



Rigging for Fishing

Installing a portable rod holder is the first thing you'll want to do if you intend to use your kayak for part time fishing.

Any kayak can be used for fishing anywhere. I've seen sit-in styles used in sweltering South Florida, and folks fishing from sit-on-tops off frigid Homer, Alaska, going against the popular protocol of using sit-on-tops for warm-weather use and sit-in styles where conditions call for more protection.

If you are more comfortable tucked into your day-tourer than atop a sit-on-top, then that's what you should be wetting a fishing line from—and vice versa—no matter where you use your kayak.

My guess is that whatever type of kayak you end up using for your first fishing forays, you will become hooked on the sport and want to make the activity a little easier to enjoy. The severity of that "impalement" will determine to what depths you'll go to adapt your kayak for fishing. If you are only lightly hooked, you may want to add a portable accessory or two that can be easily added and removed for use during occasional fishing trips. On the other hand, if you find that you have swallowed the concept, hook, line and sinker, you'll find plenty of aftermarket accessories available to feed your new found fishing habit. Just beware, it's easy to go overboard when morphing your kayak into a fishing machine—especially during the off season when simply messing about with your boat is the closest you can come to actually hooking up.

My advice is to start simple. The one piece of equipment that will do the most to make angling easier from any kayak is a rod holder. Many kayak anglers add nothing more than

holders for their fishing rods and carry on as avid fishermen with few other amenities.

My recommendation is a two-piece surface-mounted holder, often referred to as a "Robert's style," available from Scotty, Atwood, Cabela's, RAM and other sources. These portable holders feature a small base that is installed and left on the boat, flush mounted and out of the way, and the holder itself, which is slipped into the base and cradles the fishing rod's butt in a tube. The tube can be rotated and its angle adjusted and temporarily fixed to hold the rod in a particular position, based on its use at the time. The multi-positioning feature allows the holder to serve as a secure, out of the way storage rack for the rod when paddling to and from the fishing grounds, and then adjusted to cradle the rod at an angle when trolling or still fishing. It is that infinite adjustment feature that allows even kayakers with molded-in rod holders to benefit from the addition of the after-market models.

Portable rod holders can be mounted practically anywhere within arm's reach of the cockpit. The key to finding the right place is to experiment with the location of the rod holders and a rod and reel while sitting in the cockpit. Before you commit by driving screws or drilling holes, you want to make sure the attachment point is convenient, offers the proper clearance for the rod and reel being used, and allows for attaching the base securely to the boat.

Popular locations for mounting rod holder bases include the deck immediately forward of the cockpit, on the raised bulkhead between the knees found on many sit-on-tops, or atop

the gunwale to either side of the seat position. Some anglers mount two bases, one on each side and a bit forward of the seat position, and use a single holder placed in one side or the other based on which side is more convenient for the fishing circumstances. Others mount multiple bases and keep several holders handy for positioning two or more rods as they are used for fishing or stored temporarily. The universal mounting base offered by Scotty can be fitted with a rack offering a battery of multiple rod holders for storage behind the cockpit.

Installing a rod holder atop the popular poly kayakers is easy. All you need for a basic job are stainless steel self-tapping screws, a tube of silicone adhesive (Marine GOOP is great for the task) and a drill with a bit to fit the head of the screw (Philips or slot). You can also use bolts, nuts and washers to through-bolt the base to the kayak, the preferred method for fiberglass kayakers, which offers a more secure mount and eliminates sharp screw tips being exposed on the underside of the mounting surface. Just remember that you'll need access to the back side of the mounting surface to install the washers and tighten the nuts. The screws or bolts should be long enough to go through the holes in the base and penetrate the mounting surface; $\frac{3}{4}$ – 1 inch lengths will work in most applications, but you should measure first.

Once you determine the intended location, hold the base in position, mark the holes with a pencil and drill them out or drive the self-tapping screws directly through the mounting holes and into the kayak's surface. You can also

use the silicone to attach the mount and drive the screws or drill the holes and through-bolt once it's dry and glued into place. You should apply some silicone to the screws before—and a dab after—driving them in to bed them and make a more watertight fit, and consider through-bolting and back-plate the bases if you are using heavy tackle, are after larger fish or simply desire a more secure installation.

Once you have fished from a kayak fitted with even the simplest rod holder, which I consider the handiest accessory you can have aboard any boat intended for angling, you won't want to be without the option. You'll also want a leash for your paddle and it doesn't hurt to have a tether for the rod and reel as well. A small box for tackle and a pair of needle-nosed pliers for pinching sinkers, cutting line and removing hooks—hopefully from the fish—rounds out the basic rigging gear required to make any kayak into a more efficient fishing craft. ⚓

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