

Intro to Kayak Fishing

Quick Reference Guide



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Basic Gear – What you MUST have

1. US Coast Guard approved life jacket

- Must be fit to the paddler/angler
- Must be in wearable condition (e.g. no rips, tears, or faded label)
- Must be zipped and buckled

NOTE – Remember, there are kayak specific life jackets, that provide more movement for your arms, and aren't as bulky.

2. [Launch permit](#)

NOTE – In order to launch from any PFBC and/or Department of Conservation Natural Resource launch areas, you need to have a PA Launch Permit.

3. Fishing license if you are 16 and over

- [HuntFishPA](#)
- [PA Fishing Regulations](#)

4. Cork-less whistle

NOTE – Cork-less whistles will work, even if they get wet.

5. Throw bag

NOTE – Not required but are important if you should need to help another paddler who fell into the water.



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Know before you go

1. Weather

- a. Always check the weather the day before, the day of, and while you are paddling. Weather changes quickly, and you should be prepared.

2. Water

a. Learn more about [Paddling Safety HERE](#)

b. Know the waters you plan to paddle

i. Lake –

- Scout the lake or river you plan to paddle
- Determine the launch site that best suits you (*e.g. has restroom facilities, easy parking, easy in and out of the lake, etc.*)

ii. River/stream –

- Check out the launch sites, determine where you will put your kayak in, and where you plan to take your kayak out.
- Drive or hike, if possible, the route you plan to paddle. Check it out, to make sure there are no trees/obstructions in the water that will cause problems when you are paddling.
- Determine the approximate time it may take you to paddle your chosen section.

3. Paddling/fishing partners –

- a. Determine who will be going with you.
- b. Make sure their name, and emergency contact information is included on your float plan.

4. Create a [FLOAT PLAN](#)–

- a. The float plan can be texted to at least 1 or 2 family members.
- b. Be sure to allow for some extra time in your departure and return times. Sometimes the fishing gets good/or you get caught up, enjoying a moment or two.

5. Packing list – NOTE – This is not an all-inclusive list.

- a. Make sure you have a packing list that includes –
 - Filled water bottle and snacks
 - Extra clothes, preferably not cotton
 - Life jacket
 - Whistle
 - Throw bag
 - Fishing gear
 - Head lamp
 - Dry bag to keep all items dry
 - Bag to keep your cell phone dry

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Basic Gear – Fishing Rods & Lures

BASS FISHING SPINNING SET-UP	
Equipment (Finesse)	Details
Rod	6' 6" to 7' medium or medium light action spinning rod
Reel	Lightweight spinning reel with a good drag system (2500 series)
Line	5-7-pound fluorocarbon leader tied to 20-pound braid main line
Equipment (Jerkbait)	Details
Rod	6' to 6' 6" medium or action spinning rod
Reel	Lightweight spinning reel with a good drag system (2500 series)
Line	12-pound fluorocarbon

BASS FISHING BAITCASTING SET-UP	
Equipment (Chatterbait)	Details
Rod	7' to 7' 4" medium heavy (MH) action Baitcasting rod
Reel	6:3:1 Baitcasting reel (slower the better)
Line	12-15-pound fluorocarbon
Equipment (Bullshad)	Details
Rod	7' 6" to 8' 4" heavy (H) action Baitcasting rod
Reel	6:3:1 Baitcasting reel (slower the better)
Line	20-pound monofilament

LURES	
Time of Season	Lures to use
Early March through May	Ned rigs, Tubes, Chatterbaits, Spinnerbaits, Jigs
June through August	Drop shot, Buzz baits, Frogs, Ned Rigs, Whopper Plopper
September through November	Bull Shad, Big Swimbaits, Tubes, Ned Rigs, Chatterbaits,

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Basic Gear – Kayaks & Paddles

