**Tips that will increase your success on stillwater**



Want to know how to increase your productivity in stillwater? The following tips provide a short summary of tactics I have found to be critical to success in fishing lakes. These tactics are unique to stillwater environments. Try these yourself and see whether your luck fishing lakes improves.

**Continually move on the water:** You will increase the number of hook ups if you cover more water. Since trout are constantly on the hunt for food, it is critical that the angler also move. If you are not getting hit after a few casts, move to another location. When you do start getting strikes and/or hook ups, make sure you cast in a 360-degree pattern around you before moving. Avoid casting repeatedly into the same spot because the surface disturbance will spook and scatter the trout. Plus, caught fish can scatter other trout that are in the same area, so move on once the strikes begin to diminish. Give that area a rest by fishing elsewhere, and come back later to try again.
For more on this topic, see **Bite has stopped, or has it?**
https://stillwateradventure.com/7msp

**Target the feeding zones:** To find feeding fish, cast from the water to the shallow shoreline areas at first light and late in the day. Midday, target shallow areas of 2-6 feet when trout show on the surface; trout will move away from shoreline edges once the sun is on the water. During hot summer months, try fishing drop-offs into deeper habitat areas. These offer a refuge from warmer shallow waters and support prolific chironomid populations.


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**Choose presentation based on rise types:** Surface and sub-surface feeding trout provide clues as to what stage of the insect they are feeding upon. If you observe surface rings, that usually means trout are sipping adult insects off the surface or pupae just below the surface. If the rise is splashy it usually indicates larger insects like an adult caddis, damsels or terrestrial insects like ants or grasshoppers. If you see a tail and dorsal rise it usually means that trout are feeding on the pupae stage of aquatic insects. If you observe boiling in shallow waters, it indicates trout feeding on insects like scuds or chironomid larvae on the bottom. Knowing how to read the water allows you to adjust your presentation accordingly.

**Target your cast a few feet ahead of a cruising trout:** If you observe which direction the trout is moving, target your cast a few feet ahead of it. By casting ahead, trout are more likely to intercept the fly. If it is not apparent which direction the trout is moving, cast to the left or to the right of the ring. Casting directly to the ring rarely brings a strike as the trout is always on the move.

**Master the skill of casting long distances:** Long casts are essential when: a) there is a flat surface and the sun is overhead, b) fish are feeding on or near the surface, c) the water is gin clear, or d) the fish are feeding in shallow areas. A 40-foot cast is adequate when there is surface ripple, the cover of darkness or when the water is tinted with algae. Casting 60 feet will avoid spooking fish. Also, a longer cast increases the time the fly will be presented to prospective trout increasing chances that more trout will see your fly.

**When trolling, stop moving when retrieving the line:** While trolling in a pontoon boat, stop to retrieve the line. Never retrieve the line while you are moving. After retrieving the fly, recast and begin trolling again. The speed of your boat combined with the rate that you are retrieving the line will move the fly too quickly through the water. Trolling speed and the amount of line you put out controls the depth your fly moves through the water. Forty to fifty (40-50) feet is about right. Too much line in the water causes slack in the line resulting in missed strikes and poor hook ups.

**Cast perpendicular to the wind**: Keeping your back to the wind, cast perpendicular to the direction of the wind. Remember, fish face into the wind in order to intercept food that is blown downwind thus allowing them to conserve energy while hunting. When you cast perpendicular to the wind, trout will see the fly in profile view which increases your chances for hook ups.

**Add lines to your arsenal that maintain the fly in the feeding zone:** Use a floating line for dry flies and flies that are suspended below the surface under an indicator. Floating lines are not suitable for cast and retrieve presentations because retrieving a floating line creates a surface disturbance which spooks trout. Add an intermediate full sink and intermediate sink tip line to your fly fishing tackle. The intermediate full sink line will enable you to cast and retrieve the line and effectively maintain the fly in the top six (6) feet of the water column. This line allows you to present the fly at different depths where feeding trout are cruising. The intermediate sink tip line is used for fishing pupae in the top two feet.

**Factor in the conditions which are relative to time of day and time of year, and the whims of mother nature:** Where and when fish feed is relative to the conditions, which requires an adjustment in your presentation. For example, in early June when the water warms up mid-morning and triggers hatches, I present the pupae stage of the aquatic insects just below the surface in shallow areas. In fall I fish streamers at first light along the shallow shoreline areas where large brown trout and rainbows cruise. During the cooler winter months, I wait


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to fish midday, allowing the sun to warm the water, and fish chironomids vertically up through the top 6 feet of water.

When the feeding behavior changes it can be directly related to changes in weather conditions such as north winds, low pressure system, or full moon. These situations cause trout to seek cover and impact their feeding behavior.
For more on this topic, check out **Adjusting to Changing Conditions**
https://stillwateradventure.com/jodh

**Use a non-slip mono loop knot to tie the fly to the leader:** The loop knot allows the fly to swing freely. Since trout react to movement, allowing the fly to move freely simulating the movement of the natural insect. The only time that I do not use the loop knot is when using dry flies and/or suspending chironomids under an indicator below the surface.

**Use fluorocarbon for the tippet:** I use monofilament for the leader, and fluorocarbon for the tippet because fluorocarbon is less likely to leave a shadow in the water which can spook trout. The density of the fluorocarbon tippet is the same as water so light passes through the tippet rather than reflect off of it. Add 3-5 feet of fluorocarbon to a 9-foot monofilament leader. Fluorocarbon can be stiffer than monofilament, so be sure to use a loop knot to attach the fly. Tie one size smaller tippet to the leader.

**Avoid bead head flies:** It is not possible to suspend a bead head fly mid depth because the head of the will fly drop down and point the tail upward (opposite of the natural position of emerging insects). The weight on the fly should distributed over the shank of the hook which will create an undulating movement when retrieved through the water. The bead head fly drops more drastically and takes you out of the strike zone. The only exception to this is when trolling or using chironomids suspended under an indicator; it does not seem to make a difference if a bead head is used. A discussion of bead head flies and a video showing their underwater movement can be seen in **Three Perspectives on Fly Selection**
https://stillwateradventure.com/sjtq

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