

# The Complete Seasonal Fishing Calendar

FISHING GUIDES · All Species · Regions

When to go, where to go, and what to throw — all year.

The complete month-by-month fishing guide with temperature triggers, regional overlays, species-specific calendars, and the five pre-trip questions that always tell you where to fish and what to throw.

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## CHAPTER 01

# How to Use This Calendar

Temperature drives fish — not calendar dates

## THE CORE PRINCIPLE

A bass in Florida enters the prespawn in January. A bass in Minnesota enters the prespawn in May. Both respond to the same water temperature trigger: 48-58 degrees F. This guide is organized by temperature and pattern, with a regional overlay to help you translate temperatures to your calendar.

Temperature Range	Season	Primary Pattern	Key Lure Category
38-48F	Deep Winter	Slow, deep, vertical	Blade bait, jigging spoon, drop shot
48-54F	Early Pre-Spawn	Main lake points, 8-15 ft	Jerkbait, slow spinnerbait
54-60F	Active Pre-Spawn	Secondary structure, aggressive	Jerkbait, swim jig, crankbait
60-66F	Late Pre-Spawn	Near spawn areas	All reaction baits, finesse
66-72F	Full Spawn	Beds in 1-8 feet	Sight fishing, patience
72-78F	Post-Spawn	Recovery, scattered	Finesse jigs, small swimbaits
78-84F	Early Summer	Mixed shallow/deep	Topwater + offshore rotation
84-90F+	Peak Summer	Offshore structure, deep	Ledge crankbait, drop shot
72-80F (Fall)	Early Fall	Main lake to shallow	Spinnerbait, moving baits
60-72F (Fall)	Peak Fall	Shad migration, shallow	All shad-matching baits
48-60F (Fall)	Late Fall	Pre-winter feed	Aggressive reaction baits

## CHAPTER 02

# Spring: The Complete Breakdown

Pre-spawn, spawn, and post-spawn — three phases, three approaches

## Phase 1: Pre-Spawn (48-65F)

Bass move from winter depth toward spawning areas, staging on main lake points and secondary structure. This is when the biggest fish of the year become most catchable — they are in accessible depths, aggressive, and concentrated on predictable structure.

- 48-54F: Main lake points 8-18 feet. Fish are staging, moving slowly. Jerkbait with 10-15 second pauses.
- 54-58F: Secondary structure, first inside coves. Spinnerbait slow-rolled, swim jig on grass edges.
- 58-62F: Fish within 200 feet of spawning areas. Crankbait on rocks, spinnerbait near docks.
- 62-65F: Final staging before beds. Some fish already on beds. Sight fishing possible on calm days.

## Phase 2: Spawn (66-72F)

Bass are on beds in 1-8 feet of protected water. Large females are the most vulnerable — and the most important to release quickly. The spawn is the single best time to catch large fish, and the time when proper handling matters most.

- Protected bays with minimal wind and wave action are the first to see beds.
- North-facing banks in northern states (south-facing in southern states) warm first.
- Substrate: pea gravel, sand, or any clean hard bottom in 1-5 feet.
- Spawning fish are aggressive to anything in the bed — patience and accuracy more important than lure choice.

## Phase 3: Post-Spawn (72-78F)

The hardest bite of the year. Large females are exhausted and reluctant to feed. Small males guard fry in 2-4 feet. Give them 2-3 weeks before expecting consistent catches of large fish again.

# Summer: Compression and Timing

Finding bass when the water warms and the bite compresses

Summer bass fishing is a timing and oxygen problem. Surface is too warm. Depths are anoxic below the thermocline. Bass are compressed into a band — typically 12-28 feet — and active windows shrink to low-light periods.

## The Summer Daily Rotation

Time Window	Location	Technique	Notes
Dawn - 8 AM	Shallow flats, points, shorelines	Topwater — walking bait, buzzbait	Most productive topwater window of the day
8 AM - 10 AM	Transitioning to offshore	Swim jig, spinnerbait	Fish moving from shallow to offshore structure
10 AM - 4 PM	Offshore 15-30 ft at thermocline	Deep crank, Carolina rig, drop shot	The midday offshore program
4 PM - 6 PM	Transitioning back shallow	Moving baits at intermediate depth	Fish moving toward evening feeding
6 PM - Dark	Shallow points and flats again	Topwater, swimming jig, frog	Second topwater window — often the best of the day

CHAPTER 04

# Fall: The Shad Migration

Following baitfish as they move from offshore to shallow

As surface water cools in September and October, shad migrate from offshore depths toward shallow coves following the cooling water. Bass follow the shad. This creates the most mobile fish location pattern of the year — fish can relocate 2-3 miles in a week following the bait.

Month	Water Temperature	Primary Location	Best Lures
September	72-80F	Main lake to first points	Swimbait, spinnerbait, crankbait
October	60-72F	Secondary points, cove mouths	All shad patterns; best month of fall
November	50-62F	Backs of coves, shallow flats	Swimbait, spinnerbaits, topwater until cold
December	40-52F	Deep channel adjacent to coves	Transitioning to winter patterns

**FIND THE SHAD, FIND THE BASS**

In fall, looking for birds is the fastest way to find fish. Diving terns over open water indicate a bait school near the surface. Bass will be below it. Get to the birds, turn on your sonar, mark the depth of the bait, and present a lure at that depth or just below it.

## CHAPTER 05

# Winter: Slow Down and Go Deep

Cold water strategies that find fish most anglers miss

Winter bass are catchable. They are slow, grouped tightly, and will eat — but only if you put a presentation directly in front of them at the right depth and speed. Most anglers give up on winter fishing because they are fishing too fast and too shallow.

