



Quality Tackle Since 1927

Fishing Clarkspoons

for

Bluefish, Spanish Mackerel & other game fish

&

How to Fish Planers



www.clarkspoon.com

TIPS FROM CLARK

- The clearer the water, the longer the leader.
- The larger the sinker or planer, the longer the leader.
- Use a ball bearing swivel attached to the sinker or planer – never to the lure.
- The old adage “large bait – large fish” often holds true. However, it is generally more important to match the size of the bait on which the fish are feeding, particularly when fishing for Spanish mackerel.
- Fish not biting, water clear. Try a smaller spoon and/or a gold spoon. Vary your trolling speed, but a faster speed is more likely to be productive.
- Fish not biting, water cloudy or dirty. Try a larger spoon and a slower trolling speed. Also, the water may be clearer at a greater depth, so try a larger sinker or planer. If possible, move offshore to clearer water. A transition line between dirty and clear water is often loaded with fish.

WE WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND A SPECIAL THANKS TO
ART LEVY AND CAPT. JERRY DILSAVER
FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS IN CREATING THIS BROCHURE.

FISHING CLARKSPOONS

Thank you for purchasing a Clarkspoon or a Spoon Squid. Without a doubt, these are the two most popular trolling lures for bluefish and Spanish mackerel. There are geographic preferences, but both lures are very successful at catching fish. The Clarkspoon is most popular in the Southeast and the Florida Panhandle, while the Spoon Squid is the lure of choice in the Northeast Atlantic States and west coast of Florida.

Both of these lures were designed to imitate the silverside and glass minnows that are primary forage of many inshore and near shore game fish. The Clarkspoon closely resembles a healthy version of these bait fish with its tight wobble and spin. The Spoon Squid, with a more exaggerated wobble, appears to be hurt and therefore easy prey. Some fishermen feel that the Clarkspoon is preferable at higher trolling speeds.

Although they will catch other species, the traditional use of these lures is for bluefish and Spanish mackerel. The most popular sizes are #00, #0, and #1. The larger sizes, #2, #3, #4, and #5, do well on school kings, larger bluefish, stripers, and almost any fish that feeds on smaller fish. In the Clarkspoon, these more popular sizes are available either chrome-plated or with 24K gold plating. The larger Clarkspoons, sizes #2 - #4, and all sizes in the Spoon Squid, are available in chrome finish only.

Both lures may be trolled or cast, although casting will generally require that appropriate weight be placed a short distance before the lure. Again, there are geographic preferences as to which lure is best suited for which use, but we have found them to be virtually interchangeable. For simplicity, and to conserve space, the applications discussed will be in using Clarkspoons. In any and all of these applications, Spoon Squids may be substituted, if so desired.

As stated earlier, Clarkspoons are the lure of choice in trolling for bluefish and Spanish mackerel. Early in the season, when both the bait and the fish are somewhat smaller, the #00 and #0 sizes are often the most productive. As the game fish and bait fish grow, the #1 and larger sizes gain in popularity. Not only do the lures catch these fish, but are also deadly on Atlantic bonito, false albacore, and skipjack tuna. Other occasional catches include flounder, speckled trout, gray trout, cobia, cero mackerel, and king mackerel, the last three generally on the larger sizes. Many fishermen successfully mix some of the larger sizes into a lure spread in order to attract some of these larger fish.

Clarkspoons have gotten so popular that enterprising fishermen have developed a variety of ways to use them. Although they may be trolled unencumbered on the surface, the most popular fishing method is trolling beneath the surface, behind planers or trolling sinkers. The standard procedure is to place the planer or trolling sinker at the end of the line and then extend a leader back to the Clarkspoon. For most shallow water or near surface applications, trolling weights between 1 oz. and 4 oz. or size #1 or #2 planers should work well. Use a mixture of sinkers or planer sizes and various lengths until you can find the feeding depth and pattern on any given day.

Most trolling rods will handle the smaller size #1 and #2 planers. Be sure to set your reel drag just tight enough to pull the planer without slippage. Special planer rods, downriggers, or hand lines are required to handle the strain of the larger planers. Hand lines are easy to use and often are the salvation of a fishing trip if the fish are feeding at depths only reachable with the larger planers. Length, diameter, and density of the hand line affect how deep a planer can dive. Thin, strong, and flexible are the preferred qualities in a hand line. Monofilament is a better handline material than braided nylon or dacron. Stainless steel cable (49 strand) is even better yet.

