

12
MISTAKES
KAYAK
ANGLERS
MAKE





12 Mistakes Kayak Anglers Make

Mistake #1: Buying the Wrong Kayak, Buying Accessories You Don't Need

We always recommend our customers try the kayak model they're interested in before they buy it. Why? Even though your friends love theirs, and even though you see how awesome they are on social media, you don't know if it's the right boat for you and the way you fish. Most full service kayak dealers have a rental program, and most if not all will apply the rental fee to the purchase of a kayak. It's a risk-free proposition.

The same thing applies to kayak accessories. We recommend buying the basics up front, including a PFD, anchor/stake out pole, paddle, rod holder (if the kayak doesn't come with one), and Coast Guard compliant 360 degree light (if you'll fish at night). Then we recommend they fish out of their kayak several times to determine whether they need other and more expensive accessories.

- Marcos Garza, Fishing Tackle Unlimited, www.fishingtackleunlimited.com @marcosgarza07

Mistake #2: Failing to Plan for the Weather

People push themselves past their physical limits relating to the length of their paddle and the weather conditions for the day. Don't look for the daily forecast, find a more in depth forecast that gives hourly information. Wind Finder app, for example. Also, don't force a trip. If the forecast is bad, stay off the water. Once you've decided to go, plan your trip around the wind/weather for the day. Launch from a convenient spot relative to where you'll fish and the wind. Know the weather, use wisdom, and have great trips!

- Chris Vecsey – Sam's Bait and Tackle in Orange Beach, AL. @cvecsey_fishing

Mistake #3: Bad Trip Preparation

You want to know the weather for the day, including the wind and the tidal movement, and then plan accordingly.

Here are two scenarios that require different types of lures:

During Low Tide you'll find exposed oysters and mud between the water and the grass. I know I'll have sightcasting opportunities. I'll use Buggs here because they land softly and have the profile of a crab. The Beastie Bugg is my favorite in shallow water. But when the water is only inches deep and the redfish have their backs out of the water they're very skittish. During these times I downsize to a Hot Head Bugg, Bitty Bugg, or Flats Bugg. I want to make the smallest splash possible. Other baits I'll use

here are small, 3" paddle tails rigged on 1/16 oz. jig heads and smaller topwaters. Both of these are good search baits.

During High Tide you'll find flooded grass and the bait will be up in there. There are two main techniques I use here. First, I'll try to call them out of the grass with loud topwaters like She Dogs and Super Spooks. I'll also throw popping corks. I fish both of these parallel to the grass. The other thing I'll do is cast up into the grass with weedless baits. Buggs Trout Thumpers work well along with larger paddle tails rigged on offset hooks with belly weights. Sometimes I'll also fish hollow body frogs, the same ones that bass fishermen use.

Last Tip for fishing high water conditions:

Sometimes fish will be schooling and feeding away from the grass. Remember where the shell is. Work a topwater over that shell because the shell holds bait.

- Ricardo Saravia, Austin Canoe & Kayak, www.ack.com @3rdcoastkayaker

Mistake #4: Bringing Too Much Tackle and Gear

So many kayak anglers load their crates with boxes and boxes of lures. You don't need all those lures! My Advice? Find your comfort zone and confidence baits and everything will come together.

Here's what I carry:

Box 1: 2 Topwaters, 2 Twitch Baits, 3 Bags of Soft Plastics, Wide Gap Worm Hooks with Screw Locks for the Soft Plastics.

Box 2: Various Buggs for Sight Casting Redfish.

I also carry some miscellaneous items: 2 pairs of scissors, 2 pairs of pliers, and 2 fish grips. (I'm not a net guy since my philosophy is it was either meant to be or not and its just more clutter.) Bring two boxes at the most and fish hard!

- Brian Stauffer – Fishhead Kayak Charters on the Nature Coast of Florida, www.fishheadkayakcharters.com @fishheads4

Mistake #5: Only Using a Heavy Line and Stiff Rod

Most beginners use 40# fishing line and a Medium/Heavy power rod. This limits the types of lures you can fish, especially all the different Buggs. I fish Light and Ultralight Spinning and Casting rods with matching reels. They're rigged with 5 or 10 pound braid and tipped with 10 or 12 pound fluorocarbon leaders. I fish shallow marshes, and I can cast Buggs a long way with my rods. Here's how I choose which Bugg to use: I look for bait and match the size of the bait with a Buggs lure. Last two things: Don't be afraid to slow down your retrieve and bump your Bugg along the bottom. Don't be afraid to get snagged either. Oysters hold bait, and predator fish will always follow the bait. Downsize Your Gear and Your Lures and Catch More Fish!

- Mark DeLaRosa – YouTube MDLR Fishing. @mdlr_fishing

Mistake #6: Depending on “Spots” to Catch Fish

There's more to catching fish than having “spots”. There are fish in all the bays, and they move around. I look for bait, structure, and water movement. If you can find these three things, you will catch more fish and won't skunk. Know how to find fish so you don't have to depend on spots!

- Nick Yim – YouTube RX Angler. @rx_angler

Mistake #7: Overlooking Spots Near Launches

I look for places that are out of reach of bank fishermen, but relatively close to the boat launch. Power boaters zoom past these spots, but they're some of my favorite places to fish! These places can be very productive, and as a bonus you won't exhaust yourself with a long paddle right out the gate. You don't have to paddle a long way to catch fish!