FISHING KAYAKS	
Equipment	Details
Sit in (SIN)	Several options available • Spray/Sun/Cold weather protection • Tandem Sit-In Kayaks • Faster, less stable, and lighter than a SOT kayak • Easier to transport • Overnight kayak fishing/camping adventure
Sit on top (SOT)	A lot of options available • More expensive • Fishing friendly setup • Transport via Trailer/Truck bed • Super stable (Easy to stand and fish) • High and low seating options • Higher weight capacities for bigger anglers
Pedal Drive	Fastest growing segment of the market • Heavy kayaks • Transport via Trailer/Truck bed • Very stable • Very comfortable seats • Always carry a paddle
Inflatables	A few options available • Lightweight • Easy to transport • Airplane compatible • Perfect to use on small rivers • Very durable

PADDLES	
Basic Paddle	Material: Composite Weight: 36 or more ounces Cost: \$100 or less
Intermediate Paddle	Material: Composite blade plus carbon shaft Weight: 30-36 ounces Cost: \$100 - \$300
Advanced Paddle	Material: All Carbon Weight: 28 ounces or lighter Cost: \$300 - \$500

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Knots to Know

Knots to Know		
Type of knot	When to use	Learn how to Tie
Improved Clinch	Connect hook or lure to line	Improved Clinch
Palomar Knot	Connect hook or lure to line	Palomar Knot
Albright Knot	Connect main line (braid) to leader (fluorocarbon)	Albright Knot
Alberto Knot	Connect main line (braid) to leader (fluorocarbon)	Alberto Knot



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Best Fishing Waters



Largemouth Bass 15 inches & longer		
Large Reservoirs	Medium Reservoirs	Small Reservoirs
Lake Erie (Presque Isle Bay)	Cross Creek Lake	Hamilton Lake
Lake Wilhelm	Green Lick Reservoir	Mammoth Lake
Marsh Creek Lake	Pinchot Lake	
Nockamixon Lake	Lackawanna Lake	
Raystown Lake	Shawnee Lake	
Yellow Creek Lake		

Smallmouth Bass 15 inches & longer		
Large Reservoirs	Large Flowing Waters	Small Flowing Waters
Lake Wallenpaupack	Susquehanna River	Clarion River
Raystown Lake	Allegheny River	French Creek
Lake Erie	Juniata River	
Presque Isle Bay	Youghiogheny River	

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Bass Fishing Resources

WEB RESOURCES – Check before you go!	
Angler Map Apps	Water Flow
FishBoatPA App Lake Habitat Maps	US Geological Service - www.usgs.gov
PA Fish and Boat Commission's Black Bass feature page	
Learn more about Black Bass through a collection of links & magazine articles	Black Bass Feature Page
PFBC Kayak Fishing Resources	
Kayak Fishing Feature Page	Paddlesports page
Kayak Fishing YouTube Playlist	
Kayak Fishing info – Facebook Groups	
Kayak Anglers of Western PA	
Kayak Anglers of Laurel Highlands	
Kayak Anglers of Central PA	
Kayak Anglers of Eastern PA	
PA BASS Nation Kayak Series	
Hobie BOS Bass Open Series	

SUGGESTED MAGAZINE RESOURCES
Magazine Title
Pennsylvania Angler & Boater

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Kayak & Tackle Shops

LOCAL SHOPS – Kayak specific shops - Most shops are also on Facebook			
Kayak Shop	Address	Phone	Website
The River's Edge Canoe and Kayak	3158 River Rd. Leechburg, PA 15656	(724) 845-9501	https://the-rivers-edge.com/
FishUSA	6960 West Ridge Rd. Fairview, PA 16415	814-459-7800	www.fishusa.com
Allegheny Outfitters	20 Clark Street Ste A Warren, PA, 16365	814-723-3030	https://www.alleghenyoutfitters.com/
Five Mountain Outfitters	95 S Main St. Shickshinny, PA 18655	570-885-0081	https://www.fivemountainoutfittersco.com/
Shanks Mare Outfitters	2092 Long Level Rd. Wrightsville, PA 17368	717-252-1616	https://www.shanksmare.com/
Blue Mountain Outfitters	103 South State Rd. Marysville, PA 17053	717-957-2413	https://bluemountainoutfitters.net/
Sportsman Warehouse	2075 Interchange Rd. Erie, PA 16506	814-806-1997	www.sportsman.com
Bass Pro Shops	3501 Paxton St. Harrisburg, PA 17111	717-565-4980	https://www.basspro.com/shop

