

Sea fishing, step by step

Simple picture guides for getting started on the Donegal shore: setting up, tying on a hook, baiting up, rigs, casting and looking after the fish.



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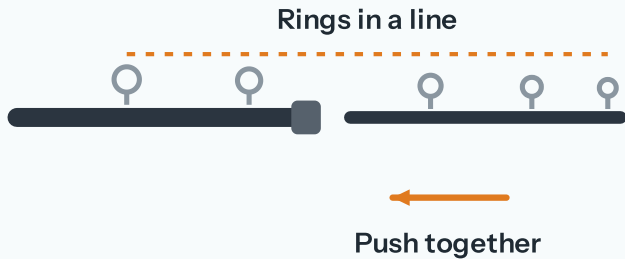
Safety first

- Wear a life jacket on rocks and piers, and never fish rock marks on your own.
- Check the wind and waves on [Cast Donegal](#) before you go, and tell someone where you're going.
- Watch the sea for a few minutes before you set up. Big waves come in sets.
- If someone ends up in the water, call 112 or 999 and ask for the Coast Guard.

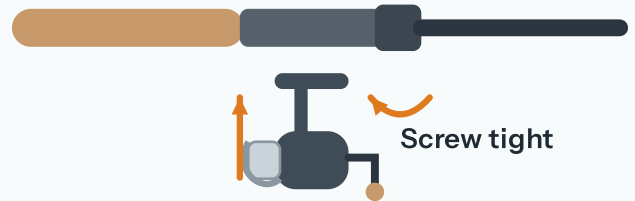
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Setting up your rod and reel

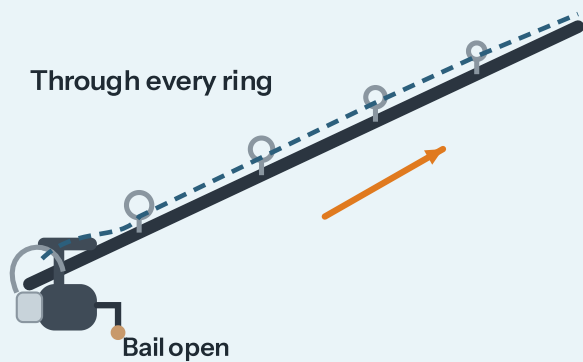
You'll need: A rod, a reel with line on it



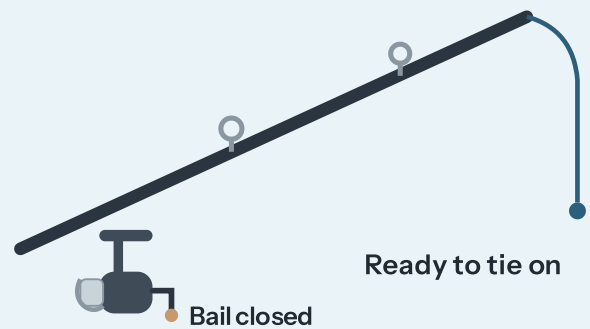
- 1 Join the rod pieces together, with the rings lined up in a straight line. Push them together firmly.



- 2 Slide the foot of the reel into the reel seat on the handle, then screw the collar tight so the reel can't wobble.



- 3 Flip the bail arm open. Pull some line off and thread it up through every ring to the tip.

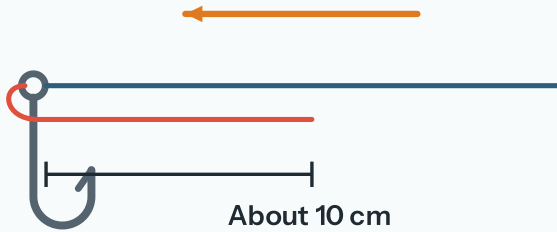


- 4 Flip the bail arm closed. Pull a little line out from the tip, ready to tie on your hook or rig.

