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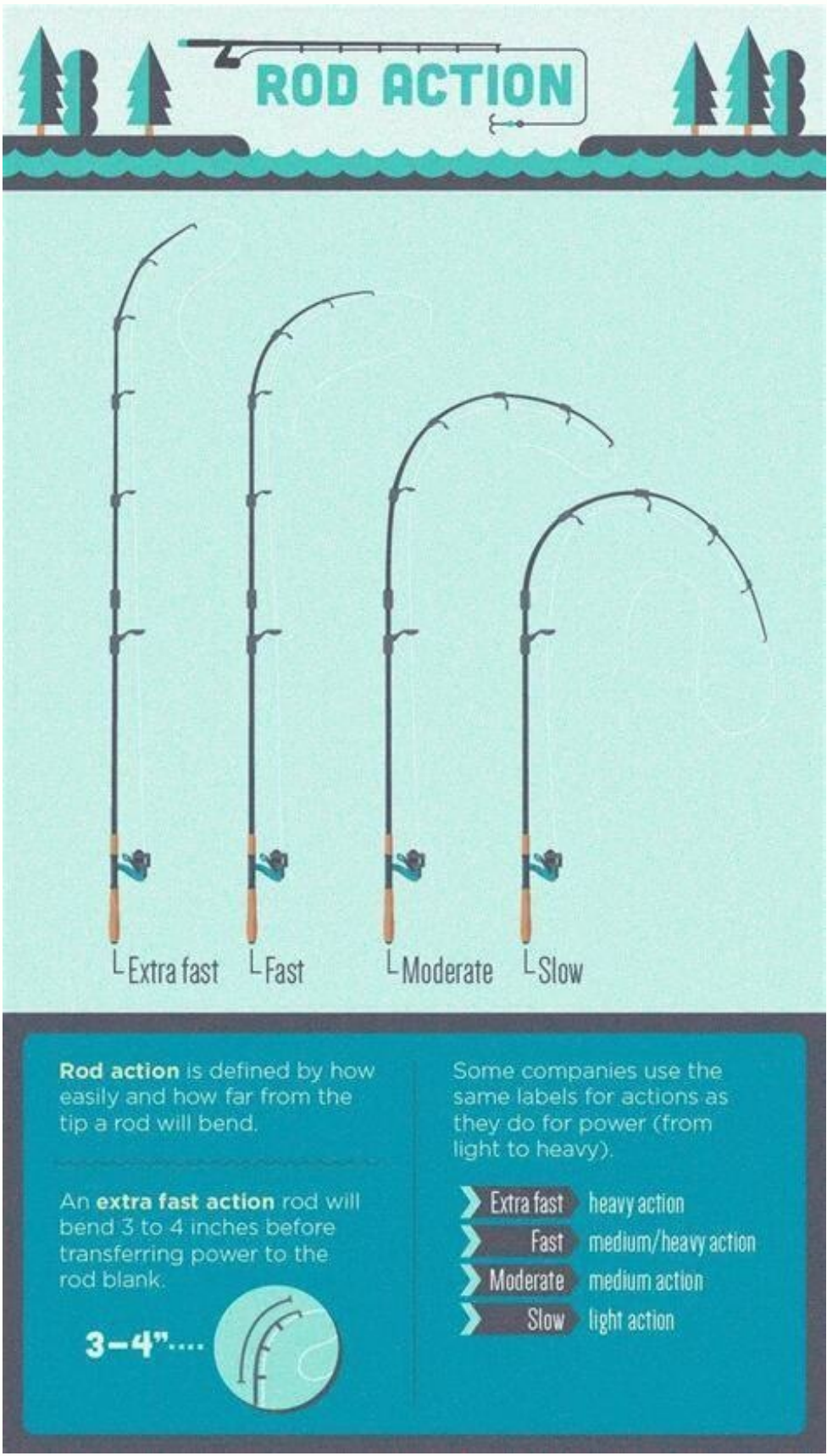
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Bass fishing rod setup. Bass fishing rod and reel selection guide. Bass fishing 3 rod setup.