- Find the deepest accessible structure with hard bottom — rock, clay, or gravel.
- Bass in water below 48F will be in groups of 5-20 fish at a consistent depth.
- Mark them on sonar before fishing. Fish vertically over the school.
- Retrieve speed should be half of what feels slow. Then half again.
- Best lures: drop shot, blade bait (Heddon Sonar, Reef Runner), jigging spoon, Ned rig.
- Best time of day: Clear afternoons 1-4 PM when solar heating has peaked.
- Two days of sunshine in winter raises rock temperature significantly — find the sunny side.

## CHAPTER 06

# Regional Timing Overlays

Adjusting seasonal patterns to your geographic location

Region	Spawn Month	Best Season	Peak Fall Month	Winter Depth
South Florida	January-February	Spring + Fall year-round	October-November	5-15 ft
Texas / Oklahoma	February-March	Spring (Feb-Apr)	October	15-25 ft
Southeast (GA/AL/TN)	March-April	Spring (March)	November	20-35 ft
Midwest / Ohio Valley	April-May	Fall (October)	October	15-28 ft
Northeast / Mid-Atlantic	May-June	Fall (October-November)	November	10-20 ft
Pacific Northwest	May-June	Summer (clear water)	September-October	8-18 ft
Great Plains	April-May	Spring and Fall	October	12-22 ft

## CHAPTER 07

# Monthly Fishing Planner

The complete month-by-month guide

**January** 38-52F (region-dependent)

Winter deep pattern in most of country. South: first prespawn signs. Blade bait, jigging spoon, drop shot on deepest structure.

**February** 42-58F

South: active prespawn. Jerkbait, spinnerbaits on main lake points. North: late winter — be patient.

**March** 48-65F

Pre-spawn begins across the Southeast and Texas. Best jerkbait month of the year. Spinnerbait for moving fish.

**April** 52-70F

Spawn in South. Pre-spawn in Midwest. Transition: jerkbait to crankbait to topwater as temperatures rise.

**May** 60-78F

Spawn in North. Post-spawn in South. All techniques producing — the most versatile month.

**June** 68-85F

Post-spawn everywhere. Offshore ledge season begins. First solid topwater in early mornings.

**July** 78-90F+

Full summer offshore. Topwater dawn and dusk only. Ledge crankbait and drop shot dominate midday.

**August** 80-92F

Hottest water of the year. Same as July. Find the thermocline. Fish early and late.

**September** 72-82F

Fall begins. Shad starting to move. Best of both worlds — summer patterns with increasing fall aggressiveness.

**October****60-74F**

Best month of the year in most of the country. Shad migration in full swing. All shad-pattern baits produce.

**November****50-64F**

Shad in shallow coves. Excellent topwater until cold front arrives. Last great warm-water bite.

**December****40-55F**

Transition to winter. South: still active. North: winter program beginning. Deep, slow presentations.

## CHAPTER 08

# Species-Specific Seasonal Calendars

When and where each species is most catchable

Species	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Largemouth Bass	Pre-spawn March-May (South) or May-June (North)	Offshore structure, dawn/dusk shallow	Following shad to cove backs	Deep structure, 25-40 ft South
Smallmouth Bass	Rocky points May-June (North), Mar-Apr (South)	Clear water ledges, FFS fishing	Jighead minnow, drop shot	Deep, clear water rocky structure
Trout (Stream)	Post-runoff hatches, spinners April-June	High elevation water, early morning only	Peak season — aggressive feeding	Midday, slow presentations
Walleye	Spawning run March-April (rivers)	Night fishing, deep trolling	Jig and minnow at transition	Ice fishing (North), deep slow jig
Catfish	Spawning May-June, pre-spawn best	Night, moving water, wing dams	Active fall feed	Ice fishing (North) or suspended

## CHAPTER 09

# The Seasonal Checklist

Always know exactly what season you are fishing

Before every fishing trip, answer these five questions. The answers tell you where to fish, what depth to target, and what presentation to use.

**Question: What is the current water temperature?**

Why it matters: This single number tells you the season more accurately than the calendar. Check a lake-specific weather app or measure yourself with a thermometer.

**Question: Is the water warming, stable, or cooling?**

Why it matters: Direction of temperature change affects fish activity as much as the absolute temperature. Warming water in spring = feeding mood. Cooling fast in fall = aggressive feed before cold.

**Question: Where are the baitfish?**

Why it matters: In fall: find the bait and you find the bass. In summer: baitfish are offshore at thermocline depth — that is where the bass are too.

**Question: What was the weather over the last 48 hours?**

Why it matters: Cold front within 48 hours = slow, deep, finesse. Pre-storm conditions = fast, aggressive, cover water. Stable = normal seasonal pattern.

**Question: What is the local spawn status?**

Why it matters: Are fish pre-spawn (building), on beds (guarding), or post-spawn (recovering)? Each requires a completely different location and presentation approach.

**QUICK REFERENCE — THE QUICK SEASONAL DECISION**

- > Water below 48F: Winter deep program (blade bait, drop shot, slow)
- > Water 48-65F and rising: Pre-spawn (jerkbait, spinnerbait, patience)
- > Water 65-72F: Spawn (sight fish, bed fish, wacky rig)
- > Water 72-80F transitioning warmer: Post-spawn then summer
- > Water 78-90F: Summer offshore (dawn/dusk topwater, midday ledge)
- > Water cooling below 72F in fall: Shad migration season (moving baits)
- > Water 48-60F in fall: Late fall feed before winter — be aggressive