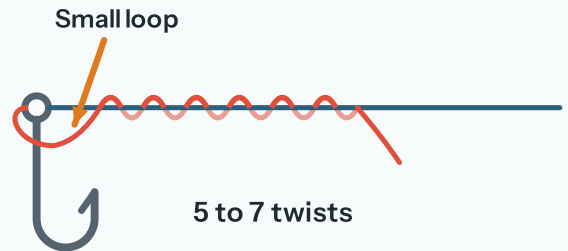
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Tying on a hook: the improved clinch knot

You'll need: Your line and a hook. The loose end is shown in red.



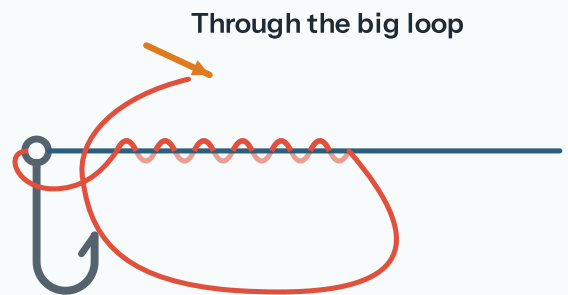
- ① Push about 10 cm of line through the eye of the hook.



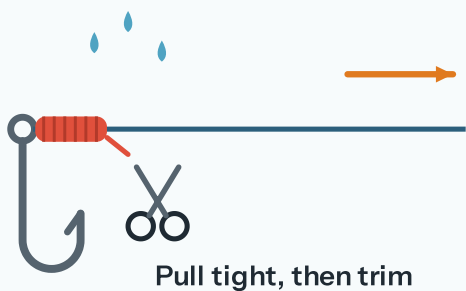
- ② Twist the loose end around the main line 5 to 7 times.



- ③ Push the loose end back through the small loop right next to the eye.



- ④ Now tuck the end through the big loop you've just made.

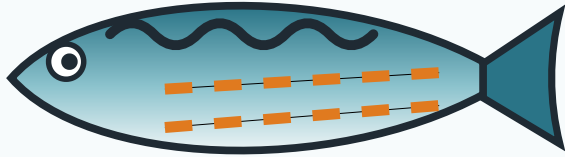


- ⑤ Wet the knot with a bit of water, pull it tight slowly, then trim the loose end.

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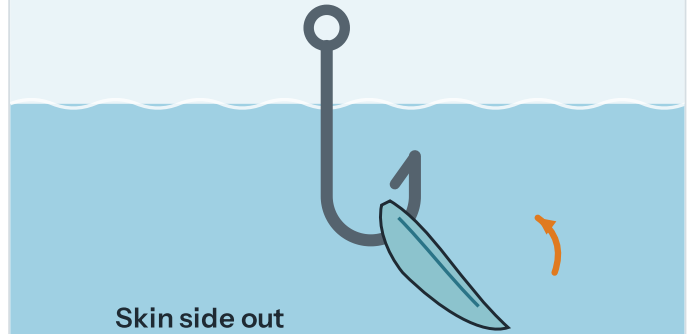
Baiting up

You'll need: A hook tied on, and some bait



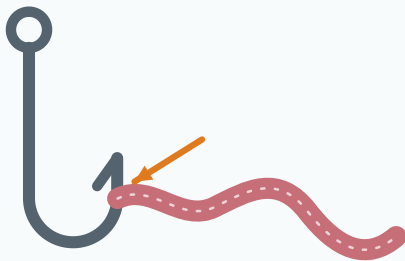
Thin strip from the side

- 1 **Mackerel strip:** cut a thin strip from the side of a fresh mackerel, about as wide and as long as your little finger.



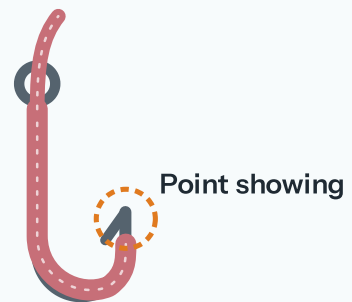
Skin side out

- 2 Push the hook once through the thick end of the strip, skin side out. The rest hangs free and flutters in the water.



