

FLOAT FISHING

Getting started!

NO FUSS Guide!



This guide is not meant to be exhaustive and concentrates on a few float fishing approaches that I know will put tench on the bank. Some anglers now consider using a float as fiddly and out of context for modern tench fishing where leger and bolt feeders predominate. In reality, nothing could be farther from the truth. I have captured tench to over 9lb on float rigs.

My advice is to always have float gear with you and using the methods described gets you set up at a minimum cost. You won't be struggling with dust shot and all that pole fishing paraphernalia. It's just running line rigs with a buoyant indicator attached! You can fish out to 10 metres, and so should not be too far removed from familiar margin legering styles.

Getting The Kit Sorted ...

Rods and Reels

The venue will dictate your rod choice to some extent. A standard 13 foot match rod would likely be fine for open water fishing on small lakes and canals that are not too weedy. For weedy pits you might want to step up to a Power or Carp version float rod, perhaps to 14 foot. My choice is a Free Spirit Hi S Power float rod (2 piece) 13 foot for weedy pits and I use the excellent Drennan Acolytes in Plus and Standard versions on more open water. I like a lightweight fixed spool reel on float rods and use Shimano Vanford. My centrepins are from the Youngs stable, at 4 or 4.5 inch diameters. However there are numerous alternatives and rod/reel choice is a very personal matter too.



Miscellaneous Kit

Add to this a bulk spool of Maxima in 6lb test. In terms of shot just buy SSG/AA/BB/1/4/6. My favourite is Anchor Double Cut I prefer tubs to those fiddly dispensers. You will need some float adapters (to facilitate quick change of wagglers, float stops and a decent range of hooks sizes 12-16) I use Drennan Specimen, Carbon Carp or Kamatsu Specimen. Avoid ultra fine match type hooks. Anything described as carp or specimen should suffice. Hook to nylons are fine if you find tying small hooks a challenge. Look for the carp variants. If using loose hooks these are tied direct to the main line. I use a tucked blood knot with Maxima and it has never failed. I don't use spade end hooks as they are difficult to tie well to 6lb mono.



Floats ...



Carrying a wide range of styles helps to ensure you are covered for all scenarios!



Floats are easy. A selection of Drennan crystal wagglers, insert crystal waggler, LocSlide and perhaps the odd traditional tench Diftbeater/Onion and you are ready to go. I don't buy anything under 2 swan and go up to 3.5SSG for pits.

I also make some specialist big pit floats carrying 6-8SSG - but they are not essential and are not really within the context of this Quick Guide" which is focusing on margin fishing. However if you are fishing small lakes or canals then float capacity starting at 3BB would likely be more appropriate. This would exclude LocSlide or Driftbeater and you would have a range of wagglers or traditional quill floats to choose from.

Float Adapters

You can buy these ready made. I make mine using soft silicone tube and a standard swivel. Just cut off a small section of silicon and place it over a swivel eye. If you are using float stops to lock off your waggler then you will require a micro swivel. But if using shot sizes Swan through to BB then any swivel in your tackle box is fine. These facilitate quick float changes and this is likely when pit fishing as drift generally increases during the day. In practice you will be more likely to increase the float size and loading by single BB increments.

Sliders

Sliding floats make fishing deeper water in pits very easy. Essentially, use a string of bulk shot and a tell tale shot. I would advise you to visit the Benwick Sport website to view an extensive range of sliding floats which I use exclusively. There is also an excellent Drennan You Tube Video by (Alan Scothorne) which you should view on how to fish the slider and tie stop knots.

LocSlides

A handy float that locks off at the fishing depth. When I purchased mine there were available in 3 sizes. The loading capacity is Size 1, 3/8oz, Size 2 0.5oz, Size 3 0.75oz. Not sure how that translates as shot weights. I convert to grams 10.5/17.5/22gm (for the three sizes respectively) and use inline Olivettes which are graded in gms. These sit above a micro swivel to which I attach the hook link. This is usually fluoro or Camfusion strippable braid for pop ups. If you "under-shot" these floats they won't cock properly when the line is tensioned but you can overweight without issues. For the purist this is effectively a float leger set up. But sliding floats have to use a lot of bulk shot too so I don't really see a big difference. They are sensitive, stable and catch tench. I never use Polaris as I find the attachment is not too line friendly.



Shooting Patterns - Don't Panic

Wagglers. In essence the bulk shot locks of the float at required depth. The mid shot is critical to avoid tangles and is your drift defeating system. The tell tale or indicator shot is the early warning system. We are going to shot up a 3SSG crystal waggler insert. Some of these Drennans crystal shot ratings are under-rated. I always test and pre shot floats in a tank then record the true capacity. Your bulk or locking shot is 2 SSG plus 1AA. Remember that 2BB = AA, 2 AA = Swan., 1AA = 2BB. This helps you sub divide the mid shot. In this instance it will be 2BB plus a No 4. Your tell tale will be a No 1. That should cock the float to the base of the fluoro tip. Remember to add the float adapter to the waggler base and not to thread the float onto the line directly. This facilitates quick float changes without breaking down the rig.

Plumbing Up

Ditch those horrible plummets. Effectively we are going to overshoot by nipping on a SSG at the hook. Cast to your feature and if you can't see the float on a slack line, retrieve and add depth. If the waggler is on the water surface then detract depth. I usually allow 1inch over depth. Once set, remove SSG and you are ready to go. Plan to overcast and retrieve line with rod tip buried to get that Maxima sunk. Place rod in rest and adjust line tension to set the tip. It's handy to mark depth on the rod using a piece of insulating tape.

Dealing With Drift

Adding a bigger tell tale shot is not the best method to defeat drift. First try and change the bulk shooting. We have 2 Swan locking. Remove one swan and replace with 2BB to lock. Add the 2BB "spare" (as 4 BB= removed Swan) to the mid shot. If this fails remove float and put on a longer float to help get the line under the drift. 3.5SSG is about right. Always check you are getting that line buried which can be difficult if there is floating weed.

Feeding The Swim

My standard mix is Dynamite marine ground bait, micro pellet and red maggots. I also use the Classic red Expo. If not fishing maggot and using dendro's, I add chopped worm. Simple and sorted in minutes. Keep the mix fairly dry as I believe a cloud effect is important as oppose to lumpy stodge. Riddling ground bait achieves a great consistency and let it stand for 20 minutes to absorb the lake water before use. Think matchman style and you won't go wrong!

A few refinements

I would recommend locking off wagglers with Drennan float stops. You can place your bulk shot below the lower stop. This means depth changes are quicker and minimises line wear. Allow an inch between stops so float can collapse on the strike. Insert wagglers offer a finer tip but cannot be fished too far out. If your spot is in the margins they are my first choice. Basically the further you want to get out the bigger the float required. However on pits I never go below 2 swan as drift seems to be apparent everywhere. As this is primarily a pit guide this works. Canals, lakes and ponds require a more artful approach! Have sizes 2BB to 2AA to cover these venues.

Learning To Strike Again!

Floats communicate a lot of line movement. I strike at any positive movement whether a lateral one, float burying, big lift or a sustained "dip". In fact anything that looks suspicious. You will soon tune into this and not be relying on flashing LED's. Sometimes you will get a churner particularly on the LocSlides so have that anti reverse off! usually use two rods when LocSliding but just the one when waggler fishing. I might have a link- leger rod alongside on an alarm with a big worm for bait but generally is is best to put your full effort into the float alone.

So that's it...

There are just a few technicalities to get to grips with and the kit required is minimal. It's an enthralling way to fish so put those Polaroids on and dust off that float rod. A specimen tench awaits you!