We independently research, test, and recommend the best products; you can learn more about our review process here. Growing up, it seems I only had a few brands of fishing rods to choose from; Daiwa, Abu Garcia, Shimano, Lew's, and Shakespeare were all trusted brands that dawned on my wall of best bass fishing rods. Today, brands like G. Loomis, Falcon, Dobyns, and Kast King have entered the highly competitive world of bass fishing and have raised the bar on the once-established OG's of bass fishing rods. They say competition creates innovation, however, it can also create confusion as bass anglers are faced with a plethora of choices when deciding on a bass fishing rod. I've been bass fishing since age seven and have seen how technology has driven the world of fishing rods from a one-size-fits-all mentality to bass anglers having a different rod designated for every choice of lure. That's where I come in! My name is Keith Lusher, and my journey through the world of bass fishing is truly a unique one. At age 6, I started with a cheap Ugly Stick with a Daiwa 212 RL push-button reel. Since then I have been sponsored by numerous rod companies and have interviewed over 60 bass anglers that give their two cents about what rods they prefer. I've mingled with dealers from big-boy companies like Shimano, Falcon, and Abu Garcia, and I've watched small startup rod makers assemble rods from start to finish, in their garages. Combining these experiences with my personal bass fishing experiences, plus a test at a private stocked pond, I've come up with a guide to help you select the best bass fishing rod. I tested numerous bass fishing rods from spinning to baitcasting at a private lake owned by a close friend. The lake was located in Mississippi and is referred to as "Old Egg Farm Lake" by the locals. This lake was perfect for my testing as it was stocked and always produced fish. I started early in the morning on a day that would be considered as post-spawn. I don't like fishing post-spawn because it seems the bass are coming off the spawn and really haven't developed a dependable pattern. During my test, I was able to catch over 30 bass with numerous fishing rods. Here are the parameters that I looked for while testing each rod. Action: Confidence is a huge factor in bass fishing. The wrong rod can affect lure performance. I tested all the rods with different lures to see how the lures handled when ripped through structure, tightlined, and its ability to keep the fish on the hook. Handle Comfort: How does the rod grip feel? Comfort makes a difference. Sometimes I fish with the same rod all day. It's important for the grip to feel comfortable even after hours of fishing. Hookup Percentage: They say "hook-sets are free" and having the first one connect and deliver a bass is priceless! I tested these rods to see which ones delivered from hook-set to the boat. 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It looks a bit more sophisticated with a clean matte finish. After trying this out on the lake I was pleased with the updated design as the combination made this rod more sensitive to help feel more subtle bites. They still have their signature glass tip too which improves your sensitivity even further. I also love the one-piece guides because they tend to last longer than guides that are threaded onto the rod. The only reason I didn't choose the Ugly Stik as the winner is that I think it lacks sensitivity when compared to the St. Croix rod. These Shakespeare spinning rods are designed to be budget-friendly costing under 50 bucks which is about a third the cost of other higher end rods. That's the main reason I chose it for the "best fishing rod for the money." It's great for those who don't want to take out a loan just to go bass fishing. It did give my "Best Overall Rod" choice of the St. Croix Triumph a run-for-the-money in that category, however, the Triumph seemed to be stronger with slightly more backbone. Here's the one that I had trouble deciding on. The industry has excelled in perfecting baitcasting rods. There are many that were outstanding but the Abu Garcia Vengeance led the pack in across-the-board performance! Length: 6'6" - 7'6" Power: MH Action: Fast Type: Casting Pros Stainless steel and titanium oxide guides Loads well both on back cast and bass strikes Cons Why I Chose It This rod was the shocker of the day as it performed phenomenally when throwing my spinnerbait and a few other crankbaits. I have to admit that this rod was borrowed from a friend of mine who fishes bass tournaments, so I didn't know what to expect. I was using a 6'8" length rod which is shorter than I normally use but I acclimated to it quickly and thoroughly enjoyed using it, especially with my cranks. The has a 24-ton graphite blank which provides a ton of sensitivity; probably more than I've ever experienced. 24-ton graphite is a high tonnage. The higher the tonnage is, the stiffer the graphite is. This enables vibrations to be transmitted readily through your rod. The only downside with this rod is that it was very brittle. My friend warned me not to step on or bang it into anything or it would break. Back to the sensitivity. When I was retrieving the spinnerbait I could feel the blade turning over which is an incredible bonus for me; if I can feel the blade stop moving when a bass inhales it, that gives me an extra second to set the hook before the fish spits the bait. Let's move on to the handle. It's a split grip handle which is great for making longer casts. The grip was a high quality foam which felt really good in my hand. The trigger was smooth and fit in between my fingers perfectly. I actually found the rod to fit my hand to the extent that it almost felt like a part of me.