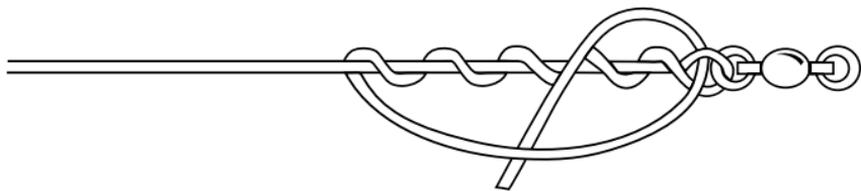
Although there is a point at which the drag on the handline or planer cable hampers the planer's ability to dive, they can be assumed to dive approximately one foot for each two feet of appropriate size planer line. Too thick a planer line will not allow the planer to dive as efficiently, while too thin a line risks tangling and breaking and is more difficult to handle. Because fish do not always feed at the same depth, a well-equipped boat will have several handlines of various lengths. A range of sizes from 20 to 75 ft. should prepare you for most situations. Obviously, if a downrigger or a planer rod is used to pull the planer, versatility is increased to the point where the only limitations are the amount of line and the size of the planer.

The Clarkspoon may also be fished on a separate line on a rod and reel and affixed to the planer with a planer release assembly, allowing the angler to fight the fish without the drag and interference of the planer.

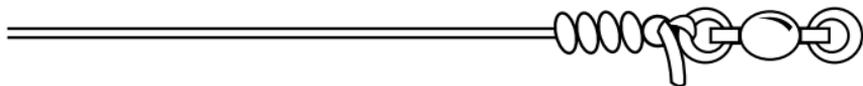
We recommend a leader of 20 to 40 lb. monofilament, when fishing for Spanish mackerel and school bluefish. A stronger leader, usually 50 to 80 lb. monofilament, is a better choice when fishing for king and cero mackerel and other larger fish. There are some locations, such as the Florida Panhandle, where nylon-coated wire leaders are the local favorite. Although you may rarely have a lure bitten off, our research shows that monofilament leaders, with their low visibility, are much more effective at catching fish, particularly in clear water. The additional productivity more than compensates for the occasional lost lure. Fluorocarbon, which is more expensive than monofilament, is less visible and potentially even more effective. When using small planers or trolling sinkers, a leader of 20 to 30 ft. is sufficient. Larger planers or clear water conditions may require leader lengths of as much as 40 to 50 ft. Plastic leader wheels make convenient storage for longer leaders.

Clarkspoons wobble and spin very quickly as they move through the water. Sometimes this motion will “crawl” up the leader and cause it to twist and tangle. A ball-bearing swivel connected to the planer or trolling sinker will minimize this problem. Never connect the lure to the line with a snap swivel or the action will be impaired. An improved clinch knot (see diagram) is recommended to tie the lure directly to the leader.

Pass the line through the eye of the hook, swivel, or lure. Double back, and make 5 turns around the standing line. Holding the coils in place, thread the tag end of the line through the first loop above the eye, then through the big loop.



Hold the tag end of line while pulling up the coils. Make sure the coils are in a spiral, not lapping over each other. Slide tight against the eye. Clip the tag end.



Trolling speeds should vary for different species. Spanish mackerel, Atlantic bonito, false albacore, skipjack tuna, and smaller school king mackerel are fast, aggressive feeders and move very quickly. Obviously, a faster trolling speed is desirable for these fish. A speed of 4

to 6 miles per hour or even greater is generally most productive. In the absence of a speedometer or electronic indicator, a tachometer reading of somewhere between 1000 and 1500 rpm should get the job done. Don't be afraid to experiment and vary your speed until the right combination is found. In the case of bluefish, a slightly slower speed is usually most effective.

If you are in an area where you expect fish, repeatedly turning the boat will often add to your catch. The direction change of the lures appears to trigger the feeding instincts of the game fish. In a tight turn, the dropping of the lure closer to the bottom will often yield an unexpected bonus such as a flounder or other deep feeding fish. Avoid too tight a turn or you will find yourself with a tangled mess, as your lines cross over one another.

