# Walleye Ice Fishing Plan and Catch Log

**Companion Reference Sheet for:** Ice Fishing for Walleye: Low Light Timing, Depth, and Jigging Spoons
Save this PDF to your phone or print a copy for field reference. Check ice thickness yourself. Walleye seasons, size and bag limits, and line limits vary by state; check your state DNR regulations before fishing.

## Key Takeaways

- Plan around low light, especially the period before sunset and just after it.
- Choose depth by structure and fish location, not by a single number that is supposed to fit every lake.
- Use a jigging spoon to attract fish, then slow down with a pause or subtle quiver when one approaches.
- Match a spoon's profile and fall rate to the depth, forage, and fish response. Color alone does not decide the best lure.
- Pair a jigging rod with a deadstick or tip up and live minnow where local rules allow.
- Check ice yourself, follow state DNR safety guidance, and review current regulations before you fish. Our ice fishing guides cover other practical ways to prepare for a day on the ice.

## Why walleye feed during low light

| Ice period | Structures to check | Depth and location approach |
|---|---|---|
| Early ice | Shoreline breaks, points, weed edges, and nearby rock or gravel transitions | Start along accessible shallow feeding areas and follow the break toward deeper water. Check a nearby route or edge if the first holes show no fish. |
| Midwinter | Humps, basin edges, mud flats, and transitions between soft bottom and rock or gravel | Check the edge of a flat and the adjacent drop. Use sonar to locate fish and forage, including suspended marks, rather than fishing only on bottom. |
| Late ice | Shallow points, weed edges, shoreline breaks, and routes leading toward spawning areas | Revisit productive shallow structure, but keep a nearby deeper edge in your search. Fish location can shift with changing conditions and seasonal movement. |

## DNR timing and depth facts to use as starting points

| Guidance | What it can help you plan | Source |
|---|---|---|
| Minnesota DNR says many walleye anglers fish shallow water, perhaps 10 feet or less, at dawn and dusk, then move deeper during brighter times of day. | Use light level as a clue for where to begin, then adjust to the lake's structure and fish marks. | Minnesota DNR |
| Minnesota DNR identifies the 90 minutes prior to and just after sunset as prime fishing times. | Arrive early enough to set up and fish through the evening activity window. | Minnesota DNR |
| Wisconsin DNR says the best depths on clear lakes are usually 10 feet to 20 feet. | Use clarity and lake conditions to shape your search, not as a universal depth rule. | Wisconsin DNR ice fishing tips |

## Pick a spoon or lure for the job

| Lure type | When to use it | How to work it |
|---|---|---|
| Compact jigging spoon | When fish are active or you need a quick, visible search presentation | Lift with a clear snap, let it fall, and pause. Reduce the lift if fish approach but do not commit. |
| Flutter spoon | When a slower, gliding fall suits the fish response | Use a controlled lift and let the spoon flutter back on slack line. Watch sonar for fish following the fall. |
| Rattle spoon or rattle bait | When you want added sound and vibration, especially while searching a flat or basin edge | Use a few firm lifts to draw attention, then pause and let the lure settle before repeating. |
| Lipless lure | When fish respond to a strong vibration on a lift | Raise it with a controlled snap and allow a measured drop. If fish follow without striking, reduce the movement. |
| Jigging minnow style lure | When a baitfish profile and a more deliberate presentation fit the fish activity | Use shorter lifts and longer pauses, keeping the lure near the depth where fish appear on sonar. |

## Ice Fishing Trip Checklist

Ice safety comes first, before timing, depth, or lure choice. Check ice thickness yourself as you travel, follow current safety guidance from your state DNR, and do not rely on another angler's report as proof that the route is safe.

☐ ☐ Check ice thickness yourself and carry appropriate safety equipment.

☐ ☐ Review weather, access, and current state DNR ice safety guidance.

☐ ☐ Check current regulations for the water body, including walleye seasons, size and bag limits, line limits, and rules for tip ups or multiple rods.

☐ ☐ Mark shoreline breaks, points, humps, weed edges, and rock, gravel, or mud transitions on a lake map.

☐ ☐ Pack a flasher or sonar, jigging rod, spoons, rattle baits, jigging minnow style lures, and live minnows if permitted.

☐ ☐ Bring a deadstick or tip up for a second presentation where local regulations allow.

☐ ☐ Plan to arrive before dusk and set up while visibility is good.

Walleye seasons, size and bag limits, and line limits vary by state and water body. Check the current regulations from your state DNR before fishing, including Michigan rules for the specific water you plan to visit.

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