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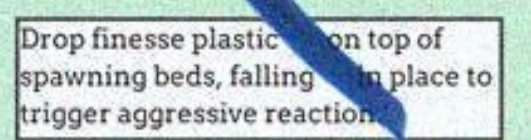
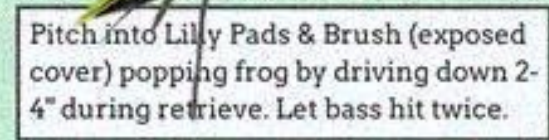
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A detailed illustration of a European sea bass (Dicentrarchus labrax) fish, shown in profile facing left. The fish has a greenish-brown mottled pattern on its upper body and a lighter, silvery-white underbelly. It has a prominent dorsal fin, a large eye, and a slightly open mouth showing small teeth. The background is a solid light green color.

SPRING Water Temp: 50-70° Depth: 2-5 ft.
Location: Shoreline Transition Weeds or Soft Bottom → Gravel or Rocks

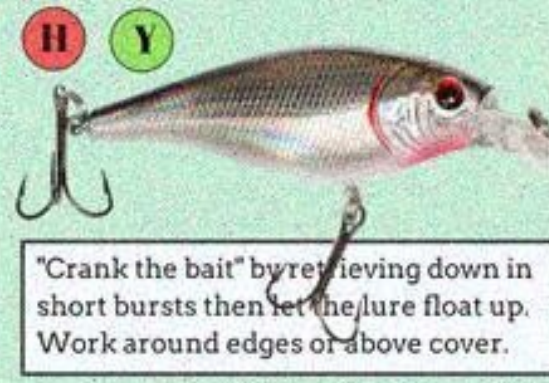
Depth: 2-5 ft.

Weeds or Soft Bottom → Gravel or Rocks



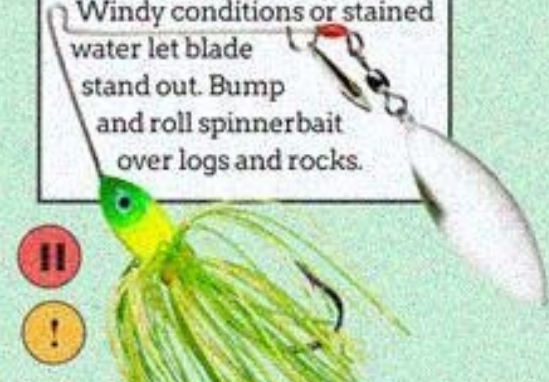
Depth: 6-12 Ft.

(Under Docks or Sunken Timber)



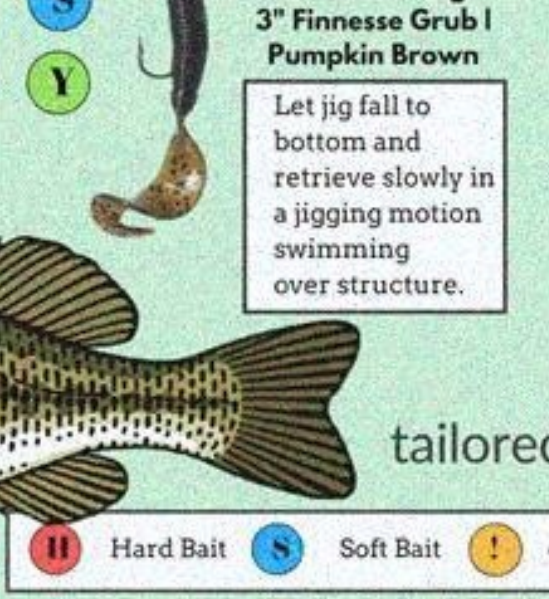
Depth: 3-8 Ft.