A pair of innovations from the past few years that have taken the fishing world by storm involve the Clarkspoon as the terminal lure part of a bird rig or daisy chain. These rigs have accounted for more than their fair share of fish in a relatively short time. In a bird rig, the Clarkspoon is tied behind a small bird and trolled across the surface of the water. A 5" bird combined with a #00 or #0 Clarkspoon is a favorite way to make this rig. The "flutter" that it makes has proven irresistible to many fish, apparently simulating the sight and sound of injured or panicked bait fish. The suggested rigging consists of a Clarkspoon 7 ft. behind the bird on 30 lb. monofilament.

Another product that has proven effective is the daisy chain. In this rig, several feathers or squids are rigged on a leader ahead of a Clarkspoon. The squids are all the same distance apart, while the Clarkspoon is rigged at twice the distance behind the last squid. The fact that the Clarkspoon is the "odd" lure, and an extra distance back, make it appear to be unable to keep up, and thus an easy meal for a

hungry fish. Although, generally fished below the surface, this rig may be used effectively on top of the water. In order to keep this rig manageable, a distance of 16" to 18" between the squids is recommended. It is also wise to use a wire leader between the squids on a daisy chain rig. A coated 30 lb. stranded wire saves lures and rigs since strikes on the squids, as well as the Clarkspoon, are frequent; and the squids or feathers are very vulnerable to sharp teeth.

For even more fish attracting power, you can place a bird at the end of your line and then attach the daisy chain to it. As with any bird rig, this combination must be fished on the surface. Not only are these rigs catching a lot of fish, they are catching a lot of larger fish. The extra motion and excitement generated by the multiple rigs tends to attract older and more wary fish.

Whether you are a new angler just beginning to enjoy coastal fishing, or an experienced veteran, you will find Clarkspoons an excellent choice for many game fish, especially bluefish and Spanish mackerel. The rigs are not difficult to make and you can easily assemble them yourself or purchase them from your local tackle shop. They also have trolling sinkers, planers, planer kits, high-speed planer kits, and a complimentary instructional brochure for using planers.

BALL BEARING TROLL SINKERS

Clark ball bearing troll sinkers virtually eliminate line twist when trolling Clarkspoons and other lures. Made with Billfisher, black oxide ball bearing snap swivels. Available in 1 oz. to 4 oz.



FISHING PLANERS

Planers will take your lure down below the surface to where the fish are feeding and return to the surface after a fish strikes. The attached diagrams show the "set" and "released" positions for a planer. The different size planers allow you to achieve increasingly greater depths as you go up in size, and there are even high-speed versions if faster trolling speeds are required.

Planers are designed to run at an approximate angle of 45 degrees. At this angle, the planer will dive one foot for each two feet of planer line that is below the surface of the water. It is important to use tackle, line, and lures that are matched to the size planer that you are using.

TROLLING SPEED

Optimum trolling speed is usually between 4 to 6 miles per hour. If you do not have a speedometer or electronic measuring device, a tachometer reading between 1000 and 1500 rpm should achieve this speed. Vary speeds within this range until you establish your most effective reading.

POSITIVE FACTORS THAT CAUSE A PLANER TO FUNCTION

1. **The size of the planing surface (blade):** The larger the blade, the deeper it will run. An exception would be high-speed planer, whose unusual configuration allows it to dive deeper at high speeds than comparable size planers.

2. **Lead weight on the planer wire:** The amount of lead on the wire will only slightly influence depth. Remember that the planer blade achieves the planing function, and the weight is not a significant factor. However, this weight is very important in setting and resetting the planer. We will discuss this in more detail later.

3. Type and quality of the line: A major influence on a planer's ability to dive is the type and quantity of the line used to pull it. Adequate strength is required to hold the planer and fight the fish. Larger planers can put substantial stress on the line and any other gear used to hold them, and this stress increases with boat speed. However, any increase in line diameter above the optimum size creates additional drag and displacement in the water, and thus hampers the planer's ability to attain maximum depth. Also, generally speaking, the longer the planer line, the deeper the planer will run.

