

## OUTDOORS

# How to pick the right jig for crappie fishing

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FOR THE JOURNAL

**W**alk into any bait and tackle shop this time of year and you'll likely be overwhelmed with choices of crappie jigs available to tempt one of the country's favorite gamefish.

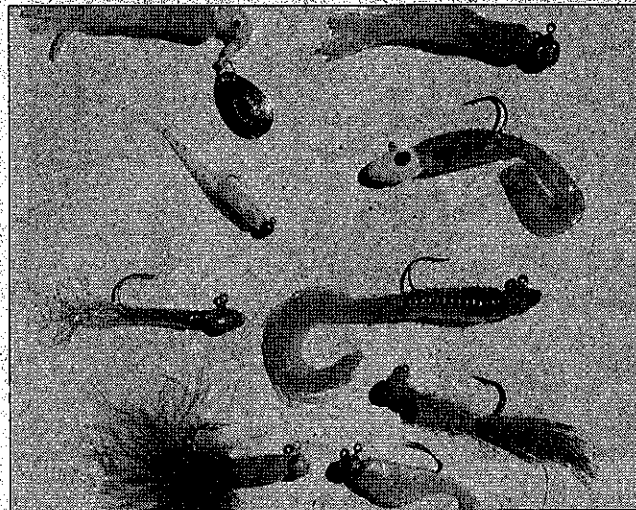
How do you decide which ones to pick?

Crappie fishing tactics fall into two categories — moving presentations, or static presentations. Moving presentations are pulling, long-line trolling and casting, while static presentations are tight-line trolling, single pole jigging and drifting. Dock shooting often requires features of both camps.

The basis of the crappie jig is the head — a hook with lead molded onto it, with or without attachments.

— Roundhead jigs. The roundhead is used to provide a flutter fall when fished. The jig is typically used with tight lining, single pole jigging or when shooting docks.

— Minnow-head jigs. Triangular-shaped heads lend their shape to swimming baitfish and are more hydro-dynamic, cutting through the water more efficiently. Minnow-head jigs are popular with long-line trolling and casting tactics.



Crappie jig colors, styles and sizes often make a big difference in fishing success.

— Pony-head jigs. Pony heads employ small spinner blades on a swivel or split ring and add flash and vibration to the jig head. This is useful for stained water or other low visibility conditions.

— Other shapes. Football heads, shad darts and other shapes see more limited use. Typically, the shape dictates whether the jig is designed to cut through the water or be more appealing when fished statically.

Jig bodies for crappie are typically either soft plastic baits that are threaded on the hook by the angler or hair, feather or other synthetic materials tied to the jig body by the manufacturer.

— Tubes. Tube jigs typically have a hollow body with tentacles on the back end to provide static action. Tubes see more usage for slow, tight-line trolling.

— Curly tails. These plastic bodies are designed to be pulled fast enough through the water so that the tails flutter, providing action to the bait.

— Paddle tails. Paddle-tail usage is similar to curly tails in that the bait has to be moving forward to provide action.

— Straight tails. Straight tails, or stingers, mimic a static baitfish. Straight tails see more use in dock shooting, vertical jigging, or other

single-pole tactics.

— Creature baits. Similar to tubes, but designed to imitate specific, non-minnow type prey. Creatures are usually better suited for single pole tactics or for bream fishing.

— Hair jigs. This category encompasses all hand-tied baits using hair, feather, marabou, chenille or a variety of other synthetic material. The design allows the baits to pulse or breath when held still in the water. Static techniques like single pole jigging, dock shooting, drifting or tight lining work best with hair jigs.

The basic rule of thumb when it comes to choosing jig colors revolves around water clarity and sunlight penetration. The clearer and cleaner the water, natural or opaque colors work best.

In stained, dark or muddy waters, brighter colors and darker colors get the nod. Angler bias probably has more to do with color selection than fish preference. Successful anglers keep changing colors until they find one color that catches the most fish on a particular outing.

**PHILLIP GENTRY** is a freelance outdoor writer and the host of PG & Boatgirl Outdoors. Download the podcast on Apple, Google Play, Spotify or at [pgandboatgirl.com](http://pgandboatgirl.com).