Into the head end

- 3 **Worms (lugworm or ragworm):** push the hook point into the head end of the worm.



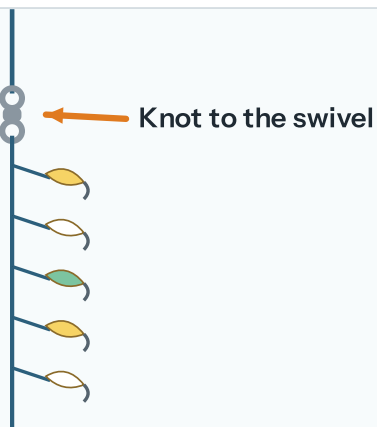
Point showing

- 4 Thread the worm round the bend and up the hook, then onto the line. Leave the point and barb showing so it can hook the fish.

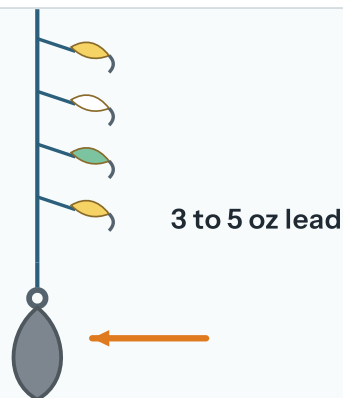
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Mackerel feathers

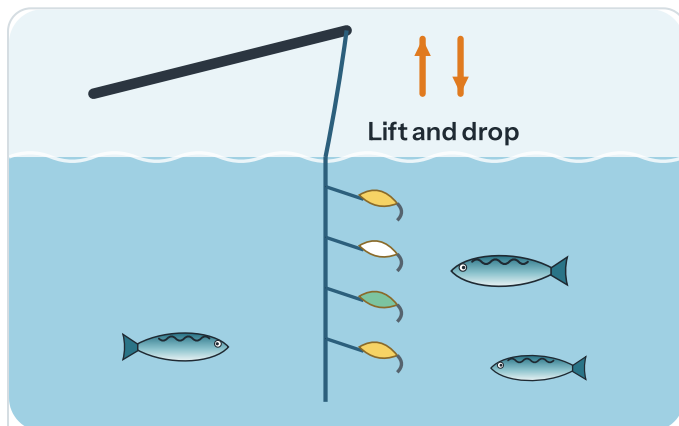
You'll need: A set of mackerel feathers and a 3 to 5 oz lead



- ① Tie the swivel at the top of the feathers to your main line, using the clinch knot.



- ② Clip a 3 to 5 oz (85 to 140 g) lead onto the snap at the bottom.



- ③ Cast out and let it sink. Then lift and drop the rod as you wind in slowly. Mackerel often take several feathers at once.



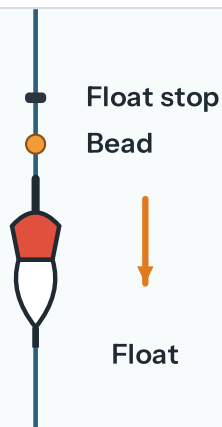
Lots of hooks

- ④ Take care unhooking: there are a lot of hooks. Keep feathers wound on a holder when you're not using them.

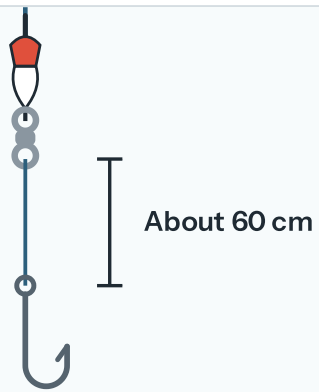
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Float fishing for pollack and wrasse

