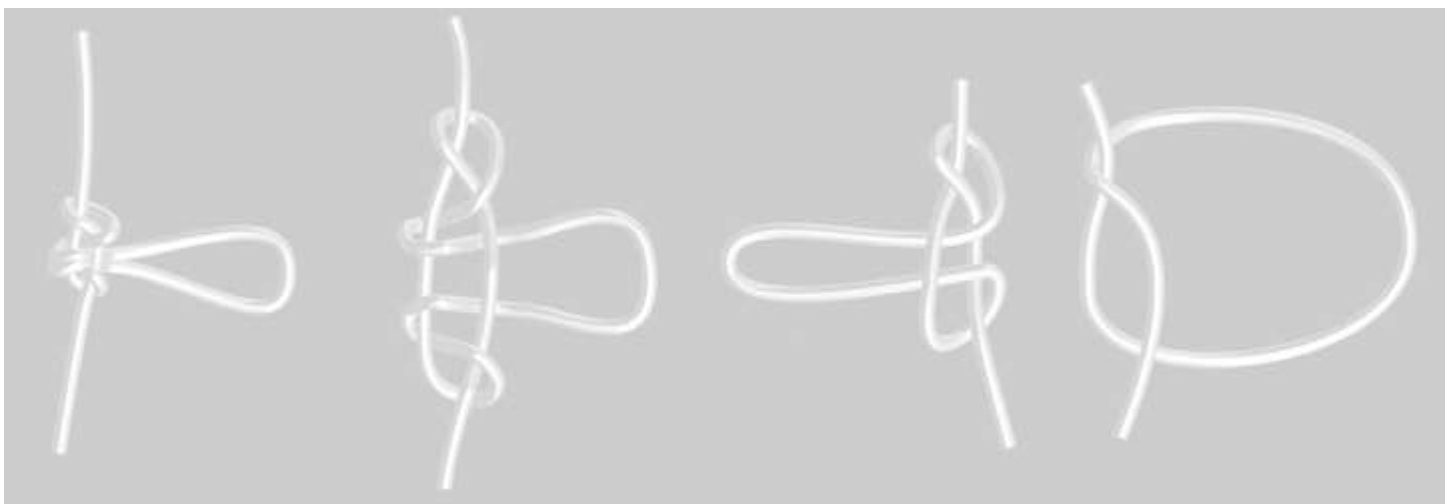
With wind or swell running an upside down pyramid sinker grips into the shingle and helps you keep tight line and detect bites. Occasionally you may need to use breakaway sinkers if there is a swell running or its really windy. Small hooks between #1 and 2/O get more hookups than using larger 3 to 4/O hooks. You need to use strong hooks and don't 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.

10kg line is good but you may like to fish lighter or heavier depending on conditions and your target fish. Braid is very good for detecting bite (no stretch).

12 – 13ft surfcasters are the preferred rod but smaller rods can be used in good conditions.

Paul Barnes kiwi dropper knot



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