LOCAL SHOPS – Tackle and Gear Shops - Most shops are also on Facebook			
Tackle Shops	Address	Phone	Website
Fishing Online	406 Constitution Blvd. New Brighton, PA 15066	844-534-7466	https://www.fishingonline.com/
Susquehanna Fishing Tackle	3992 Locust Grove Rd. Columbia, PA 17512	800-814-7433	https://sfttackle.com/
FishUSA	6960 West Ridge Rd. Fairview, PA 16415	814-459-7800	www.fishusa.com
Bass Pro Shops	3501 Paxton St. Harrisburg, PA 17111	717-565-4980	https://www.basspro.com/shop
Cabelas	100 Cabelas Drive Hamburg, PA 19526	610-929-7000	https://www.cabelas.com/shop/en
Sportsman Warehouse	2075 Interchange Rd. Erie, PA 16506	814-806-1997	www.sportsman.com

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Summer
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Pennsylvania • League • of • Angling • Youth

Kayak Fishing?

Do you like to fish? Do you own a kayak? Have you ever fished from a kayak? If you have not, then join the fastest growing outdoor recreational sport in the country, and try kayak fishing. All it takes is some fishing equipment, a kayak, a paddle and a life jacket. Over the last few years, kayak companies have redesigned kayaks specifically for fishing. Kayak anglers want stable, comfortable and maneuverable kayaks. Pennsylvania is made up of several small streams, large rivers, reservoirs and even Lake Erie, so finding a kayak that works for the waters you fish is important.

This PLAY issue covers some of the basics for paddling safety, bass fishing combos, fishing kayak setup and competitive kayak fishing tournaments.



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Paddling Safety

Before heading out on the water, let's talk paddling safety. While kayak fishing, always wear your life jacket and dress for the weather. Plan to use the buddy system while fishing. If you are fishing near dusk or dawn, turn on your headlight. If you plan

to fish in the early spring or late fall, wear the appropriate cold weather gear. Always file a float plan with a family member in case of emergencies.

Kayak fishing on rivers or small streams can be a rewarding experience. Kayaks are designed to float on skinny or shallow water. If you venture out on moving water, never exceed your skill level. Next, let's talk about bass fishing equipment.



Bass Fishing Setup

You just launched your kayak in a lake or a river and want to know what lures to use. The most popular fish species for kayak fishing is bass. In lakes, you will find Largemouth

Bass or Smallmouth Bass. In rivers, you will find mostly Smallmouth Bass. Here are a few fishing setups to use while targeting either bass species.