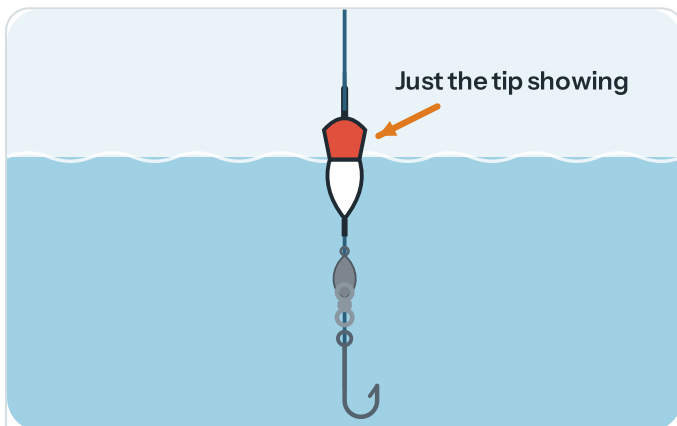
You'll need: A float, a float stop, a bead, a swivel, a hook length and a small weight



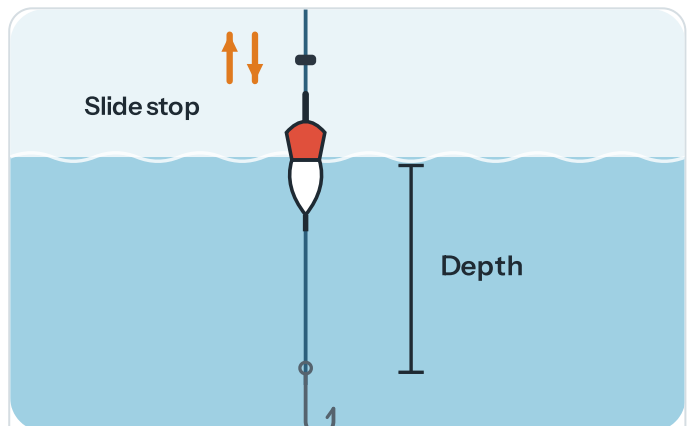
- ① Slide a float stop onto your line, then a bead, then the float.



- ② Tie on a swivel, then add a hook length of about 60 cm with a hook on the end.



- ③ Add a small weight above the swivel so the float sits upright with just its tip showing.

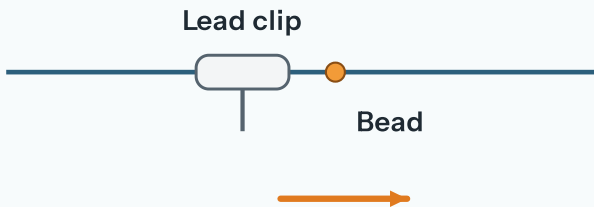


- ④ Slide the float stop up or down to set the depth. From a pier, start around 2 to 3 metres deep, then watch for the float dipping under.

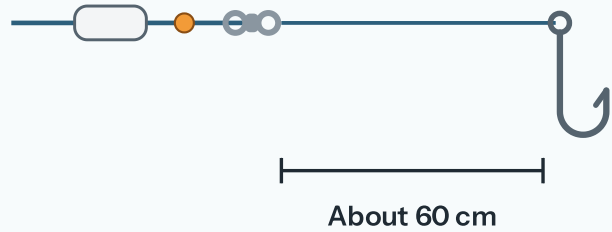
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Bottom fishing with a running ledger

You'll need: A lead clip or boom, a bead, a swivel, a hook length and a 3 to 5 oz lead

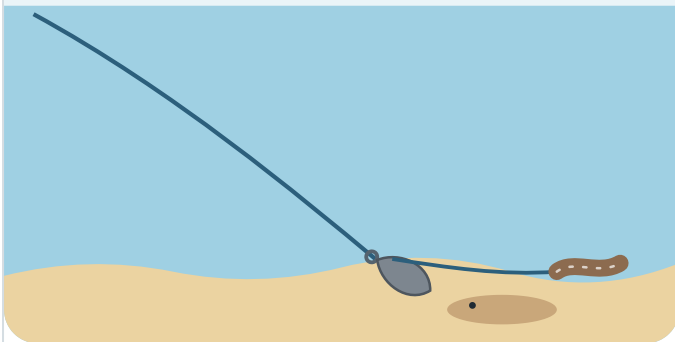


- 1 Slide a lead clip or boom onto your line, then a bead.



