



Rigging Up, Not Missing Out

FISHING SITUATIONS REQUIRE A VARIETY OF RIGGING METHODS; WE BREAK THEM DOWN FOR YOU.

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Drop shot rig

The drop shot rig is an important rig for fishing in clear water, on slow catching days or in heavily pressured lakes. Unlike some other rigs, where the weight is attached between the rod and lure, the hook is above the weight on a drop shot. This also gets the bait off the bottom.

The drop shot can be fished in shallow or deep water. For water deeper than 10 feet, fishing it vertically below the boat can be very effective. Fish slowly, and don't move it as much as you would think. In fact, many times just a light twitch of the rod tip or none at all works best.

Use a light- or medium-action spinning rod with light line and weights. To set the hook, just start reeling and keep pressure on the line.

Tying up the rig is as simple as tying on a hook (try a 1/0 or similar size) with a Palomar knot about 18 inches from the end of the line. Don't cut off the tag end, but run it back up and over and then down through the hook eye. Attach a weight on the end of the line.

Depending on the underwater vegetation or other cover, you may need to embed the hook as pictured or you may be able to use an open hook.

Texas rig

The Texas rig is the granddaddy of them all. I don't know who coined the term Texas rig, but it's been around probably since the development of the vinyl (now plastic) worm in the late '40s. The original worm manufacturer moved from Ohio to Texas at the time the soft plastic worm and bass fishing became prominent nationally, especially in the South, with the proliferation of new reservoirs filled with standing timber.

The rig involves running a sliding weight on your line, the line tied to an appropriate hook and the hook point inserted into the worm body

in such a way that the barbed point is buried in the plastic. (Exposed hooks snag on nearly everything they contact. The first artificial worms were packaged, pre-rigged with the hooks exposed.)

Of course, there are tips to rigging the bait to make it more effective. On soft plastic material that's a little stiffer, thicker bodied or more dense, many anglers run the hook point through the plastic (it makes a channel through the plastic) and then slide the point back into the plastic, retreating into the channel, so it is not exposed.

Another method is to run the hook

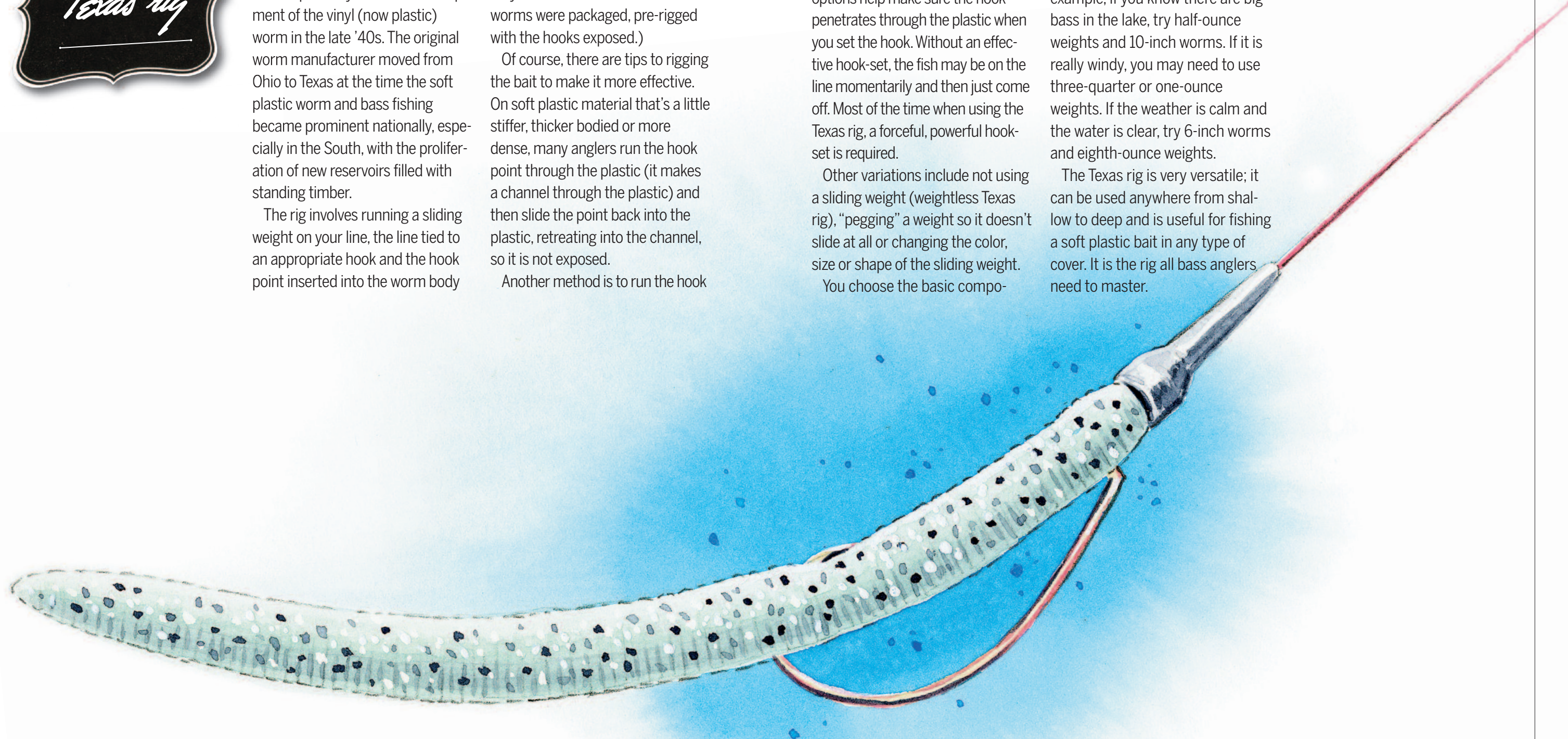
through the plastic and then slightly embed the hook point on the outside edge of the plastic. Both of these options help make sure the hook penetrates through the plastic when you set the hook. Without an effective hook-set, the fish may be on the line momentarily and then just come off. Most of the time when using the Texas rig, a forceful, powerful hook-set is required.

