



Crawler Harnesses

Crawler Harnesses are one of the most popular and effective live bait presentations for both drifting and trolling. The most common application is trolling for walleye on the Great Lakes. Walleye 101 and Walleye Kid have lots of great information and videos to help you use Crawler Harnesses to catch more fish.

Product Overview

- **What:** great lure for targeting walleye in a nearly endless combination of colors, sizes, and actions.
- **Depth:** used to target fish throughout the water column in 10 ft to 50 ft of water
- **Baits:** large, live crawlers work best but artificials like “Gulp” can work at certain times.
- **Leader:** best length is a 3’-6’ – longer lengths cause netting issues. Use 14-17 lb test fluorocarbon.
- **Speed:** effective at a wide range of speeds. Generally a speed of 0.6 MPH is needed to turn the blade. Can run up to 1.6 MPH with inline weights and bottom bouncers. Jet divers can pull then up to 2.2 MPH.
- **Rod & Reel:** line counter trolling combos work best so you can repeat your program consistently.
- **Sizes:** blades from size 3 to size 6 are most common. Single hooks size 2 to size 4. Treble hooks size 8.
- **Colors:** endless combinations. Perch beads and gold blades are popular near bottom. Purple beads and silver or purple blades higher in the water column. Try white beads and white blades early in the day.
- **Cost:** complete harnesses range from \$1.50-\$4.00 each depending on size, quality, and where you purchase them. Better quality harnesses have fluorocarbon line, quick change clevis, and chemically sharpened hooks
- **Setup:** the majority of harnesses have two octopus type hooks; some harnesses use a treble hook as the back hook. Use a quality barrel swivel or crane swivel on the end of the harness to prevent line twists. .
- **Rule of Thumb:** getting your harness in front of the fish is more important than color initially. Once you are confident in your program, start to experiment with bead and blade colors, blade type and size, and trolling speed. Over the course of the day you will see a pattern emerge and can modify your program.

Getting Set Up on the Water

- **Step One:** look for fish on your sonar that you can target with crawler harnesses. The most likely group is active fish near the middle of the water column. Determine what presentation method you will use to get your crawler harnesses in front of the fish – inline weights, bottom bouncers, snap weights, or jet divers.
- **Step Two:** get a good mix of bead and blade combinations in your spread to see what the fish prefer.
- **Step Three:** experiment continuously. Concentrate on distance behind the planer boards and speed first.
- **Step Four:** adjust your program. If a harness with purple beads and silver blade 50 feet back produces a fish move another line to the same distance back but leave the color as is. You will now see if both colors produce fish at the correct distance back. If the purple harness hits again switch both to purple and silver.
- **Common Mistakes:**
 1. Hooking the crawler on improperly. The front hook should barely be through the nose of the crawler.
 2. Not checking your bait often enough – small fish will steal your crawler and you will never know it.
 3. Running too deep. Walleye will come up a long way to feed, keep the baits above them.

Fish On!

- **Recognizing a Bite:** depends on the presentation technique – subtle flag twitch to massive rod bending jerk
- **Wait for the right time:** don’t grab the rod at the first sign of a bite. Harness bites can be slow to develop
- **Set the hook:** not required. Smooth sweep upward with bouncers or a couple quick cranks with a board

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