

THE ABCS OF WALLEYE FISHING



Sépaq

Summer vacation is here! It's a time to get away from it all and do something fun and different that breaks the routine. Walleye fishing offers you this opportunity. To be successful, anglers must take the proper steps: choose the right equipment, adapt their fishing technique, and use bathymetric maps and other tools available to them. Get ready and come enjoy a stay at one of Québec's wildlife reserves. The staff of the Société des établissements de plein air du Québec (Sépaq) is waiting for you. This brochure will guide you in organizing your fishing day.

ORGANIZE YOUR FISHING DAY

Essential things to bring with you

CLOTHES

- Warm clothing
- Rainwear
- Hat
- Shoes adapted to the weather conditions
- Sunglasses
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen

SECURITY

- Life jacket
- First aid kit
- Flashlight
- Whistle
- Buoyant line

MATERIALS

- Rod
- Reel
- Tackle box
- Bait
- Landing net
- Cooler
- Plastic bags

MISCELLANEOUS

- Fishing licence
- Right of access to fish
- Map of the territory
- Bathymetric map
- Food
- Beverages

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE FISHING

In order to ensure the protection of fish and fishing, you need to know the rules enacted under the Québec Fishing Regulations (visit the website of the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs (MFFP)).

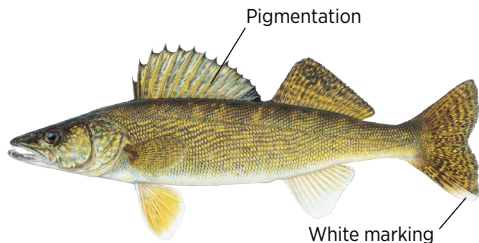
- In Québec, a licence is required for sport fishing, including in wildlife reserves. However, in the case of a family, the children and the parent may fish either with their own licence or the children may do so in the presence of the licenced parent, limited to one catch per fishing licence.
- The number of rods and related gear is limited to **one rod per angler in summer**, and the **number of hooks on a line cannot exceed three**.
- Fishing must be done during authorized seasons and must respect size or weight limits, as well as daily catch and possession limits, if applicable. These limits vary from reserve to reserve, species to species, and sometimes even from lake to lake. It's important to ask the staff about the specifics of the lake you are fishing on or visit www.sepaq.com.

Walleye fishing has the particularity of being subject to a size range that varies according to the region, depending on the growth rate of the fish found there. Walleye that are above or below the length limit allowed in the fishing zone must be released as soon as possible to ensure a better chance of survival.

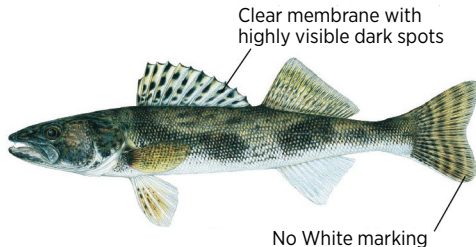
HOW TO RECOGNIZE WALLEYE

Walleye is the fish of choice for gourmets! This species is the most popular in Canada and ranks second in Québec, just after the brook trout (or speckled trout). It's without a doubt one of the most caught fish in North America.

In Québec, there are two species of this fish: the walleye and the sauger. These species differ in their behaviour, their distribution area, and the habitats they frequent. However, their general appearance is similar, so that many anglers confuse them. However, certain identification criteria make it possible to recognize them quite easily.



The walleye



The sauger

Source: MFFP

WHERE TO FIND WALLEYE?

Walleye are usually found in extensive lakes with dark, cool waters (13-21 °C) as well as in large rivers where they mainly frequent pools located at the foot of rapids and areas of moderate current.

As this fish has very light-sensitive eyes, it seeks out areas of low light. Not very selective, it usually feeds in shallow water at sunrise and sunset, while it takes refuge in deep shade or under shelters during daylight hours. In sufficiently murky settings, it can feed all day long.

The walleye in search of food lingers near

- Water inlets, discharges, and other outlets.
- Islands, rocky points, and narrows between two sections of a lake.
- Shallow seagrass beds or bays.
- Shoals, beaver lodges, or rock piles.
- Escarpments (close to banks where the depth suddenly increases).

Also, keep an eye on the wind direction. Fish tend to retreat to the side of structures that are consistently buffeted by the wind, in the same direction.

Unlike brook trout, water temperature is rarely a determining factor in walleye activity levels, except during summer heat waves.

PRACTICAL TOOLS

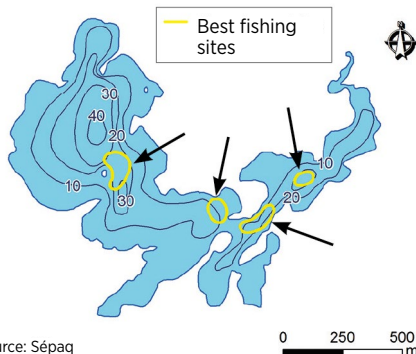
Bathymetric maps

Bathymetric maps are topographic maps of the bottom of a body of water that show the topography in concentric lines of equal depth. The numbers indicate depths in metres or feet, depending on the map. The closer the lines are to each other, the steeper the slope at the bottom and, conversely, the more the lines are separated, the shallower the slope.

