

# The basics of ice fishing Maine

- by Richard Yvon - Twin Maple Outdoors

## Getting Started

Traditionally ice fishing has always been a great past time enjoyed by many generations of folks. The sport has always provided a fun way to get through some otherwise closed in times of year. With a little help and equipment, ice fishing can start a family tradition that can last generations and provide memories to last a lifetime. Get everyone involved and get out!! Ice fishing can be combined with ice-skating, snowmobiling, snowshoeing or just enjoying some hot soup and hot chocolate spectating on the ice!

So you want to go ice fishing and haven't got a clue where to start...

To get started one must be familiar with the regulations and hard water to be fished. Each and every water body in Maine has it's own regulations and characteristics. Knowing the water you are fishing will not only keep you in the good graces of the local warden but also keep you safe! It is always a good idea to buddy up for an ice - fishing trip with someone who is familiar with the area and conditions. Every year is unique in regards to weather and timing, when ice is safe and not so safe. Hazards such as springs, river currents, ice thickness and types of ice are some considerations before venturing out on hard water. Some lakes in Maine are late to freeze due to the amount of springs, giving some lakes a longer time to freeze up.

## First and Foremost - Safety!

Here are some things to think about for keeping safe in Maine's unforgiving winter environment...

- Put together a personal safety must have list! Make sure you have the essentials such as a compass, first aid kit, ice cleats, ice safety picks (best worn around your neck), Mylar (space) blanket, food, water and extra clothes.
- Let your people know where you are fishing and when you will be expected to return.
- Have a means for outside contact in case of emergency
- Get an weather report and ice thickness update from a local tackle and bait shop
- Consider buddy Up with someone experienced or hire a guide

## Checking the Ice

You are about to step out onto the ice but you see no signs of previous activity, now what? The only way to check the ice is to make test holes with your auger. Keep in mind that the shoreline typically freezes first on a lake or pond. So ice can get thinner as you venture away from shore. Study the ice color, clarity and conditions.



## An approximate guide for blue, black or clear ice only

- 2" or less stay off ice
- 4" Ice Fishing/Ice Skating
- 5" Snowmobile or ATV
- 8"-12" Small Car or Pick Up
- 12"-15" Medium sized Truck

White—or snow—ice is about half as strong as new clear ice. Double the below thicknesses guidelines if you are traveling on white ice. Also, river ice is approximately 15% less strong as new clear ice.

## Fishing methods and Equipment

The best advice to a new comer is to keep it simple. Starting out with less fishing gear is always a good way to keep it enjoyable and not turning it into a chore. A single trap and jig rod is a great way to learn the sport and keeping it fun. Some basic tools needed in getting started...

- A way to make a hole in the ice. This can be achieved by use of a ice auger, chain saw or ice pick. Years ago I started with a hand auger and a good arm. This is by far a great economical way to get started. One bit of advice on any auger is to protect the blade during use and storage. Even a slight bang on the blade is enough for the tool to loose its effect.
- Tip Ups (Traps) come in several configurations but they all serve the same purpose is to provide a means to leave a baited line in the water and signal with a flag when a fish has taken your bait.
- Jig Rods do come in several sizes that are chosen for the species of fish you target. To use a jig rod, a line is set in the water with lure or bait and is set or twitched with hand to attract a fish bite.

## Please Always remember...

- Use only legal bait as listed in Maine's Fishing Regulations
  - Dispose properly of all unused bait.
  - Never be afraid to ask questions and support your local tackle shops.
- Hopefully you are now pointed in the right direction to enjoy Maine Ice fishing.

Richard Yvon is a Professional Maine Registered Guide who owns and operates Twin Maple Outdoors, a four season Guide Service in north central Maine. He presently is a business director on the board of "The Maine Highlands" Visitor's Bureau.

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