(Weed Beds, Fallen Trees and Branches)



Depth: 15-25 ft.

e (Drop Offs, Points, Humps)



TAILORED TACKLE

 Hard Bait
 Soft Bait
 Challenging
 +Year Round
 +Spawn

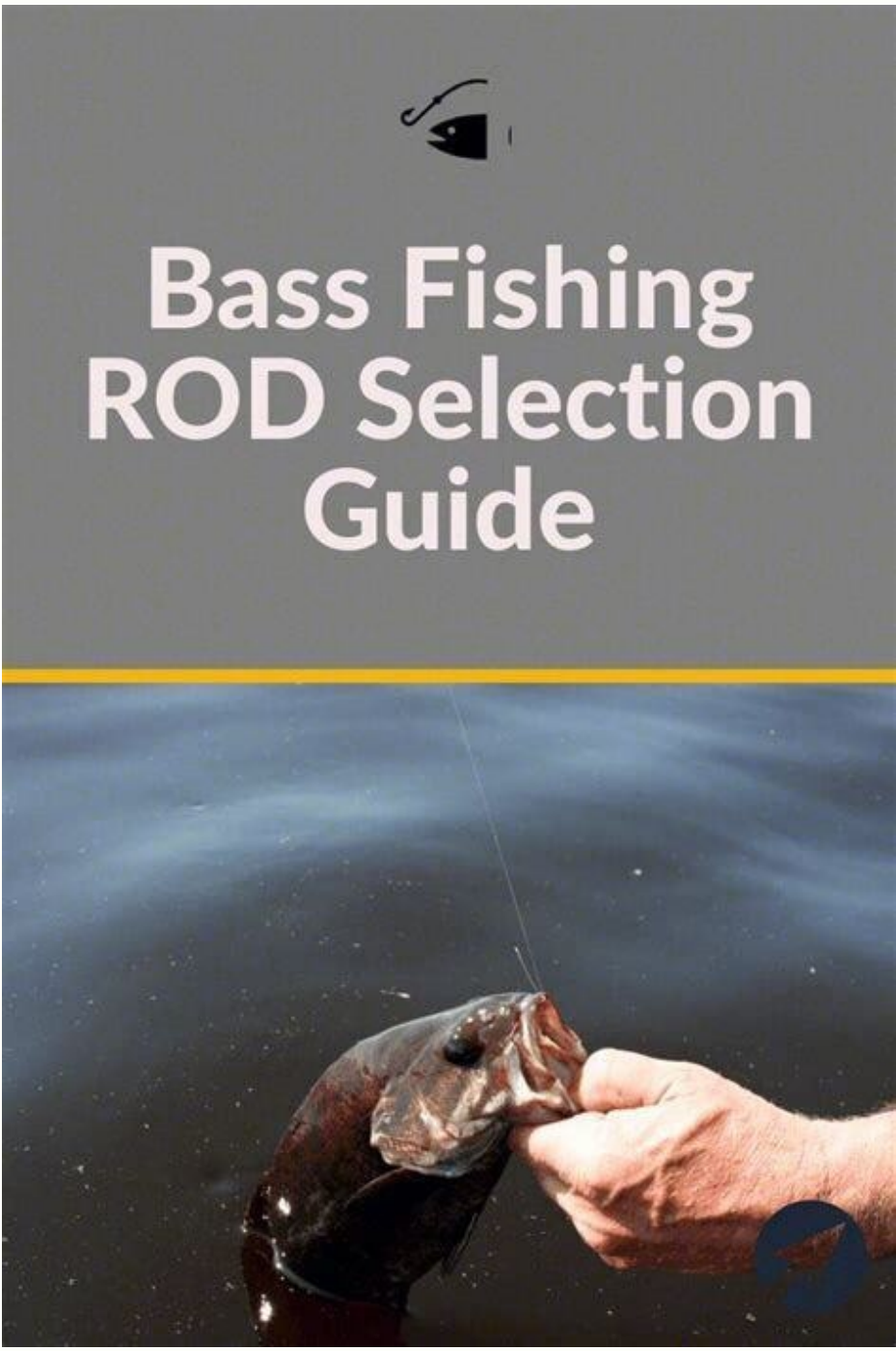


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The soft tip slows down the hookset which allows that all-important extra 1/2 second for the lure to stay in the bass' mouth. While I prefer to use a spinning rod when fishing top water, I found this rod to work well with a hollow-bodied frog I used to haul in an early morning largemouth that hit in a patch of lilies. This rod even performed as a flipping pole as I was able to catch my biggest bass of the day, a 4.3-pounder caught next to a submerged fallen tree. While I usually flip with braided line I was able to land this fish using a 10-pound monofilament line. I'd definitely recommend this rod for a bass fisherman who fish on the bottom with plastic lures or jigs. Specs Length: 5.6 ft. Power: M/MH Action: Ultralight Type: Spinning Pros One of the best spinning reels on the market Rod is made using IM8 graphite which is great for strength and durability 10 bearing system for a buttery smooth cast and retrieval Cons Only works best with shorter rods (less than 7ft) Why I Chose It I've been using Plueger rods since I was a kid and they've also proved to make a quality rod. This rod and reel combo is the perfect set-up for those who are looking for a perfectly matched rod to reel. I thought the reel on this combo performed well. The reel has a graphite body and rotor with 10 corrosion-resistant bearings so it casts and retrieves smoothly. While the rod felt a little cheap, it held up while fishing the lake and even turned out a solid 3-pounder I caught on a deep-diving crankbait in 25 feet of water. While the rod left a little to be desired in the comfort category, the combo as a whole felt like the rod and reel were meant for each other as there was no creaking coming from the reel seat. Here is a list of the rods that I tested as there are many high quality combos on the market. Ultralights are among my favorite rods but I usually use them for bream fishing so I actually enjoyed the opportunity to use a few to catch bass. Among the ones I tried out, the St. Croix Premier Series Rod performed best! Specs Length: 4.6 - 8.6 ft. Power: UL/LM/MH/H Action: Fast/Moderate Type: Spinning Pros No friction aluminum oxide guides for a smooth cast Made with St. Croix premium SCII graphite Very light, great for beginners Cons Why I Chose It Ultralight means a few things in the world of bass fishing. It means that the rod is actually lightweight but it also generally means that the rod is beginner-friendly. I grew up using ultra-light rods because I mostly targeted panfish and ultra-lights were perfect for catching bluegill. But using them to target bass was entirely foreign to me. I have to admit that I was pleased with the Premier Series made by St. Croix as I thoroughly enjoyed using the rod with a weightless worm. It was extremely light and comfortable. But how would it hold up to a bass? Well, I was finesse fishing a worm on a Texas rig and caught 5 bass on this rod with the largest being 1.5 pounds and the rod landed all the fish. The rod even performed well on top water lures as I caught a largemouth bass using a small weightless swimbait. I will say that the line I was using on this rod was 8-pound mono so that's about the best you're going to get in terms of fishing line being invisible. I think this was key to catching the amount of fish I caught using