Solving lockjaw

FOLLOW THE FLOWCHART TO TROUBLESHOOT A TOUGH WALLEYE BITE



start
Drill a hole and get jigging. Do you have a sonar unit?

NO SONAR :(
I'm not using a sonar and have no idea what's going on down there.

SOLUTION
Go get a sonar unit. Diagnosing a tough bite is impossible without total sub-surface awareness.

YEP, GOT A SONAR
I see fish attracted to my jigging on sonar but they won't bite and eventually swim away.

Do you have an underwater camera?
Interested fish aren't always the target species. An underwater camera, if you have one, is a good way to confirm the fish signals on a fish finder are in fact walleye, and not whitefish, ling, or another species.

YES, I SEE WALLEYE

NO CAMERA
How much money am I supposed to spend on catching fish anyway?

(No more questions about owning tech, we promise)

Are you tipping your hook with bait?

NO

SOLUTION
Add a minnow head or piece of a scent-loaded artificial to the lure.



YES

SOLUTION
Add a fresh piece of bait to your lure.

Did the fish bite?

NO

Do fish swim off quickly?

YES!



Great! Send us pics: *www.oodmag.com/mbentry*

YES

SOLUTION
The fall rate of your jig might be too fast. Repeat the jigging sequence, but control your lure's fall rate once the fish are close.

NO. FISH ARE STICKING AROUND

SOLUTION
Repeat jigging sequence, but change your triggering moves (see left).

Triggering moves:

- Pull the lure away from a walleye as it approaches to force it to chase.
- Pause the lure between lift and drops, experiment with length. Sometimes a long stop is needed, other times short pauses. Short pauses don't allow walleye to get a good look at the lure, forcing one to quickly decide whether to bite or not.
- Add shakes to move lure while keeping it at the same depth (good for walleye with small strike window).
- On the fall, let the lure hit bottom and then lay still for several seconds.

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Did the fish bite?

NO. Changing triggering moves or fall rate didn't help.

SOLUTION Repeat jigging sequence that attracted fish, but jig higher in the water column, moving up 12-36 inches.

Raising the lure higher is a strategy to target more aggressive fish in the area with a larger strike window. By raising the lure any walleye that swims up to get a closer look is invested and more likely to bite. But, pay attention to how far off bottom a fish is willing to travel. If it repeatedly won't chase higher than a certain depth, this is a clue of where its preferred depth range ends, so focus efforts on that band of water.

YES!

Nice! tag your pics on social media @oodmag

Did the fish bite?

NO

Was the fish interested?

Interested fish follow the bait up and down in the water, go away and come back, and generally stay in the sonar cone.

YES

SOLUTION You're on the right track, but the presentation needs tweaking. Try a smaller lure or a different colour.

Cut the noise

If fishing shallow, excessive noise (cleats on bare ice, drilling holes, heavy footsteps, dragging a portable shelter, etc.) may have spooked the walleye. Keep noise down, or relocate if other anglers are the culprits.

NO

SOLUTION Change lure styles. For example, if jigging a spoon (vertical profile) try a jigging minnow (horizontal profile).

Other swaps: switch from a bent spoon to a straight model, try a rattling bait instead of a non-rattling one, or switch from a hard-bait to a soft-plastic minnow.

SOLUTION Try a bait-and-switch approach:

If the fish loses interest but is still under the hole, quickly reel up and immediately drop a smaller, or bait-tipped offering. Setting a dead-stick rod in a hole 3 feet away can also work.

THAT DIDN'T HELP

YES!

Did the fish bite?

NO

SOLUTION Time to shift holes. Here's how:

Don't give up the hole completely. Set a dead-stick rig while you explore the vicinity.

Don't move far yet. Work holes in the vicinity where you marked fish. You just need to adjust your position slightly to be around more walleye. The more fish are grouped together the more competitive they become and more likely to bite.

Hole-hop through area, returning to original hole to try and coax the fish again (sometimes a fish just needs a break).

STILL NO BITERS

Is it daytime?

YES

NO

SOLUTION These fish may turn on in late afternoon into dark. Wait them out or look for willing biters holding in a deeper part of the existing structure.

SOLUTION Keep working the vicinity, or make a big move to another spot to find willing biters.

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