

# Ice Fishing Essentials

A guide to equipment, clothing and helpful tips for fun on ice



## By Daryl Bauer

Ice fishing can be a great way to beat cabin fever and it can be one of the best times of the year to catch fish. However, to take advantage of ice fishing opportunities some gear is essential to make the experience comfortable and productive.

## Clothing

- There are a number of **(1) pac boots** available that have removable liners and are rated for temperatures well below zero. Spend as much money as you can afford on a good pair of boots because you will be standing on the ice.
- There are a variety of hats that will keep your head and ears warm; consider a **(2) fur hat** — nothing beats fur for warmth and style.
- The key to staying warm is layering. Begin with a base layer of silk or synthetic underwear and add layers.
- Wool garments provide excellent insulation and will maintain warmth even when damp.
- Outer layers can include sweat shirts and jackets covered by heavy parkas, bibs or coveralls.
- Carry at least a couple pairs of gloves or **(3) mittens**.



Any nice largemouth bass caught through the ice is sure to bring a smile.

- Remove layers during periods of activity to avoid sweating and add layers back on during periods of inactivity.

## Safety

- The best tool for checking ice thickness is an ice chisel or **(4) spud bar** that can be used to strike the ice and evaluate ice conditions.
- Commercial or homemade **(5) ice picks** should be worn around your neck in case the worst happens and you need something to grip the ice and pull yourself out of the water.
  - Try **(6) ice creepers** or ice cleats. They are great for keeping you on your feet.
  - Wearing a **(7) life jacket** is a good idea until you are sure the ice is safe.
    - All ice anglers should have a long piece of rope in case of emergency.

## Ice Holes

- A spud bar can be used to make holes in the ice, but **(8) ice augers** make the job easier. Hand augers are relatively inexpensive and would be the best investment for beginning ice anglers. The most important thing about ice augers is to keep the blades sharp. Purchase an extra set of blades to ensure you have at least

one set of sharp blades on every trip.

- Once a person is ready to make a greater investment in ice fishing equipment, gas-powered augers make the job even easier.
- An **(9) ice skimmer** is essential for scooping ice chunks from holes.

## Rods and Reels, Hooks and Bait

- Beginners can use their open-water fishing rods and reels. Specialized, shorter, **(10) ice-fishing rods** that allow anglers to sit closer to their ice-holes while they are fishing.
- There are a variety of ice fishing rods on the market, or anglers can manufacture their own using broken open-water rods.
- Think small and light for most ice fishing tackle. Fish metabolism rates are slower during the winter so light lines with relatively small **(11) hooks, jigs or spoons** tipped with wax worms or maggots are the best ice fishing tools for most species of fish.
- Borrow a child's **(12) sled** to haul your equipment onto the ice.
- Use heavier lines and larger baits for pike and other large predator fish.

## Bauer's Blog

Read more about Nebraska fishing in Daryl Bauer's Barbs and Backlashes blog at <http://barbsandbacklashes.wordpress.com>.