



HOW TO HOOK BAIT

Learn to hook bait the right way to catch the most fish! Different baits are hooked by different methods. With many soft baits - clams, worms, insects - "bait holder" hooks (with barbs on the hook shank for holding bait) are best. Just remember that certain baits (goldfish, for example) are prohibited in some waters and that bait is not allowed in "lure only" or "fly only" fishing areas. Check out the following proven methods for hooking all types of baits:

WORMS – Worms are used in all fishing. Earthworms and manure worms are used for freshwater fishing; bloodworms and sandworms are used in saltwater fishing.

To hook worms on tiny hooks for small fish, cut the worm into pieces and thread one or more pieces onto the hook. To keep the bait from sliding off, push the point and barb into the end of the worm. This technique works for all worms in all fishing. Another method is to use several worm pieces and thread the hook through the center of the body so that the worm pieces dangle from the side of the hook. You can also thread small whole manure worms onto the hook the same way. Thread big worms on larger hooks by running the hook through the worm at several places on the body, with the tail extending for attraction.

EARTH & MANURE WORMS



HOPPERS & CRICKETS
(OR HOOK FROM THE REAR FORWARD)

INSECTS AND SIMILAR LIVE BAITS –

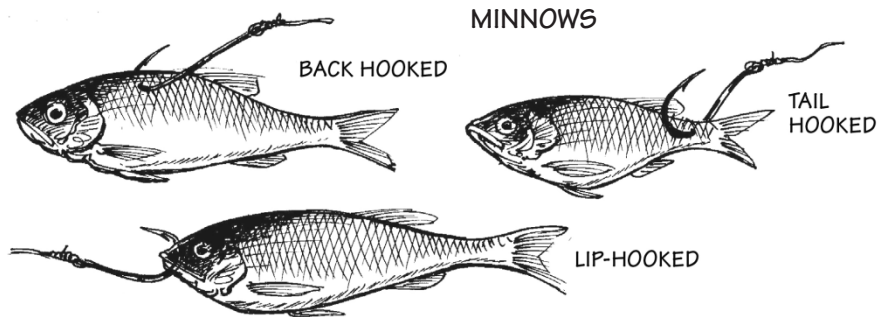
Insects such as grasshoppers, crickets, and beetles can be threaded onto a hook. For maximum long life of the bait, do not thread the hook through the insect, but instead use a fine flexible piece of wire, wired to the hook shank, and then twist the wire gently around the insect body.

If hooking the insect, keep it lively longer by threading the hook through the rear of the insect (abdomen) to avoid organs in the forward part of the body. A hook through the forward part of the body will quickly kill the bait.

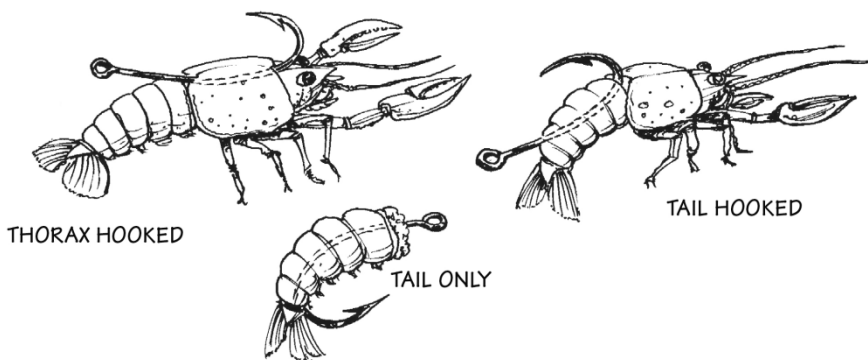
MEAL WORMS AND GRUBS – Small baits such as meal worms and grubs are available from most tackle outlets. Thread the bait onto the hook by running the hook lengthwise through the body or threading through the side of the meal worm, adding several worms or grubs to hide the hook.



MINNOWS – How you hook live minnows depends upon how you are going to fish them. If you are fishing a minnow to troll (drag the bait) or repeatedly cast and retrieve it, hook the minnow through the upper and lower lips with the hook point up so that the minnow will "swim" naturally. You can use this same method for hooked minnows fished from a single- or two-hook rig or from a float and sinker combination. A better method for float-and-sinker fishing is to hook the minnow through the back, but avoid the spine so as to not paralyze the baitfish. This allows more natural baitfish movement. For fishing a minnow that you allow to free swim without a weight or float, hook it through the tail so that it can swim naturally to attract game fish.