Other variations include not using a sliding weight (weightless Texas rig), "pegging" a weight so it doesn't slide at all or changing the color, size or shape of the sliding weight.

You choose the basic compo-

nents based on conditions and, to some extent, the size of the fish available where you are fishing. For example, if you know there are big bass in the lake, try half-ounce weights and 10-inch worms. If it is really windy, you may need to use three-quarter or one-ounce weights. If the weather is calm and the water is clear, try 6-inch worms and eighth-ounce weights.

The Texas rig is very versatile; it can be used anywhere from shallow to deep and is useful for fishing a soft plastic bait in any type of cover. It is the rig all bass anglers need to master.



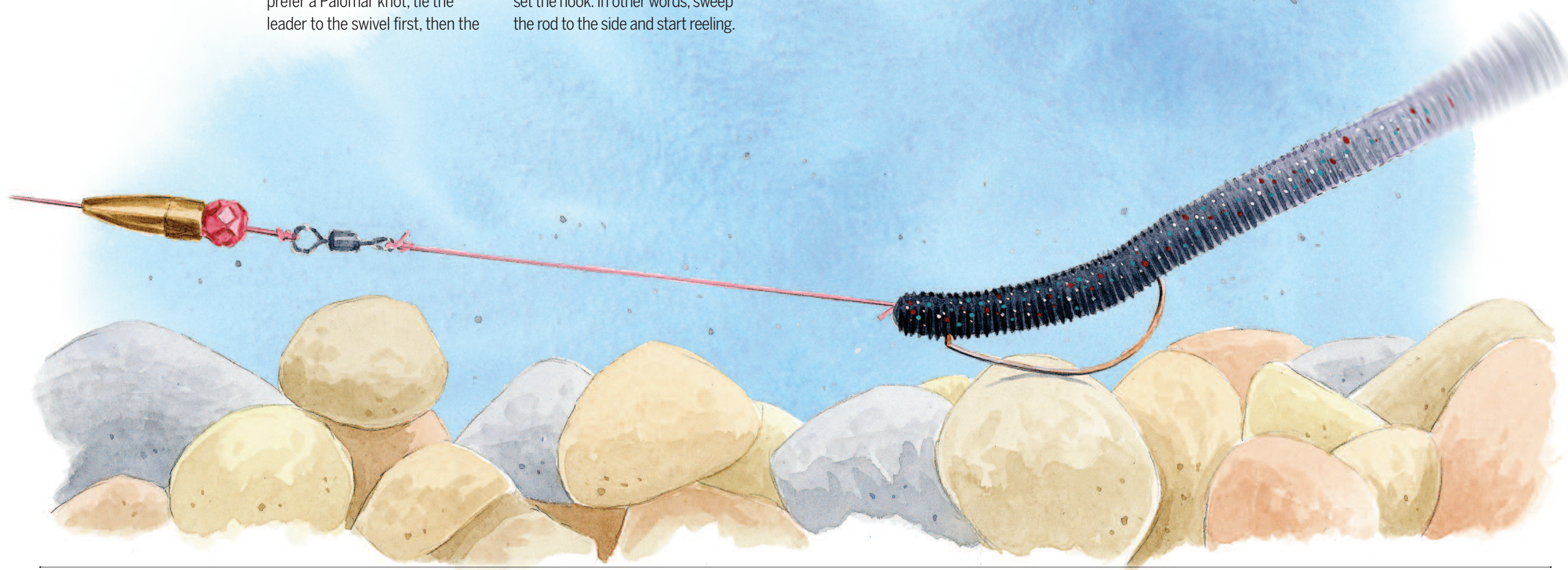
Carolina rig

The Carolina rig is generally more effective in deeper water and is a good setup for novice anglers. It also seems to be better for windy conditions.

Again, starting with a sliding weight (half-ounce is a good size to begin with) on the main line, tie on a barrel swivel, add a length of leader to the other end of the swivel and tie on the hook. (Tip: If you prefer a Palomar knot, tie the leader to the swivel first, then the

swivel to the main line and add your hook last.) Rig the soft plastic of your choice on the hook just as you do for the Texas rig.

The advantage of the Carolina rig is that when a bass picks up the plastic bait, it feels less resistance. It feels more natural to the bass and it holds the bait longer. At the same time, the angler has more time to detect the bite. Use a sweep-set to set the hook. In other words, sweep the rod to the side and start reeling.



Split shot rig

With a split shot rig, a weight is placed on the line above the hook (as in a Carolina rig). But in this rig, pinch on a standard split-shot weight. Don't pinch the weight too tightly. Pinching too tightly may weaken the line. The weight does not slide up and down the line as it does on a Texas or Carolina rig. However, it is easy and fast to assemble.



Wacky rig

The ultimate finesse setup is the wacky rig (also called the Neko rig). This rig is mentioned often in many fishing reports because it works when most everything else doesn't. It is a pretty simple setup but has many variations for applications in open areas or cover.

Tie on a small hook, run the hook through the center weight point of the plastic worm and catch fish. In cover, use a weedless hook. There

is a major disadvantage of this rigging method, however — nearly every time you catch a fish the plastic rips, making the bait unusable. You can go through many plastic worms this way.

Here are some tips to prevent using so many worms: Slide an O-ring on the worm and run the hook through the O-ring. Or, put a short piece of shrink tubing on the worm and then run the hook through the

