

# A "Muskie Mentor's" Tips

by Larry Ramsell, Muskie Guide

After many hundreds of days on the water observing muskie fisherfolks "doing their thing," I decided that I would put together a list of "Do's" and "Don'ts" of some of the subtle things that can enhance or inhibit your muskie fishing success. In this manner, I can "coach" you without actually fishing with you. Don't misunderstand, most muskie anglers do the right things "most" of the time, but.... If you do the do's and don't do the don'ts, great. If not, well....read on. My goal here is to make each of you a better and more successful muskie fisherman/woman, and to also help to make your guide happy if you do fish with one. A happy guide is a productive guide!

Note: Written with a "smile" on my face!

## **DO:**

\*Do practice your "accuracy casting" at home, not after you get in the boat. An old tire makes a good target (take the hooks off your lure). Success on flowages often requires pinpoint casting to a shoreline or a stump/snag. When the muskies are "there", you need to get near.

\*Do think ahead and try to mentally pick out your next couple of spots to cast to, leaving room for others.

\*Do listen to lure suggestions from the guide if you choose to use one.

\*Do make an "L" turn or "figure 8" after each cast, especially in dark water lakes. Keep the lure speed constant and smooth, no stops. I cannot stress how important this is!!! Are you listening?

\*Do make the "L" or "figure 8" nice and smooth and "large enough" for the fish to make its turn.

\*Do figure 8 deep under water if you have a follow, it gives the fish "security" and they will hit it more readily than if done close to the surface.

\*Do work a lure like the guide says. Slow means SLOW, not warp speed. I'm on the water nearly every day, and if the fish are wanting/liking it slow, you need to give it to them that way (if you want to catch one!).

\*Do watch "behind" your lure, not "at" it. Fish follow behind and often below the lure. Pay particular attention near the boat. A few of my clients missed nice fish this past year because they weren't watching!!

\*Do help the guide swear at the fish if they aren't being cooperative (yodeling assistance optional).

\*Do return any weeds you hook to the lake, ESPECIALLY milfoil. Helps keep the boat clean and prevent the spread of milfoil and is "required" by law.

\*Do slam your lure back in the water and get it moving if a fish shows up after you take it out!!! Don't just stand/sit there and look dumbfounded, catch the darn thing!! They will often return even if they have "flashed off."

\*Do tell your guide that you love him on a regular basis, he has a tough job!

## **DON'T:**

\*Don't cast across the other peoples lines. Stay in your "zone". That "zone" is from straight out perpendicular to the SIDE of the boat (unless instructed otherwise), to 45 degrees forward in the direction the boat is heading. And remember that the boat is almost always moving, especially if you are using a guide, so make allowances, depending on that forward speed. Don't cast straight ahead of the boat, slack line will occur.

\*Don't "scatter" cast. Cast your "zone." If I want you to cast elsewhere make sure you can keep you line tight and don't interfere with another anglers zone.

\*Don't try to cover every five feet of shore line or bar. Remember that your partner, if any, needs a spot to cast to also.

\*Don't cast a country mile (**too many** of you are doing that!), even on open water bars. Three reasons: First, you cannot get a good hook-set at the end of a long cast. Second, short accurate casts will better cover more water and be more productive. Third, if your lure fouls or gets weeded up, it wastes more time and "screws-up" more water!

\*Don't cast over logs or way past snags. What are you going to do if one hits on the other side?

\*Don't cast "into" weed beds unless you are using a weedless lure like a Wisher Weedless Bucktail.

\*Don't overdo your figure 8. If there is no follow, go around once, and don't go any faster than your retrieve speed was..

\*Don't use monofilament line!!!!!! Rubber bands stretch, and so does mono, period! Large muskie lures need a good hook-set.

\*Don't piddle around. If you are tired, say so and take a break. Otherwise, get that darn lure in the water and catch a fish! Not paying attention has cost many a muskie angler the fish of a lifetime!

- \*Don't think you have to change lures every five minutes just because you haven't caught a fish. I rarely change lures more than five times in one day!
- \*Don't bring 10 tackle boxes and 500 lures with you ! You'll only use a few anyway!!
- \*Don't work your lure too fast, especially surface lures. In dark water, slow is better!
- \*Don't forget to set the hook. Often a surprise stike causes anglers to freeze.
- \*Don't set the hook on surface lures until you "feel" the fish on the line.
- \*Don't worry about getting an occasional snag. That is where the fish are and if you don't hang up once in a while, you are either a professional caster, or aren't getting into where the fish are.
- \*Don't stand there pointing at a fish that shows up after you take your lure from the water, get that lure back in and figure 8.
- \*Don't forget to hug your guide, he has a tough job.

While I'm sure there are more "do's" and "don'ts" that could be added to the above, I have every confidence that if you work at following my above suggestions, you will increase your opportunities, become a better muskie fisherman, AND catch more muskies! Good luck...

Larry Ramsell is a muskie guide in the Hayward Lakes area and can be contacted at: 715-462-9880 or email at: [larryramsell@hotmail.com](mailto:larryramsell@hotmail.com) Check out his web site at: [www.larryramsell.com](http://www.larryramsell.com)