The lake maps that are offered free of charge on our website are also essential tools. For some bodies of water, they offer much more than bathymetry: they target favourable fishing sites identified by our experienced guides in order to promote your fishing success.

Fish finder (sonar technology)

Buying a portable or stationary fish finder (sonar technology) can be a very good investment if you want to fish for walleye regularly. A sonar allows you to easily see the depth of the water and adjust to the ambient temperature, in addition to being able to identify the objects found in the water body.

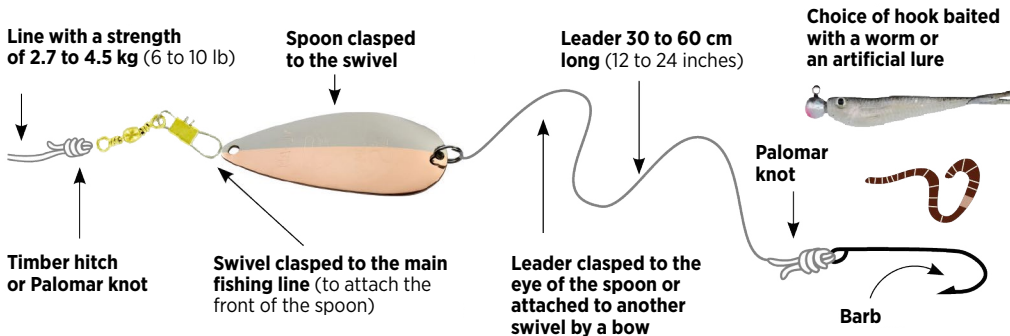


Source: Sépaq

ASSEMBLING THE FISHING LINE LEADER

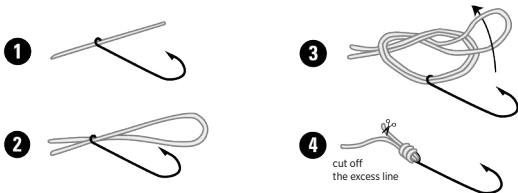
There are several different ways to assemble leaders depending on the fishing technique, the weather conditions, and the number of hooks required.

- Ideally, your reel should have a line with a strength of 2.7 to 4.5 kg (6 to 10 lb) that isn't very visible to the fish.
- Hide the hook as much as possible with the bait (worm, leech, artificial lure).

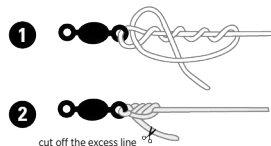


LEARNING SOME KNOTS TO ASSEMBLE A LINE

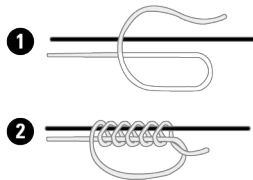
Palomar knot (very popular)



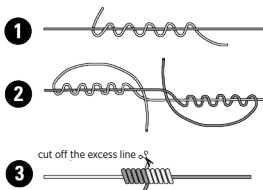
Timber hitch (very popular)



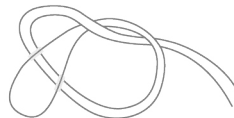
Uni knot (simple grinner)



Connection knot



Bowline knot (simple)



SOME LURES AND TECHNIQUES TO TRY

Artificial lures

Some of the most popular artificial lures for catching walleye include swimbaits, jigs, spinners, and harnessed bottom bouncers.

Swimbait

- Choose models that sink to a depth of 3 to 4.5 m (10 to 15 ft).
- To be used when winds exceed 15 km/h on stretches of the water buffeted by the wind where the depth varies between 3 and 4.5 m.
- Use bright colours when the water is cloudy, and natural colours when the water is clear.



(Fire tiger colour)



(Black gold colour)

SOME LURES AND TECHNIQUES TO TRY (*continued*)

Spinner

- Preferably in cold and murky water: in these conditions, vibrations and noise quickly attract the attention of fish.



(Fire tiger colour)

Jig with flexible artificial lure

- Choose $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ oz jigheads in bright colours (chartreuse, orange, etc.).
- Use flexible artificial lures that imitate small fish, with a round tail (helps imitate the movements of a real fish). Artificial fish normally range in size from 3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches (7.5 to 9 cm) or 4 to 5 inches (10 to 12 cm) for large walleye fishing.
- Thread the hook through the mouth of the artificial fish to bring it out through the abdomen.



Jig



Flexible artificial lure

FISHING TECHNIQUES

Among the following techniques, it's suggested that you start exploring the body of water by trolling. When you get nibbles or catches, concentrate your efforts around that stretch of water by spin fishing or still fishing. If neither of these work, the bottom bouncer technique is your best bet.

Trolling

Trolling is the practice of leaving a line in the water behind the watercraft while moving across a lake.

