Inshore Saltwater Species Tackle Specification Matrix (Reel Size, Drag lbs, Braid, Leader, and Lure Weight)

Companion Reference Sheet for: Inshore Saltwater Tackle: Build a Setup Around Your Target Fish
Save this PDF to your phone or print a copy for field reference. Verify local conditions and manufacturer specs before use.

Key Takeaways

Question	Quick answer
What is a good setup for saltwater shore fishing?	Start with a 7 foot medium light or medium spinning rod, a 2500 or 3000 reel, and line suited to the cover.
How do you rig for inshore saltwater fishing?	Use an exposed jighead over clean bottom, a weighted weedless hook in grass, or a cork or bottom rig to reach a different feeding depth.
How should you balance rod, reel, and line?	Match the reel and line to the rod's ratings, then keep the combined weight of your lure and terminal tackle within its casting range.
What should you carry in a basic tackle box?	Pack a few jighead and hook sizes, soft plastics, corks, sinkers, leader material, pliers, and a line cutter.
How do you choose live bait or artificial lures?	Use live bait when natural movement and scent help, and artificial lures when you want to cover water and find active fish.
Where can you find more fishing guidance?	Browse The Reel Authority fishing guide library for more practical tackle and fishing articles.

Start with the fish, habitat, and water conditions

Situation	Rod length and power	Reel size	Typical use
Open flats	7 feet, medium light, fast action	2500	Light lures and a controlled presentation over open water
Mixed grass	7 feet, medium light or medium, fast action	2500 or 3000	Adjusting between open lanes and moderate cover
Heavier grass or dock cover	7 feet, medium, fast action	3000	More control when steering fish away from structure

Match braid and leader to cover and fish size

Fishing area	Braid starting range	Leader starting range	Reason for the match
Open flats	10 to 20 pounds	15 to 20 pounds	Light tackle handles open water presentations without excess bulk.

Fishing area	Braid starting range	Leader starting range	Reason for the match
Mixed grass	20 pounds	15 to 25 pounds	A middle ground for casting while managing occasional snags and vegetation.
Oysters, docks, or hard structure	20 to 30 pounds	20 to 25 pounds or stronger as conditions require	More abrasion resistance helps protect the connection near rough cover.

Select a rig that presents bait at the right depth

Rig	Presentation depth	Useful cover	Sensible starting weight or role
Exposed jighead	Near bottom or swimming through open water	Clean bottom and open water	1/8 to 1/4 ounce in shallow, calm conditions
Weighted weedless hook	Through the water column, controlled by retrieve	Grass and snag prone cover	Choose enough weight to cast and reach the feeding depth
Popping cork	Suspended at the selected leader depth	Grass edges and open lanes	Set leader length to keep bait above cover
Carolina rig	Near bottom, with bait moving behind a sliding sinker	Bottom areas where bait should move naturally	Use a sinker that holds the intended bottom path
Fish finder rig	On or close to bottom	Open bottom and bottom feeding areas	Simple leader and sinker arrangement for stationary bait

Choose lures and bait for feeding conditions

Item	Practical starting selection	Purpose
Jigheads	1/8 and 1/4 ounce	Shallow presentations, with weight choices for changing depth or current
Weighted weedless hooks	A few sizes to fit your soft plastics	Working baits through grass and snag prone cover
Soft plastics	Paddletails and soft jerkbaits in a few profiles	Swimming, darting, and slower presentations
Leader material	15, 20, and 25 pound strengths	Matching the leader to fish size and cover
Popping corks, hooks, swivels, and sinkers	A small selection matched to the planned rigs	Suspending bait, changing terminal tackle, and fishing bottom
Pliers, line cutter, and spare leader	One of each, kept accessible	Removing hooks and replacing damaged line or terminal tackle

Use this field checklist, then care for the tackle

Run through this checklist before each trip. A few deliberate checks help prevent avoidable failures once fish are feeding.

☐ **Identify the target and habitat.** Note likely fish size, feeding depth, and whether you will fish open water, grass, oysters, docks, or bottom.

☐ **Choose rod power and reel size.** Match the rod to the cover and the reel to the line capacity and control you need.

☐ **Verify lure and line ratings.** Keep the combined lure and terminal tackle weight within the rod's printed casting range.

☐ **Spool and connect line and leader.** Tie a compact connection and pull it firmly to test the knot before fishing.

☐ **Select the rig and weight.** Account for depth and current, then choose the lightest weight that reaches the feeding zone and holds the intended path.

☐ **Inspect hooks and knots.** Check points, leaders, and connections for damage before the first cast.

☐ **Set the drag.** Start around 20 to 30 percent of the rated strength of the weakest line or connection, then test with a controlled pull. For a 20 pound weakest link, that is about 4 to 6 pounds of drag.

☐ **Adjust to fish response.** Change presentation depth, speed, or weight based on where fish respond, one variable at a time.

During a strong run, let the reel give line instead of locking the spool. Keep the rod angle controlled and avoid raising the tip sharply overhead, which can create a high stick and overload the blank.

After fishing, gently rinse salt from the reel, rod guides, and terminal tackle with fresh water, then dry everything before storage. Avoid forcing water into the reel with a high pressure spray.

Before the next trip, inspect rod guides for rough or damaged inserts, check braid and leader for abrasion, and look for corrosion or dull points on hooks. Retie slipping knots and replace damaged components before they fail under pressure.

Make local regulations, protected species, and your release plan part of the rig choice. Handle fish carefully and use tackle strong enough to shorten the fight without overpowering your equipment.

Published by The Reel Authority (thereelauthority.com), a publication of Viking Trading Group LLC.

Source URL: https://thereelauthority.com/inshore-saltwater-tackle-build-a-setup-around-your-target/