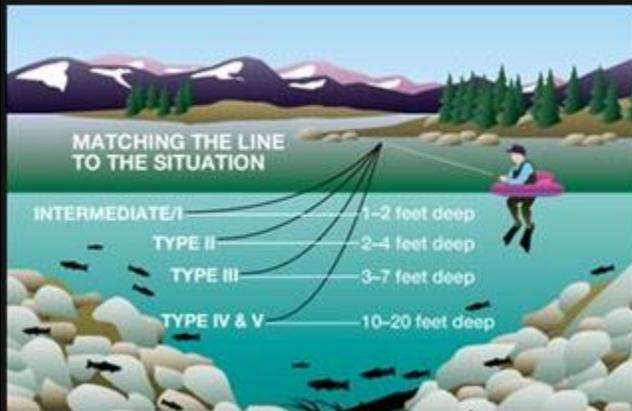


# Sinking Lines



## Sinking Lines: How to use them effectively in the saltwater

### Line Design

Sinking lines have become a popular adjunct to the local striper fisherman's equipment arsenal. These lines can be very helpful when the fish are holding deep. The sinking line will help deliver your fly to the level where the fish are. Many people complain about the heaviness of these lines and how their shoulders and arms hurt after using them. Using sinking lines can be difficult if you use them in the same way you use your standard weight forward floating line. The real secret to casting sinking lines effectively is based on understanding the differences in the line design then using this knowledge to make some adjustments in your casting techniques. This will help you to use sinking lines without pain. First we will look at the design of sinking lines.

Sinking lines are comprised of two parts: the head part which is weighted and the running line which is unweighted. The head portion has a weighted material, usually tungsten or lead which is impregnated into the coating of the fly line to help it sink. The head section is generally about 20-30 feet in length. The running line is an unweighted, thinner diameter line. The running line diameter is thinner so it will shoot easier and allow you to cast farther. The head and the running line can be two separate components joined by a loop to loop connection, or they can be integrated into one fly line, these tend to be more popular at present. The head is usually a different color than the running line, this gives you a visual clue to know where the head or weighted section ends and the unweighted running line begins. The purpose of the weighted head section is to deliver the fly to the level of the fish. The purpose of the running line is to allow you to extend your casting distance.

Sinking lines are available in a variety of grain weights from 200 grain to 450 grain. The lighter grain weights are best with 7 weight rods and the heaviest grain weights are designed for use with 10 or 11 weight rods.

### Casting Sinking Lines

Most people cast sinking lines the same as their floating lines, but now you know they are different. The first thing to consider is the weight of the head. With floating lines, you can false cast as many times as you want. The only downside to multiple false casts is that you are wasting time and energy which could be spent with your fly in the water. When false casting sinking lines, you want to keep your false casts to a minimum. The head section, because it is weighted will tend to have a momentum of its own (an object in motion wants to stay in motion). Once accelerated, the line will want to continue the acceleration. In fly casting we want the line to change direction from back to front, while we false cast. Because the sinking line has extra weight which facilitates the acceleration, it does not make the transition of change in direction from back cast to forward cast as smoothly as a weight forward floating line. If you false cast excessively you may find the line getting out of control. Keep your false casts to a minimum and you'll find it easier to stay in control.

Another area to consider is your loop size. Because the sinking line does not make the transition from back cast to forward cast as gracefully as a weight forward floating line, it is more difficult to cast with a tight loop. To ease the transition from back cast to forward cast, you want to open up the loop. This can be done with an oval cast. An Oval cast uses a curving back cast followed by a straight forward cast. The curving back cast allows the fly line to unroll around an oval shape which means the transition from back to forward occurs more gradually. You can also cast with a wider loop by increasing your casting arc. You can either stop the rod just an inch beyond your usual back cast and forward cast positions, or you can use a little more wrist action which accomplishes the same thing. Be careful not to use too much wrist or you will destroy your cast.

Also if you are casting a weighted fly, this will add to the difficulties in casting with a tighter loop. In this case the fly can tend to fall below the loop of line and tangle with the line. Again a slightly wider loop will help avoid this.

When casting with sinking lines you should also be familiar with the concept of overhang. Overhang refers to the amount of running line which extends beyond the rod tip. Remember that this running line is unweighted, this means it can not effectively lift the weighted head section of line. The more running line you have outside the rod tip, the further away the weighted head is and the more difficult it is to lift the weighted section. Limit the overhang to a maximum of 12-16 inches when using sinking lines. When you

are just starting, you may want to have only a few inches of overhang. Note that to use the line most effectively you want some overhang, as this will help you shoot line and increase your distance. As you improve your technique, you may be able to handle more overhang, however the upper limit of desirable overhang is about 24 inches.

Your goal for casting with sinking lines should be to work with the head outside the rod tip and a comfortable amount of overhang and shoot the extra line on your delivery cast to reach your target.

### Fishing with Sinking Lines

When fishing with sinking lines, you will need to recast your line throughout the day. If you have just cast to one area and see fish breaking in another area you will need to pick up your line and recast. Because the line is weighted, it is now sinking and you can not easily lift the line for recasting, also if you have shot line, you have too much overhang to effectively lift the line. To solve this problem you can strip in some running line. Stripping the line in will decrease the amount of overhang. Also the stripping action causes the fly to rise up closer to the surface of the water, which will make it easier to lift.

Strip in enough line until you can lift the line up, make one false cast (changing your direction to the new target) and deliver your fly.

When you are fishing your cast, you may strip in all the way till your leader is at the rod tip. Now you need to get the line back from your feet (or stripping basket) back outside the rod tip. You can stroke the rod side to side, using the resistance of the water to help pull the line out and allow the line to slip from your line hand, back out through the guides. Once the head is outside the rod tip, you can make a roll cast to straighten the line on the surface of the water. Now back cast and haul, then shoot some line and present your fly. Remember that after you make the roll cast and your line is straight, you need to start your back cast immediately. If you wait too long, your line will start to sink and you will need to start the process over again. So, roll cast and then immediately start into your back cast, the delivery your fly on the next forward cast, shooting line to reach your target.

One more thing to remember about fishing with sinking lines is your leader. When using sinking lines you'll want to shorten up your leader to keep you fly on the same level as you line. If you use a long leader, your sinking line may sink to one level, while your fly on the long leader (which does not sink) may rise up above your fly line. This creates slack and keeps your fly away from the area you wanted. Shorten up your leader to about 6 feet and your fly will track straighter and at the same level as your line.

So now you know the secrets of using sinking lines effectively. Simply use your knowledge of their design and make a few changes in your usual casting techniques and you will enjoy the sinking lines.