NEGATIVE FACTORS THAT CAUSE A PLANER TO FUNCTION

1. Boat speed: As previously mentioned, optimum planer trolling speed is usually 4 to 6 miles per hour. When you exceed this optimum speed for a planer, the increased water pressure on the planer blade and line begins to lift the planer in the water. Thus, as speed continues to increase, the planer will continue to rise and will eventually jump out of water.

2. Diameter of the planer line: Large diameter planer lines decrease the ability of a planer to attain maximum depths for reasons already mentioned.

3. The law of diminishing returns: We have already mentioned that using more line will increase planer depth. Unfortunately, if 40 ft. of line will allow a planer to dive 20 ft., it does not necessarily follow that doubling the length of the planer line would double the planer depth. Due to the combination of water pressure and water displacement (buoyancy),* the additional 40 ft. of line might only yield another 12 to 15 ft. of depth.

PLANER LINES

1. Stainless steel cable (49 strand) is probably the most effective planer line. Solid wire, such as monel, although extremely efficient from a diving perspective, is prone to kink and break when used in a planing application. The new super braid fishing lines appear to be second only to cable in planer pulling properties. Monofilament line would be a third choice. Braided nylon and dacron have proven to be least effective where maximum depth is required. However, where greater depth is not a major factor, the ease of use and availability of small nylon cord make it the hand line of choice of many fishermen.

2. All planers can be used with a hand line. One end of the line is attached to the boat (often with a loop around a cleat), and the other is either tied or connected with a large snap swivel to the planer rig. Sea Striker offers a variety of hand line kits that will meet most inshore requirements.

3. Sizes #1 and #2 planers are often trolled on rods and reels spooled with line ranging from 20 to 50 lb. test. This has the advantage of allowing the angler to quickly adjust the distance and the depth at which the planer is fished. A #3 planer will require a substantially heavier trolling rod and 40 or 50 lb. line. Be sure to set your reel drag just tight enough to pull the planer without slippage.

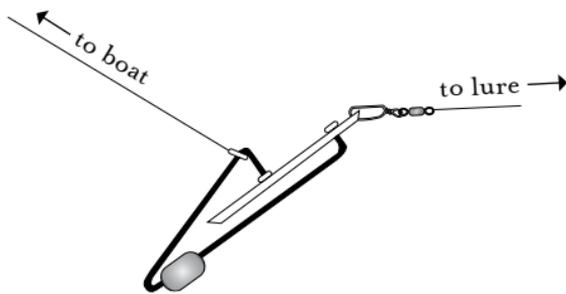
4. Large-sized planers are best pulled on hand lines, downriggers, or specialized planer rods with 6/0 or 9/0 reels. We have found 275 lb. stainless steel cable to be the most effective and durable product for deeper ocean fishing with heavy gear.

FISHING

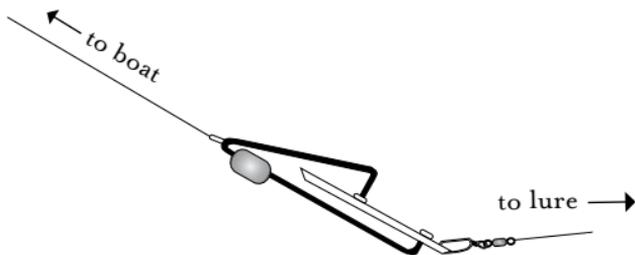
Now that we understand how planers work and the factors that affect their ability to dive, it is time to catch some fish. There are a few simple guidelines that will make using planers both easier and more productive.

1. Guideline and safety precaution #1 is to always wear gloves when handling a planer or planer line. Loose fitting gloves that can be easily removed are best.

2. In order to dive, a planer must be in the "set" position (see diagram).



Usually a planer will set itself upon entering the water. Sometimes it doesn't or a fish may strike and trip, or release, the planer (see diagram) without getting hooked.



In these instances, it is helpful to be able to reset the planer without reeling it all the way to the boat. Pull in several feet of line and then quickly release it. This slack in the planer line will allow the weight on the planer wire to cause the planer to nose dive and reset itself. If this doesn't work after an attempt or two, slow the boat speed and repeat the procedure. Again, this same procedure can be used if the planer should hit bottom and trip.

3. Sometimes it is desirable to trip and retrieve a planer without slowing the boat. The same technique as described above may be used to trip the planer. Considerable effort may be required to pull the planer, depending on the size of the planer and the speed of the boat.