- 2 Tie on a swivel, then add a hook length of about 60 cm with your hook.

Keep it tight



- 3 Clip on a 3 to 5 oz lead, bait up and cast out. Keep the line tight and watch the rod tip for bites.

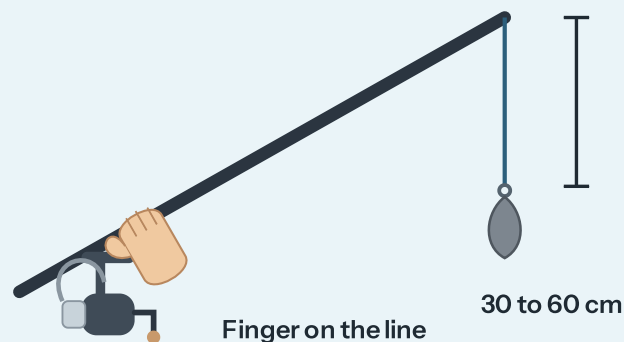
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Casting safely

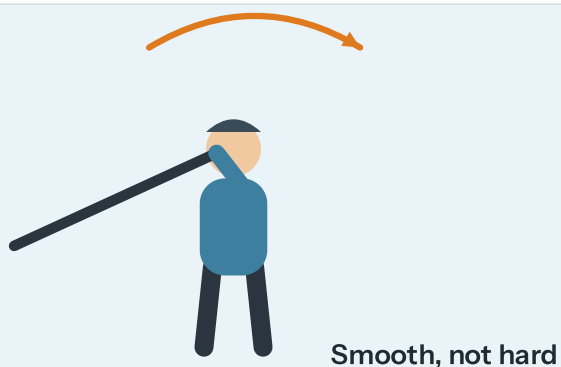
You'll need: Plenty of space, and a clear look around



- 1 Every single time, check behind and around you for people, dogs and cars.



- 2 Leave about 30 to 60 cm of line hanging from the rod tip. Open the bail arm and hold the line against the rod with your finger.



- 3 Bring the rod back over your shoulder, then push it forward smoothly. No need to force it.



- 4 Take your finger off the line when the rod is pointing up and out in front of you, about halfway between straight up and level. Close the bail arm when the rig lands.

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Unhooking and releasing a fish

You'll need: Wet hands, and pliers or a disgorger

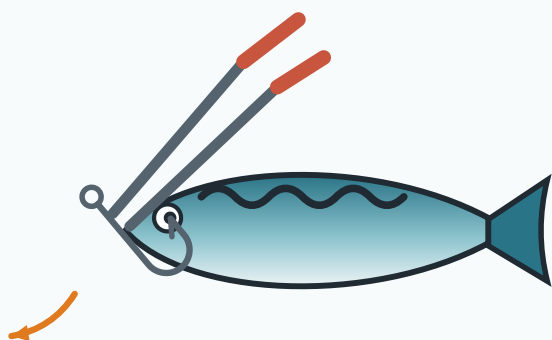


- ① Wet your hands first. Dry hands strip the slime that protects a fish's skin.



Just behind the head

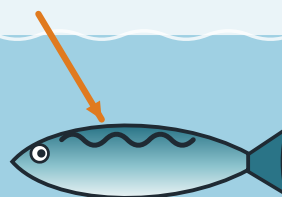
- ② Hold the fish firmly but gently, just behind the head. Watch out for the spiky fins on wrasse and bass.



Back it out gently

- ③ Use pliers or a disgorger to back the hook out the way it went in.

Back it goes



- ④ If you're putting it back, do it quickly: low to the water, head first. Remember the bass rules: two a day at 40 cm or more.

Cast Donegal Dún na nGall. castdonegal.netlify.app

These guides cover the basics. Ask in your local tackle shop too: they know what's working right now.