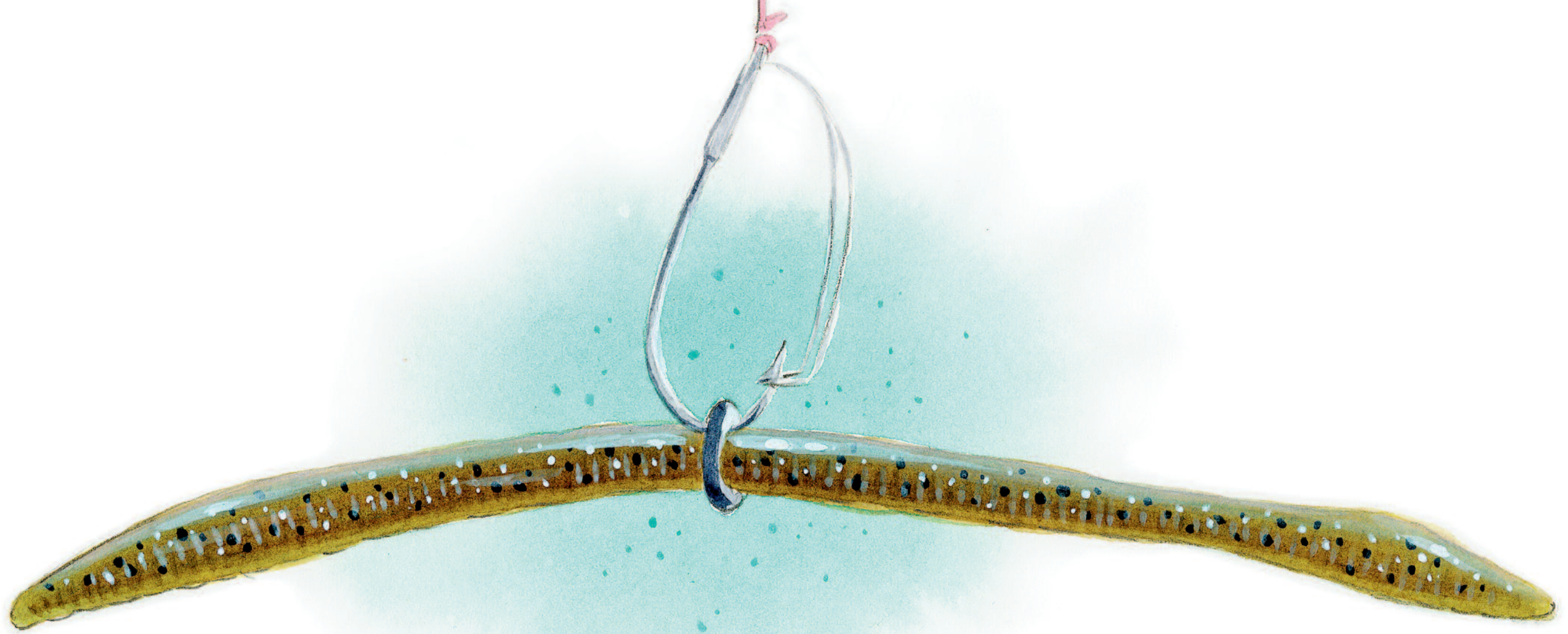
tubing and worm.

There is also a pre-rigged setup called the WackOjig. It solves the problem of tearing up baits and comes in various sizes.

The wacky rig has a unique, slow descent rate and action. Does it work because of the action and slow fall? Does it work because it is something fish don't see as often? Who knows? It just works.

A modification of the wacky rig is a Neko rig. In this case, rig the hook about one-third to one-half of the distance from the tail end of the worm. Insert a weight into the head or front of the worm. Some people use small finishing nails or stainless steel screws.

The Neko rig gets the bait down a little faster than the wacky rig, so choose whichever rig works best for the water depth holding fish.



Jika rig or jig rig

The jig rig is a relatively new rigging method to present soft plastics, but without using — get this — a jig. It is useful in getting the bait to fall more vertically as the weight on the rig pulls the bait straight down.

The hook is attached to a split ring so the bait undulates with any little movement.

You may purchase the rigs pre-rigged from tackle shops or manufacturers such as Owner's JigRig or make your own. Start with a welded stainless steel ring, add a split ring and then add to the split ring both a hook and drop shot style weight that has a wire loop on top. Tie your line to the ring, not the split ring.



These basic rigs will cover many aspects of fishing soft plastic baits. Any method may be more effective one time or another. Have multiple rods rigged and ready for the conditions. Experimenting with these rigs requires an assortment of tackle.

SAMPLE LIST OF INGREDIENTS:

- Sliding sinkers**
(weights) in assorted sizes such as bullet weights from 1/16 to 2 ounces.
- Worm hooks**
- Drop shot weights**
- Swivels**
- Split shot weights**
- Assortment of soft plastics**
- Split rings**
- Split ring pliers**

OPTIONAL TACKLE:

- Plastic or glass beads**
(adds an additional element of clicking noise)
- Rubber bobber stops**
(works for pegging a sliding weight so it becomes stationary)