

Controlled Drifting

That's right, I said controlled. Unfortunately, a lot of anglers think of drifting as a lazy man's way of killing an afternoon, haphazardly meandering across a flat in hopes that he will contact a random fish here and there.

Performed thoughtfully, it can actually become an ultra precise way of presenting your baits exactly where and at the speed you want them. I'll share with you some techniques and tips on how to make this one of your go to options for boat control.

The very first thing you will need to do to become adept at drifting is to invest in a couple of quality drift socks. If you are not familiar with them; they are simply a bag made of durable cloth that catches water and acts as a drag while employed on the windward side of the boat, thus reducing your rate of drift.

The biggest mistake I see people make is going way, way too fast, while drifting. The socks will allow you to move at a snail's pace in the strongest of winds. Many of you may not have used them because you think they are a hassle to deploy and retrieve and cause tangles with your fishing lines. The models available today have solved all of these problems, and for the most part are a breeze (pardon the pun) to use. They sure beat the way some of the resourceful old timers slowed their boats; by pitching out a five gallon pail attached to a stout rope. You can just imagine how fun it was to recover these.

In a moderate wind you will want to start out with one sock off of your front cleat as the bow catches the majority of the wind. If the wind should increase, you can then slow yourself further by throwing out another attached to the stern cleat. If the wind is really cranking (25-30 mph +) it is not unusual to see savvy anglers using three socks. When I ordered my last Triton, I had the factory install a 3rd cleat in the center of each side, specifically for this scenario.

When deploying your socks you will want to determine how much lead rope to use so the bag fills completely without having excess line. This makes them more manageable and helps to prevent getting lines, hooks, and worst of all, fish entangled in them. Once you have the optimum length, simply tie a loop and feed this through and over the cleat and you'll have the correct distance every time. By using just a little common sense, you shouldn't encounter any difficulties.

When you have mastered the basics and are comfortable with getting your socks stowed and deployed there are several options that will help you to become a sophisticated drifter. The first art to master is the use of your bow mount trolling motor. There is a lot more than pulling yourself in or out from shoreline. With a little imagination and reasoning you can make a drift work in almost any wind direction with the exception of blowing straight in or out from shore. Another trick that will help you to adjust the attitude of the boat is to raise or lower your main outboard. A great aid to covering sharp breaking structure is have a bowmount with built in sonar and universal adapters such as the models Minn Kota offers. By doing so, you can monitor depth in both the bow and stern to precisely follow contours.

There are many more nuances to learn, but this should get you started.

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