the St. Croix Premier Series Rod. Being a lightweight pole I did have to fight the fish longer but that was to be expected. After checking with some other professional bass anglers, I did learn that there are some problems with the tip breaking which was a disappointment however I never encountered it myself. The rod is sensitive, light, and easy to use for anglers of all ages and skill levels. Add to it, the five year warranty that comes with the rod, and I give it the honor of ranking among the best of ultralight rods. Anglers.com writer Wes Littlefield gives us his take on the best bass fishing rods in the YouTube video above! Fishing rods used for bass fishing are much like fishing rods that are used for catching other species other fish. Let's take a look at the components of a bass fishing rod. Butt The butt of the rod is on the bottom and this will supply you with the necessary leverage needed to handle a big fish. The butt of the rid is the part that you grip and it is also the part where the rod connects to. Real Seat The seat is usually two corkscrew-like sections that you can crank back and forth to secure the reel in place. The tongues of the reel fit into the reel seat and are secured to the pole using the real seat. It's important to understand that all reel seats for bass fishing rods are made to fit with all bass fishing reels which makes all rods compatible with all bass fishing reels. Blank The blank is the majority of the rod and it's everything from the reel seat to the tip. Blanks are made up of different types of material that make them strong or make them sensitive. Fiberglass and graphite make up the majority of bass fishing rods. The blank is also where you'll find the guides or eyes. These are the round loops that your line will run through when you cast and retrieve. The heavier the fish, the heavier line you need. Tip The tip is another guide that is usually molded to the blank or welded in place. Many rods have removable tips so they can break and be easily replaced. Some bass anglers refer to the tip of their pole as soft or hard. When you hear this, it's not necessarily the tip they are talking about, but the upper 4 or 5 inches of the rod. Now that you understand the components of a bass fishing rod, let's talk about some of the "bells and whistles" or unique specs you should look for before committing to one. Let's start with two primary rod blank materials. Those would be graphite and fiberglass. Fiberglass is incredibly flexible and it's heavier than graphite but it has its advantages and disadvantages. Here are a few differences between fiberglass rods and graphite rods. Fiberglass Fiberglass is a cheaper material and is often seen in more affordable rods. Fiberglass is more durable than graphite. If you are a beginner in the bass fishing world I highly recommend buying a fiberglass rod because of its strength and durability. My first rod was fiberglass and can vouch for their durability. There were many times that I ran through the woods and down to the river to go bass fishing. My fiberglass rod came in contact with hundreds of branches and didn't snap. Graphite Graphite rods are less durable than fiberglass rods but they are super sensitive and help put more fish in the boat in the long run. Graphite also comes with something called a "modulus rating" which refers to how stiff the rod is based on what strain of graphite it is. It took me years to understand what rod action and power rating meant. Of course, I'm someone who hates math so much that I cringe every time