

How To: Bottom Fish (Drifting)

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By Captain Dave Tilley

In the Oceans vast dark underbelly resides some of the most spectacular fishing available along the Carolina Coast. Inshore Trout and Striped Bass to Offshore Grouper and Snapper the bottom is where the action is. The problem that most people have with Bottom Fishing is the ability to put the boat in the correct place. I can tell you from experience that IF you are more than 20 feet off the bottom, you will catch nothing. So let's start the easy way.

The first thing we need is a Marker Buoy. A marker is a buoy that we are going to use to mark the exact spot that we want to fish on. You can go buy all these expensive ones or you can make your own. I prefer to make my own.

Here's How. Take an empty Clorox bottle (Paint it a loud color IF you want) and tie heavy fishing line to the handle. How much line you ask? This is where most folks screw this one up. If I am fishing in 100 feet of water, I want NO MORE than 110 feet of line on this marker. Why? Because I want this marker exactly where I drop it. (Remember the 20 feet off comment above) This means that you will have to make several markers for different depths. Take a marker and write how many feet on each bottle. So you tie the line to the handle and put 110

wraps on it. Try NOT to crush the bottle. At the end of your wraps place about a pound of weight. (More if it is rough) We want that marker to stay in place. Now that we have a

Marker Buoy we need to find some fish and put the marker in the correct place.

Since the advent of GPS too many people fish by numbers. Well I am here to tell you that don't mean squat! Fish move, Seasons change. Fish areas NOT numbers. Choose the area that you would like to fish and work that whole area not just what the numbers say. This is where the scope comes into play. You pull up on a ledge...you see it on the scope...now take your time and follow that ledge and mark it as you move along. Look for fish on the face of the ledge. Continue to look till you have a Ledge Line that you can now follow. Now while you were marking this ledge you were making mental notes about what you and in what area you saw it. Pick the best spot that you saw. Go up-current from that spot and move slowly downwind till you come to the ledge. Right as you come up on it...throw the marker over the side so it will spool right off the bottle. Now give it a pass or two to make sure you the marker in the correct position. If it is not correct just make a note of how far in what direction it is and work from there. If you want to get real fancy drop multiple markers along the ledge so you can see the length of the ledge on the surface. We have the ledge marked and now it time to go fishing.

Move the boat just up-current from the marker and turn it which ever direction you feel comfortable with. (I like mine stern to the sea but that varies boat to boat. Some boats perform better at different angles) Drop the lines. You should slowly drift across the ledge. Try to keep the lines on the bottom. This means continually giving it line. We have underwater cameras on a couple of our boats and I have watched the fish scatter when the rig comes off the bottom so the idea is to keep the rigs on the bottom and still. You may need to use

the engine to hold the boat on the proper angle or to slow you drift. Just make sure that you do not have any lines in the wheels.

We have made our first pass on the ledge. How did it go? Good? Bad? Ugly? If it was good. Do the same spot again. If it was bad or ugly move down the ledge just a little and do the whole thing over again. There is no need to move your marker just use it as a reference to where you are. Work the entire length of the ledge. One drift after another. You are now bottom fishing. It's a happy thang!

Good Luck and Catch'em Up!
Captain Dave Tilley

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