

## Switching Lines

By  
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Ilan Iax at Giants Cup photo Stelios Comminos

I don't think I am any good on still water though I have by long association picked up a tip or two that might help those better suited to the science that is still water fly fishing. And it is a science. You see whereas river fishing is all about discerning the lie and managing drift, Stillwater fishing is about fishing at the right depth. All trophy still water fishermen will tell you that depth is crucial. This is because still water trout feed throughout the water column. Thus the difference between a good day and a bad one is not just about the fly or the manner of your retrieve but also at what depth you put this fly. I experienced this the other day when I caught a lot of fishing the company of considerably better fisherman who blanked despite fishing the same are with the same flies. I had got lucky because the line I was using, an airflow fast intermediate, was hitting the right depth. So I caught and the guy next to me who was using a different line did not.

Line manufacturers are well aware of this and consequently offer lines with a bewildering array of different sink rates. The sink rate, by the way, is determined by number of inches a short piece of the line sinks in a second. So a slow sinking line will sink at as little as half an inch second and a fast sinking one at as much as ten or more inches a second.

Now you would think that this would make your faster sinking lines more effective. After all they get to the zone faster. But this is not the case because they sink through the fishing lane faster as well. Thus for about 80% of the time you are best served using a slow sinking line. These are known as intermediate lines and they range from a sink rate of half an inch a second up to as much as four inches a second.

Now the trick with all these lines is to know their sink rates and time your retrieve accordingly. If you are in 2 metres of water and are fishing with an intermediate line with a sink rate of 1.5 inches per second, it will take about a minute for the line to reach the bottom. The fly might get there a lot quicker but when you start retrieving it will rise to the level of the line. So you

can determine the depth at which you fish by waiting for a measured period of time to elapse before starting to retrieve.

If only it ended there. Unfortunately the laws relating to fluid dynamics operate so that the speed of your retrieve or the flow of water can influence line depth as can the amount of line that is in the water. A fast retrieve or fast flowing water will for example pull the line shallower than a slow flow or retrieve rate. This effect is exaggerated the shorter the line gets. Thus you will want a faster sinking line to hold a fly at depth if you are fast stripping to imitate a bait fish than you would imitating a slowly retrieved mayfly nymph, for example. You also want as much line out as possible. The same applies if you are trying to hold a fly at depth in fast flowing water.



Competition fishermen know this and thus carry a selection of different sinking rate lines with them. They will also prospect the water column for fish changing flies and the sink rate of their line to best suited the conditions they are in. They will often tweak this by adjusting the length of their leader. Thus for example one could prospect the entire water column with a long leader carrying three flies, two on dropper using a slow retrieve or a dead drift and a floating or intermediate line. A slow retrieve will keep the tail fly on the bottom which would

be perfect if you are fishing a blood worm imitation coupled with caddis mayfly or Midge larvae or pupae that drift rather than swim. However if you intend imitating a baitfish or fast swimming dragon fly anywhere in your fly selection a faster retrieval and thus a faster sinking line will be required if you want to keep a fly on the bottom, no matter how long the leader.

Similarly you will want a shorter leader when fishing heavier flies which require a faster sinking line. Do you get the drift?

Cassette reels offer an efficient way of changing lines quickly. And this is made so much easier if instead of relining the rod you reel in the line all the way in until the leader is running through the eyes. It is a simple matter to then cut the leader at the fly line and reattach into the new line. That is then pulled through the eyes when you strip out the leader.