- Scott Kennedy – Whistlin' Waters Kayak Fishing, Orange Beach, AL. www.whistlinwaters.com
@kayaking_kennedy

Mistake #8: Failing to Move and Cover Water

The kayak fishing platforms available today help you fish as you move through the water you're fishing. I'm speaking of pedal drive kayaks of course. There are lots of good options out there. Fishing from a pedal drive kayak is a quiet and efficient way to find fish. Keep moving and find those fish!

- Scott Bienvenu – Pack & Paddle in Lafayette, LA. www.packpaddle.com @bienvevho

Mistake #9: Spooking the Fish You're Trying to Catch

I like to fish with the wind at my back. So when I get to my spot and the wind is in my face I have to get to the other side. It wouldn't be smart to paddle right through the area I'm about to fish. Instead, I take the long way around and make sure I'm not going to spook the fish. Also, try to avoid banging your paddle on your boat and don't scrape oysters with your paddle. Don't spook fish and you'll catch more of them!

- Jared Esley – Tails and Scales Kayak Fishing in Galveston, TX.
www.tailsandscalesgalvestonkayakfishing.com @jaredesley

Mistake #10 – Sitting Down Too Much

When you're sight fishing, you'd be amazed at how much more you can see by standing up. With the stable platforms we have available, there's no reason to sit down. You'll see better into the water, you'll see fish that are really close, and if you lift your head up you'll be able to see bait jumping further away. Tie on a Bugg, stand up, and go hunting for fish!

- Heath Panganiban – Yak Tribe Kayak Fishing. YouTube Yak Tribe Kayak Fishing Show. @heathpanganiban

Mistake #11: Missing Your Cast When Sightcasting Redfish

Accuracy is very important, and you have to practice. This is how I got better. I set up cones in my yard and replicated my casting posture. I stand most of the time, so I would stand in my yard and practice casting. My feet would be in the same position as they'd be when I was in my kayak on the water. Consistency is key. You don't want to have to think about it. You want to be able to put that lure where it needs to go. Speaking of that, I use the 5 x 5 rule. For a cruising fish, I cast 5 feet in front and 5 feet behind the fish. This allows me to get the Bugg about 2 feet in front of the fish. Once the Bugg is in front of the fish, I've found three effective retrieves. One is a straight retrieve, just reeling steadily. Next is a retrieve with a little jiggling action. And then sometimes I'll let the Bugg drop down in front of the fish. This mimics bait that is trying to hide. Find the retrieve that works best that day and stick with it. Last thing. I use baitcasters when I'm sight casting. The main reason? I can cast with one hand. When the fish eats I'll set the hook with my thumb, quickly put the paddle down, and fight the fish. Make the Cast, and Catch More Fish!

- Matt Carr – Point Aux Chenes Kayak Fishing Guide, PAC Kayak. www.packayakrental.com @mattbcarr

Mistake #12: Messing Up Your Casts

When you can't cast accurately you'll spook fish, get hung up, tangle your line, and tire yourself out. I've found the longer your rod is, the harder it will be to cast accurately.

Here's what I use:

- 6 foot rod for skipping under mangroves and docks (I live in Florida).
- 7 foot rod for sight fishing on the flats.
- 7 ½ foot rod for distance when I'm blind casting or using a topwater.

Here's what I've done to become a more accurate caster:

I practice off the water in an open space. I sit on something that equals the height of the seat in my kayak. I place two targets at a comfortable casting distance. Target A represents the fish, and Target B is three feet to the side the fish is swimming and three feet behind Target A. You're trying to hit Target B with your cast. When you're hitting it consistently, move the targets closer to you and further away to practice some more.

Here's how I cast to make sure I'm hitting my target:

Point at the target before and after your cast. Practice your release so you don't get too much arc in your cast. The wind will carry your lure off target and you're more likely to develop wind knots. I use two hands to cast both baitcast and spinning gear. I use my wrist to cast so I won't fatigue my arm and shoulder. If I know my cast is going too far I can slow down my lure. I increase the pressure from my thumb on my baitcaster. On my spinning gear I feather the line coming off my spinning reel with my hand or I flat out stop the lure by pinching the line between my thumb and index finger. Last thing, remember to manually close the bail of your spinning rod before you start reeling. I hope this will make you a more accurate caster and help you catch more fish!

- Dee Kaminski, Reel Kayak Fishing Charters on the Space Coast of Florida, www.reelkayakfishing.com @reelkayakfishing

Honorable Mention: Taking Unnecessary Safety Risks.

Several of our contributors also mentioned this as well. Their advice? Always fish with a buddy, especially beginners. Stay hydrated. Bring snacks. Wear your PFD. Bring a Waterproof Floating Marine Radio.

Heath Panganiban provided a specific and useful addition to the safety advice. He says, "I want to be able to self rescue with my own supplies." He explained that he anticipates the most common problems he could have on the water, and then he is prepared to solve them. Here's what he carries:

- Heavy Duty Wire Cutters – in case he buries a hook in his finger.
- Adjustable Wrench and Flat Head Screw Driver – make repairs on his kayak, including his pedal drive and rudder. This is kayak specific, so bring the tools you need to fix your kayak.



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