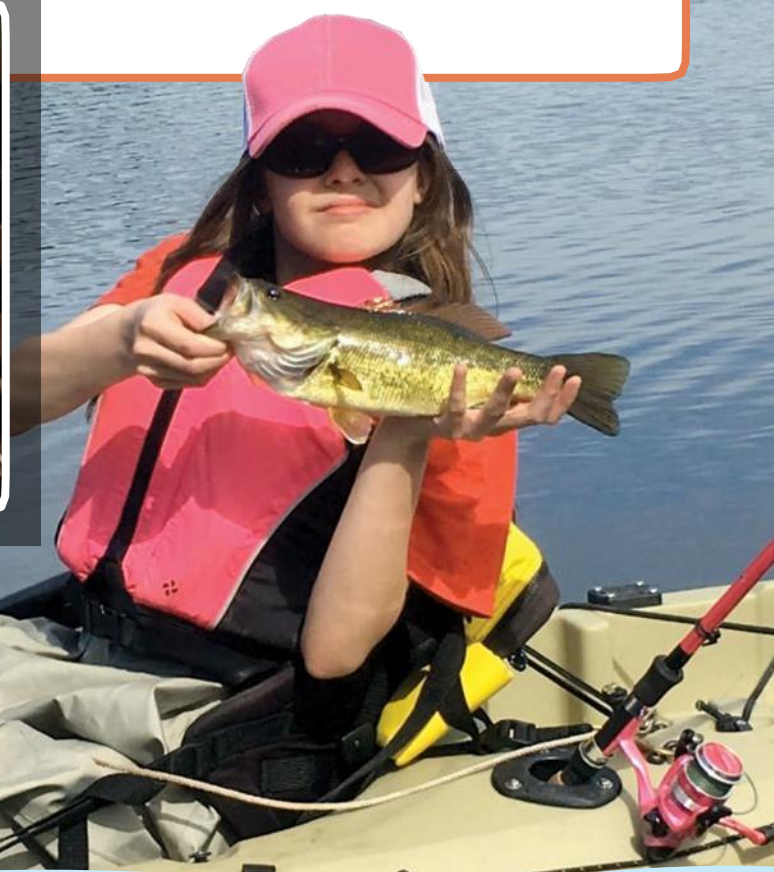
In rivers and lakes, you can use either a spinning or baitcasting setup. If you are a beginner, start with a spinning setup. A medium-action rod paired with a 2000 series spinning reel is a great combo. As far as baits and lures,

use the following chart as a guide. Start at the top of the water column and work towards the bottom. If the water is clear, use baits that look like the natural forage. If the water is stained, use dark or flashy-colored lures.

Water Column	Baits or Lures
Topwater	Buzzbaits, Whopper Ploppers, Frogs
Middle	Chatterbaits, Spinnerbaits, Jerkbait, Crankbaits, Swimbaits
Bottom	Ned Rigs, Senkos, Drop Shot Baits, Soft Plastic Crayfish Baits, Soft Plastic Tubes



An assortment of bass fishing lures



Fishing Kayak Basic Setup

Over the past few years, the popularity of fishing kayaks has increased. The next two pages will cover two types of fishing kayak setups. Fishing kayak setups can range from \$500 to \$3,500, so knowing the type of fishing you want to do is the first step. Will you be fishing small creeks or big lakes? Will you be an avid angler or just go fishing a few times a year? Keep these questions in mind when you purchase your first fishing kayak.



If you have a local kayak dealer nearby, test paddle as many kayak brands as possible to find the right kayak for you.

The first type of fishing kayak is a basic recreational sit-inside kayak outfitted with a few rod holders and gear tracks. These

kayaks are not very stable or comfortable for fishing but get you on the water. Next, let's talk about the advanced fishing kayak setup.



Fishing Kayak Advanced Setup

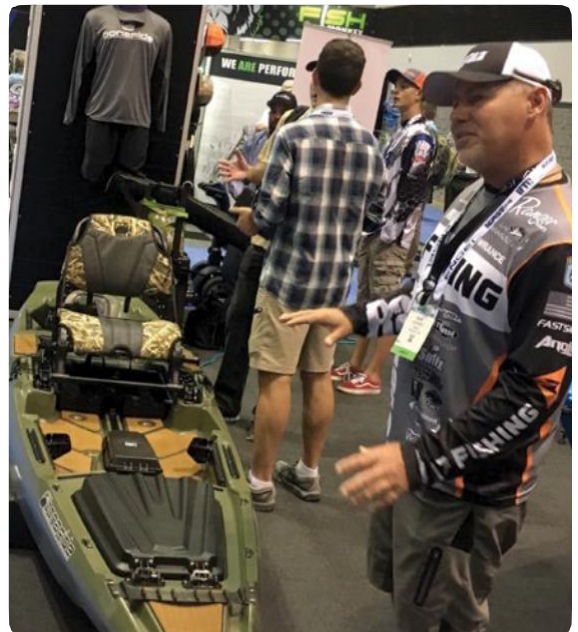
The second type of kayak is a fully customizable sit-on-top fishing kayak. Most kayak companies make fishing kayaks that are more comfortable, easier to fish from while standing and more maneuverable than even a few years ago. Nearly all kayak companies