- It can be practiced with several anglers, each using a different lure or trolling at a different depth.
- Once the type of lure and the depth are determined, you can stop trolling and begin spin fishing or still fishing.

Casting

Spin fishing consists of repeatedly casting and retrieving a lure using movement to entice the fish.

- It can be done from the shore, from a dock, or from a watercraft.
- It's best to use a single hook to avoid tangling the line.

Still fishing

Still fishing involves presenting a baited hook at a fixed location and waiting for the fish to bite.

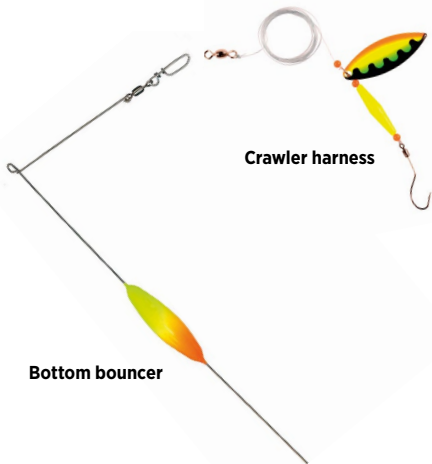
- It can be practiced in any season but is well adapted to the warm period when anglers must offer their bait at a deeper level.
- It's possible to attach up to three hooks (spaced about 45 cm apart), then add a weight to carry the line to the bottom.

FISHING TECHNIQUES (*continued*)

With bottom bouncer and crawler harness

This technique is effective, even in warm weather, when the fishing techniques outlined above don't work.

- As its name suggests, the bottom bouncer is designed to scrape the bottom of a lake and make noise to attract fish.
- The bottom bouncer is a metal wire bent at a 90 degree angle to which a weight of varying heaviness is added, depending on how deep the angler wants it to sink. A general rule is 28 g (1 oz) per 3 m (10 ft) of water.
- A crawler harness can then be attached to the bottom bouncer. The harness is a leader with floats, a spoon, and two hooks. Then all that's left to do is to attach a lure!

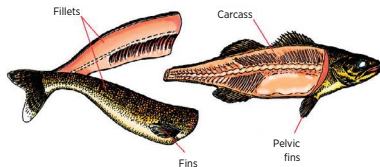
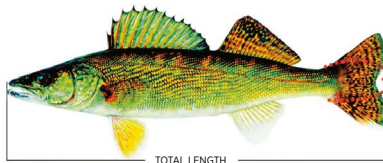


RECOVERING, STORING, AND TRANSPORTING YOUR CATCH

- When you feel a bite, snag the fish by pulling your line up sharply enough to prick the hook.
- After a catch, keep the line taught and the rod up to absorb the shock, unless the fish is trying to jump out of the water, then lower the rod sideways.
- When the fish is close to the watercraft, scoop it up with a net or carefully swing it high into the watercraft without hitting the edge.
- If you're planning to release your catch, see the "Best Practices for Catch and Release" section.
- It's better to keep your catch cool in a cooler than to keep it alive in the water.

At the end of your fishing day, don't forget to record your catches, even those eaten or released!

In order to facilitate enforcement by wildlife protection officers of the size range regulations for harvested walleye, anglers **must transport their fish whole or in fillets**, which will allow identification of the walleye species and determination of the total length.



BEST PRACTICES FOR CATCH AND RELEASE

Fish may be released for conservation reasons, because the species caught is not the one desired, or because the size of the fish does not meet current regulations. To promote the survival of released fish, a few simple precautions can be taken to minimize injury to the fish.

Catch-and-release walleye fishing

- Fish less than 50 feet deep to limit rapid pressure changes on the way to the surface.
- Use artificial lures instead of natural bait (worms and leeches).
- Replace J-hooks or treble hooks with circle hooks.



Artificial lures



Natural bait



Circle
hook



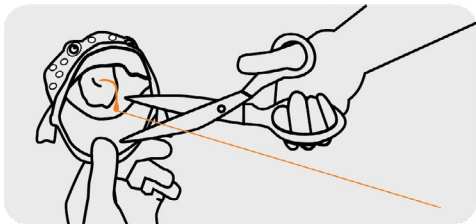
Treble hook



J-hook

BEST PRACTICES FOR CATCH AND RELEASE (*continued*)

- Use a small mesh net without knots.
- Keep the fish in the water for all handling. If you must handle the fish out of the water, it's best to keep your hands bare and wet and to limit the time of exposure to the air to less than 15 seconds. The longer the fish is exposed to the air, the lower its chances of survival.
- Avoid touching the gills or eyes of the fish.



Source: MFFP

IN A NUTSHELL

1. **Become informed:** confirm the dates and learn the regulations pertaining to the water body where you intend to fish.
2. **Gear up:** purchase your fishing licence and equipment.
3. **Review:** practice different fishing techniques depending on the conditions.
4. **Enjoy:** have fun and connect with nature, with rod in hand!



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Credits: Émile David, Beside, Government of Canada