I'm forced to look at anything that looks like an algebra formula. Some anglers who have been fishing for years still don't understand what it means. It's not the easiest thing to understand. Action on a spinning rod refers to the location on the blank at which the rod bends. For example, a fast action rod will bend about 15% down the blank from the tip. This makes the rod more sensitive for smaller fish but more liable to break for larger fish. Power refers to the amount of pressure you need to apply to make the rod bend. So, for example, a heavy power rod will require a lot of pressure from a heavy fish to bend the rod. With that knowledge in mind, fast action, medium power rods are ideal for bass in my opinion. You don't need to get too carried away with the power of your rod but fast action is always a good way to go. I'm a big believer in saving a buck and going with generic products in my life. But as I grow older I have learned that it's probably better to spend a little extra, especially for a rod that I intend on laying me numerous years. You need to stick to brands you can trust. I recognize names like St. Croix, Ugly Stik, Falcon, and Abu Garcia because they have a reputation for building quality fishing products. As a result, I continue to do business with them. I would pair reviews that you read with brand reputation and use that to guide your decision. When it comes to the types of rods that you need, there are three types that you will want to consider: a baitcasting rod, spinning, and combination rod. However, it is important to mention at this time, that for the greatest level of success, experienced anglers will recommend that you have at least one of each. Combination rods are a good option for new anglers and those who don't want to mess with switching reels between rods. Combination rods come complete with a matching reel that allows you to adequately fish for bass without the questions about which rod and which reel go together. Combination rods are also a good option if you don't want to make a big investment in a rod and reel until you are certain that this is a sport or hobby that you are going to enjoy. Combination rods get a bad rap in my opinion because they are looked upon as beginners, however, I like them because I believe the manufacturer of the rod and reel knows a little more about the product than I do and can pair a rod to a reel using that knowledge. Some of my best fishing rods came as a combo. The main difference between a combination rod and a spinning rod is the fact that you can only use a spinning rod with a spinning reel. With spinning rods, the reel seat is on the bottom and the eyelets are on the bottom as well. This ensures that the line flows smoothly off the reel through the eyes so you can get a fluent cast. For most anglers, a spinning rod is deemed as a lightweight rod best used for bass fishing, trout, panfish, walleye, and other fish you'd find in lakes or inshore fishing. They are used in offshore saltwater fishing like the Penn Battalion, but it's less common. I always recommend medium spinning rod and reel setups for anyone who is learning how to catch bass because they are versatile and can be used with virtually all bass fishing lures. When you're fishing with a baitcasting setup, nesting becomes a real problem, and spinning rigs make that much easier to manage. The final thing that I want to look at is the casting rod. You'll find a few of these recommended above and they're a great choice because they often provide a bit more durability than their