4. If the planer is not running straight, but wants to track to the right or left, it's an easy problem to fix. The planer has probably gotten bent and needs to have the blade straightened or the wire aligned. It is a common occurrence for the planer to be stepped on in the excitement of landing a fish and a pair of pliers is generally all that it takes to put the planer back into working order.

5. In addition to the selection of planers according to the depth that you want to achieve, they must also be matched to the lures and size of the fish that you are pursuing. A lure that is too large for the planer will create enough drag to repeatedly trip the planer. The only solutions are to go to a larger planer or a smaller lure. On the other hand, small fish will often not trip a large planer and a smaller planer may be required.

6. When a planer that has been running straight suddenly starts tracking at an angle, it is likely that a small fish is on the line. The other possibility is that the planer has picked up seaweed or other debris. In either event, the planer needs to be pulled and checked.

7. Sea Striker planers may be used on appropriate rods, reels, handlines, and downriggers. Although they are often more effective, planers do create more turbulence in the water than trolling sinkers. Because of this, longer than normal leaders will greatly improve planer productivity. A minimum of 20 ft. should be used on the smaller planers, and 40 to 50 ft. will work best on larger sizes. If the water is unusually clear, then even longer leaders will add to your catch.

In addition to line diameter, there are other factors that determine the maximum depth such as, line type, trolling speed, current, lure drag, lure weight, water temperature, and length of line. Therefore each planer may have a wide range of possible depths that can be achieved. Based on a variety of fishing conditions the following chart will help you choose the correct planer for your purposes.

Sea Striker® Planers

Item	Size	Estimated Depth
SSP1	1	5-12 ft. of depth
SSP2	2	10-20 ft. of depth
SSP3	3	12-25 ft. of depth
SSP4	4	15-30 ft. of depth
SSP4BR	4 BRACED	15-30 ft. of depth
SSP5	5	20-40 ft. of depth
SSP5BR	5 BRACED	20-40 ft. of depth
DLX-P	6 BRACED	20-40 ft. of depth
HS8	8 BRACED HI-SPEED	10-40 ft. of depth



SSP4BR



SSP3

A #1 and #2 planer can be used with most trolling rods. #3 would need to be used with a heavier trolling rod. Any planer larger than a #3 should be used with a handline or specifically designed planer rod.

Thank you for selecting a Clarkspoon product. We hope that this brief guide will add to your understanding of Clarkspoons and planers with the result of enjoyable and successful fishing adventures.

* NOTE: All objects immersed in water are subject to a buoyant force that is proportional to the volume of water displaced; therefore, if enough planer line was let out, the combination of the buoyant force from the water displacement with the water pressure on the line and blade would eventually reach a point where the upward pressure would offset the diving capability of the planer. Additional line would possibly even cause the planer to rise. Since it is unlikely that this line would be let out under normal fishing conditions, this remains more of a theoretical issue than a functional problem. This buoyant force is one of the primary reasons that the depth attained does not remain proportional to the amount of line let out.

SETTING AND RETRIEVING PLANERS

To set the planer, attach the snap swivel from the planer line to the brass ring on the planer and ease it into the water at a 45 degree angle. Should the planer trip while fishing, it may be reset by pulling the planer line forward (2 to 3 ft.) and then releasing. This may take several attempts since you must change the altitude of the planer in order to get it from the neutral position into the planing position. A slightly slower boat speed will help. Your planer may be tripped for retrieval by pulling forward and releasing the planer line (as above).

PLANER DEPTH

Planers will run at a 45 degree angle and achieve approximately one foot of depth for each two feet of planer line when used with appropriate line. There is a point where a planer reaches its optimum depth. For example, 50 ft. of planer line will probably result in a planing depth of 25 ft. Unfortunately, it does not follow that 100 ft. of line will generate 50 ft. of depth. It is more likely that 125-150 ft. of planer line would be required. Speed will only take a planer down so far and the process reverses itself. You can see this if you pull a planer at very high speed. Eventually, it will actually jump out of the water. Diameter and density of the planer line or cable is an important factor relative to depth. Monofilament lines run deeper than braided lines, and stainless steel cable (275 to 400 lb. test) will obtain even greater depths.