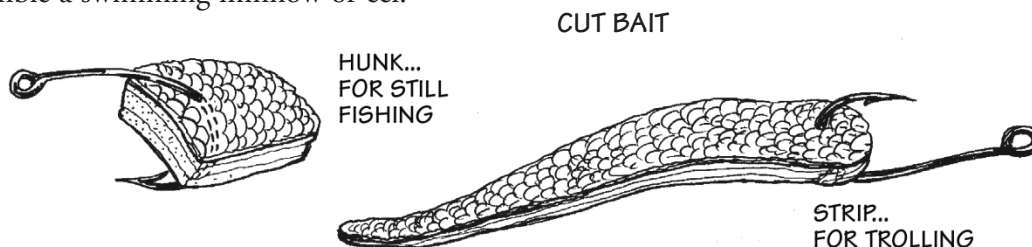


CRAYFISH



CRAYFISH – Crayfish are great baits for smallmouth bass, catfish, walleye and similar fish. To hook crayfish, thread the hook shallowly through the back or forward part of the body so as to not hurt any vital organs. An alternative is to hook the crayfish through the meaty part of the tail. You can also cut the tail off the crayfish and use the tail to hide the hook.

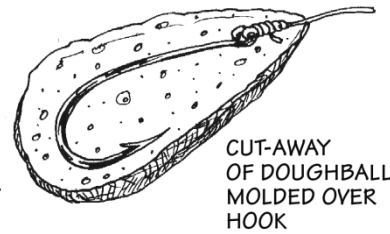
CUT BAIT – Cut bait is made from fish, eels, or minnows and is cut into chunks for still fishing (fishing from one spot) or into strips for trolling (dragging a bait behind a moving boat). For still fishing, cut the bait into squares or hunks that can be easily threaded onto a hook. For best results, keep the skin on the bait to help the penetrating hook hold in place. For trolling (dragging bait), retrieving bait and drifting bait in a current, cut the bait into a long "V"-shaped strip. Hook through the skin at the wide end of the "V" strip so that when retrieved the bait will resemble a swimming minnow or eel.



DOUGHBALLS – Doughballs can be purchased or prepared with a homemade recipe. Prepared commercial "paste" bait that can be formed into doughballs is available for carp, trout, panfish, bass, catfish and other freshwater game fish.

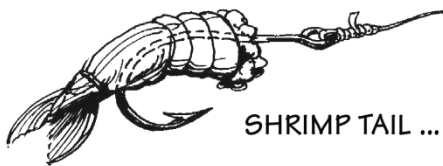
Home-made doughballs can be made from a doughy mix of hot water, flour, cornmeal and flavoring. To hook doughballs, thread the hook through the doughball or form the doughball around the hook so that the bait completely hides the hook. Some treble hooks include wire springs to help hold dough in place.

DOUGHBALLS



CLAMS, MUSSELS AND OTHER SOFT BAITS - Clams, mussels, and soft baits such as pieces of liver are best hardened in the sun briefly before hooking. Allowing the bait to harden in the sun will keep it on the hook longer and make it less likely that a game fish can peel the bait from the hook. Cut liver into chunks and allow it to harden slightly. Harden clams and mussels after removing the bait from the shell just before using the bait. Run the hook point through as many parts of the clam or mussel as possible, using the final parts to hide the hook point. If necessary, use fine wire or thread to wrap and tie the bait onto the hook shank. If you have a cooler, you can also freeze soft baits at home and use them as they partially thaw in the cooler.

CLAMS & MUSSELS...



SHRIMP TAIL ...

SHRIMP AND GRASS SHRIMP – Shrimp can be used whole or in part. Use smaller grass shrimp whole, threading a fine wire hook through the tail. To hook a larger whole shrimp, hook it lightly through the body or through the meaty tail. Remove one or two sections of the shell to allow the shrimp scent to attract fish. You can also use just the tail of the shrimp, threading the hook into the meaty part to hide the hook.

These basic methods of hooking bait will assure that you have the best possible fishing success and maximum possible chances of catching fish. These proven methods keep bait on the hook, hook a fish well and work for all species of fish.

For additional information on baits, see our **BASIC FRESHWATER BAITS** tip sheet at takemefishing.org.