spinning counterparts but what you gain in strength you often sacrifice in weight as well. The main difference between a spinning rod and casting rod is the location of your reel. A casting rod will have the reel on top of the rod with the line guides on top. That's because the line flows from the reel, through the guides, and off of the rod on the top portion of the rod rather than the bottom. I find that casting rods are more commonly used in bass fishing tournaments and they're recommended by pro anglers because of their added sensitivity and mainly because of the reels they're able to work with. Professionals feel that baitcasting reels provide more sensitivity which allows them to work the lures better and create the ultimate presentation. For a beginner, it's difficult to use these reels and that's why I recommend spinning gear when you're starting out. The stiffness of a rod can be determined by something called speed. So let's take the stiffest rod available. That rod would be classified as a "fast action rod" because, on a hook set, the line reacts fast. The slower you get, the more flexible the rod gets. So the most flexible rod would be called a "slow" rod because the line reacts slower when the hook is set. Rods with this level of action will only bend near the tip of the rod. This will allow you to set a hook easier without having to do a lot of work. Fast baitcasting rods are good for fishing locations where your casting distance is shorter. Also, if you are using a single hook lure such as a live bait lure or bait jigs, fishing rods come in a range of lengths, and in general, the length that you choose depends on the type of fishing that you will be doing. A good rule of thumb to remember is that shorter rods are good for short casting distances while long rods have a greater casting distance. On the small end, a tiny 4-foot rod can serve you well for close-in fishing. Short rods also have a lot less bend, so if you are fishing for big, trophy-size fish, you may want to think about using a shorter rod. Your on-lake transportation also plays a part in length selection. While you can be comfortable using a longer rod from a power boat, if you are fishing from a kayak or canoe a shorter rod will be easier to transport. Long rods are great for open-water fishing for covering a lot of water quickly. Longer rods are also great for fishing in deeper water. Just keep in mind when you are selecting a longer rod to consider the action of the rod. Select a faster action for longer rods to protect your catch and to have the greatest level of control. There are numerous choices that bass anglers have to decide on. Personally, I like a 7-foot, medium heavy rod. I chose this rod because I like versatility. I want my rod to be able to be used across the board from crankbaits to worm fishing. The "best" brand is hard to come by while it's subjective. In my personal opinion, Abu Garcia makes quality bass fishing rods across the board. The best bass angler always knows how to choose the right rod for the job! Bass fishing is such a diverse sport that most anglers will benefit from a couple of different rod options. Doing your research before you shop will ensure that you select the best bass fishing rod for the conditions that you are most likely to encounter. Our goal with this buying guide was to help make this research easier and shopping for bass fishing rods more enjoyable. We understand that choosing a fishing rod is subjective and we encourage your feedback! We'd love to hear about your favorite rod below!