put gear tracks everywhere, so the angler can adjust as needed. For gear storage on a kayak, use a milk crate to hold tackle boxes behind the seat. If the kayak has a bow storage hatch, store extra clothes and even a few spare fishing rods in the hull.

Kayak anglers are putting shallow water anchors, fish finders and even motors on their kayaks. Each one serves a purpose, allowing anglers opportunities to catch more fish. A great way to see advanced kayak fishing setups is to attend a kayak fishing tournament near you.



A shallow water anchor and motor



Dave Lefebvre, professional tournament angler



A sit-on-top fishing kayak with an advanced setup.

Competitive Kayak Fishing Tournaments

Interest in kayak fishing has grown so much over the past few years that competitive kayak bass fishing tournaments are popping up everywhere. You may ask yourself, "Where do you put a live well on a kayak to keep your limit?" Since there is no room for live wells, most kayak tournaments use the Catch, Photo, Release (CPR) format to keep track of the length of fish caught.

How does CPR work? An angler catches a legal bass. The bass is put on a measuring device with a unique identifier. A photo is taken. Once the angler

checks the photo for all requirements, the fish is released. The winning angler has the most inches in length not in pounds as at normal bass fishing tournaments.



A Smallmouth Bass on a Hawg Trough Fish Measuring Device.

If you are interested in entering kayak bass fishing tournaments, visit Kayak Anglers at www.kayak-anglers.com or Kayak Bass Fishing (KBF) at www.kayakbassfishing.com.



Kayak Anglers Kayak Fishing Tournament.

Kayak Fishing Word Search

Before kayaking on a Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources State Park lake or using a Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission launch, get a Pennsylvania launch permit or a Pennsylvania unpowered registration for your unpowered kayak. If you have a motor on your kayak, get a powered registration. Visit www.fishandboat.com for more information about launch permits and registrations.

Complete the word search below to learn about some of Pennsylvania's fish species and waterways to explore in a kayak.



Word List

BASS

WALLEYE

STEELHEAD

MUSKELLUNGE

SUSQUEHANNA (RIVER)

PRESQUE ISLE BAY

ALLEGHENY (RIVER)

PYMATUNING (RESERVOIR)

(LAKE) NOCKAMIXON

JUNIATA (RIVER)

YOUGHIOGHENY (RIVER)

DELAWARE (RIVER)

(Hint: Some words may appear backwards.)

Z N O X I M A K C O N Z U F J
V O L H W H Z I S S H U I B U
G T X N L P I N R H K V M M N
N Q T N C B C A V Z L X I Q I
I V E G N U L L E K S U M K A
N F E H X O O A B R V D J Y T
U N W S T E E L H E A D C P A
T H B C K E E Y E L L A W C S
A H T L Q B E R A W A L E D S
M Y N E H G E L L A E M U T A
Y A B E L S I E U Q S E R P B
P D D O Q I B C T E X O C Z W
N I A N N A H E U Q S U S O U
P F Q K G G L F G I L T Z A Z
A Y O U G H I O G H E N Y J H

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ANSWER KEY

Y A B E L S I E U Q S E R P B
M Y N E H G E L L A E M U T A
P D D O Q I B C T E X O C Z W
N I A N N A H E U Q S U S O U
P F Q K G G L F G I L T Z A Z
A Y O U G H I O G H E N Y J H

ANSWER KEY