Ice Fishing Line Selection Chart and Rigging Checklist

> **Companion Reference Sheet for:** Ice Fishing Line: When to Use Braid, Fluoro, or Mono
> Save this PDF to your phone or print a copy for field reference. Always confirm ice thickness and local regulations before going out. Ice is never guaranteed safe.

Key Takeaways

- **Choose braid** when low stretch helps you feel light bites or control a lure at depth. In exposed, severe cold, account for water pickup and ice building around the line and reel.
- **Choose fluorocarbon** for a less visible leader in clear water, or as a main line when its low visibility and faster sink than mono suit your presentation.
- **Choose mono** when its stretch helps cushion sudden runs and keep small hooks pinned. That stretch can make subtle bites harder to detect at depth.
- **Think of dedicated ice lines as cold-weather formulations, not a separate material.** Their flexibility and memory depend on the formulation, spool, and conditions.
- **Use a braid main line with a fluorocarbon leader** when you want braid's sensitivity and a less visible section near the lure.
- **Match pound test to the fish.** Panfish need light line for small jigs, while pike call for stronger line and a bite-resistant leader.
- For more winter tactics and safety guidance, visit The Reel Authority's ice fishing section.

How Braid, Fluorocarbon, Mono, and Ice Lines Compare

Practical comparison of common ice fishing line options

Line type	Cold handling	Memory and stretch	Visibility and sensitivity	Useful role
Braid	Fibers can pick up water that freezes in exposed cold.	Low stretch and typically little spool memory.	High sensitivity, but visible fibers can stand out in clear water.	Main line for depth, light bites, and vertical control.
Fluorocarbon	Can stiffen in cold; handling varies by line and reel setup.	Less stretch than mono, with memory that can show on a small spool.	Low underwater visibility and strong bite feedback.	Leader for clear water or a main line when its sink rate suits the lure.
Monofilament	Can become stiff and coil in cold conditions.	More stretch and spool coils than braid.	More stretch means less direct feedback at depth.	Finesse presentations where cushioning a run helps keep fish pinned.
Dedicated ice line	Formulated for cold-weather use, with performance varying by formulation.	Memory and stretch depend on the material and construction.	Visibility and sensitivity depend on the underlying line type.	Choose by how it behaves on your reel and through your rod guides.

Reference Table

Reported diameters at 10-pound test

Line type	Pound test	Reported diameter
Monofilament	10-pound	.011 inches
Braided line	10-pound	.008 inches

Reference Table

Braid construction and guide feel

Construction	Sourced characteristic
4-strand braid	One of the thread counts in which braided line is sold.
8-strand braid	Quieter and smoother through rod guides than 4-strand braid.

Choose Line for Temperature, Shelter, Clarity, and Depth

Starting line and leader ranges by species

Species	Main line starting range	Leader setup	Why it fits
Panfish	2 to 4 pound test	Optional fluorocarbon leader in clear water.	Light line works with small jigs; move up for cover or larger fish.
Perch	3 to 6 pound test	Fluorocarbon when water clarity makes visibility a concern.	Balances small baits with extra strength for deeper water or abrasive structure.
Walleye	4 to 8 pound test	Braid main line with a 3 to 6 foot fluorocarbon leader.	Pairs sensitivity with a less visible section near the lure.
Trout	2 to 6 pound test	Mono or fluorocarbon for finesse, or braid for sensitivity at depth.	Adjust for fish size, water clarity, and bait.
Pike	10 to 20 pound test	Wire or heavy fluorocarbon around 20 to 40 pound test.	Use a bite-resistant leader for tooth protection, not visibility alone.

Pre-Trip and On-Ice Line Checklist

☐ **Before leaving:** Inspect the first several feet of line and the leader for nicks, flat spots, fraying, or weak knots. Retie any section that shows damage.

☐ **After a fish or a scrape:** Run the line between your fingers. Cut back damaged line instead of trusting it for the next strike.

☐ **At each hole:** Keep line clear of sharp ice-hole edges, slush, and frozen guides. Clear ice carefully, without pulling hard against a frozen line or reel.

☐ **Before lowering a lure:** Carry spare line and retie materials, then make sure a cold, wet reel releases line smoothly.

☐ **Before moving onto the ice:** Check local ice thickness and conditions, fish with a partner when possible, and carry appropriate flotation and ice safety equipment. Sound line does not make unsafe ice safe.

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