

Slow Pitch Jigging Explained

Originating in Japan some years ago, the facet of Slow Pitch Jigging has rapidly spread throughout the world, including here in the UK.

Jigabite was one of the very first stores in the UK to introduce

the full range of the specialist tackle required to SPJ effectively and the range has since become vast.



Although the more traditional Speed Jigging can be an amazingly effective method of catching fish, there are times when it's more effective to present the lure in a different way to invite the bite.

Often fish chose to take a more leisurely approach at mealtimes, not always willing to chase a speeding prey but instead more content to laze around in wait of an easier prize; some Demersal's feed this way naturally and most of our UK cold water species certainly feed the same due to their lower body metabolism.

In a nut shell, speed jigs represent a fleeing baitfish whereas a Slow Jig presented correctly will imitate all the signs of an injured or dying baitfish, a much easier meal.

So Slow-Pitch Jigging is all about getting the lure to dance and flutter longer in the strike zone and the easiest way to do this is by using a specifically designed set up. From the rods to the hooks I will attempt to give you my interpretation of Slow Jigging by giving you a breakdown of the specific tackle required to make this method effective.

Slow Pitch Jigs



Above; Some of the very best Japanese Jigs on the market

The various shapes and styles of Vertical Jigs are created to impart different actions but in short they are designed to drop fast and be worked with a quick retrieve, generalising I know but I don't want to get too bogged down here talking about these more familiar Jigs.

To just simply slow down our jiggling technique most Vertical Jigs would remain fairly static in the water which is not exactly inviting to a predatory fish so the Jig design as well as the technique needed to be changed.

The first thing to notice is that Slow Jigs are deliberately more Centre-balanced and flatter more on one side than the other to generate a much more erratic action and eliminate the need to be speeding through the water column in order to attract a fish. Instead the Jigs design demands a lot less effort from the Angler to be effective in the water though this is not to say that there is no technique required, quite the contrary and I will talk about this later.



Above left; A selection of high end hand made Jigs from Japan



Above Right; Myself learning SPJ from the master, Andreas De Nardo

Slow Jigs fall into two categories, Slow Jerk and High Fall with a few hybrids also available. Slow Jigs are shorter and often wider when compared to Fall designs that are more likely to be longer and slimmer. Most of our UK fishing requires Slow Jigs that are designed to slide and flutter using a slow pitch method. The High Fall method and Jigs are mainly for deeper water of stronger currents.

There are plenty of different shapes and designs available from the many jig manufactures all falling under the banner of "Slow Jigging"; it's a case of understanding how each individual jig performs and adjusting your technique to suit.

The more erratic action of a Slow jig will sometimes cause it to become suspended in the water, sinking slowly as it flutters sending out the signals similar to that of an injured baitfish; this is often when a predator will strike so remain alert and try to keep in touch with whatever is happening at the business end.

Vertical Jigging demands an aggressive approach to get the jig moving through the water as fast as you can while Slow jigging has a lot more finesse and is more about feeling and reading how the Jig is working. This is why the tackle used for each style has been so carefully refined to suit each method.

Slow Jigging Rods



Slow Jigging Rods have a full Slow Taper that make them feel soft all the way through the blank and most are constructed from high end Toray Carbon for lightness and strength.

This design is specific for working Slow jigs correctly and whilst you may catch fish jigging with other rod types you are certainly not optimising your efforts.

For Slow Jigs to perform correctly the rod should be matched specifically to the jig weights you will be using. A Slow pitch rod Rated to 120g will not impart the correct action onto a 200g Jig, sounds obvious but it is more critical that one would think with this style of jigging.

The whole concept of rod design and Blank makeup is delicately matched for the best performance and I would strongly recommend purchasing from one of the many companies that specialise in this style of fishing.

Jigabite only sell rods from these companies with a good pedigree and you will find there is a wide range available in a variety of jig weights to suit most Budgets.

In shallower water of up to 60metres the demand from the rod is less critical than if fishing in 200metres.

Slow Pitch Rods are extremely light, very thin and generally around six feet to 6 feet 8" in length. Despite this they are remarkably strong but it is important to understand that the rod is designed and balanced to work the Jig and NOT so much to fight the fish.

When playing a larger fish most of the fight is played relying on the Drag from the Reel. This allows us to use such delicately light Rods.

Naturally a heavier rated rod will have more backbone than a lighter rating so in some instances it will be possible to let the rod take some of the strain.

Manufacturers state Power and Jig Ratings differently from each other but generally most UK fishing falls between a Power 2 or 3 rating. Please contact me if you would like conformation based upon your specific fishing conditions.

Where I have stated that these rods are very strong , I am refering to their abilities to work a jig and play a fish.

***Its important to realise that the High Carbon content used to keep them light can also be delicate and these rods do NOT take kindly to knocks so treat with care,
Under no circumstances must you high-stick as this can easily end badly.***

Reels

The Rage Reels from Maxel have to be some of the finest on the market today.



The preferred Reels for Slow Jigging are without doubt Overhead Reels; they allow you more instant jig control especially when the jig is on the drop or static which is often when a fish will strike. Slow Jigging can still be performed using a Spinning Reel, it is much more difficult to maintain a direct contact with the Jig at all times.

There are many purposely designed SPJ Reels on the market that are up to the job but try to chose a narrow spool version and fast retrieve 6.0:1 minimum if possible.

Match the lightness of the Rod to a Small Reel but ensure it has a sufficiently strong smooth drag system remembering the demands of the reel when playing a fish.

Jigabite stock the range of Maxel Reels that are specifically designed for slow jigging.

These are very light and operate like a silky smooth machine making the whole experience a pleasure to entertain.

Most SPJ reels are ergonomically designed and sit low in the reel seat. The line then comfortably meets the first guide making it easier to level the line on the retrieve.

The narrow spools with larger diameter also assist the line lay and increase the amont of line retrieved per handle revolution.

Line

**Chose a quality Braid
like the YGK Varagass Fune**



***This is where a lot of people compromise, when they shouldn't!
When using such delicate sensitive Rods it is imperative that you
remain in direct contact with the Jig to feel for its every movement
and ensure it is performing correctly.***

***Slow Jigging demands a High Quality low PE diameter rated Braid,
preferably X8 Strand and PE1.0 to PE2.0 for the UK.
At this point I'm not going to go into the vast complexities regarding
Braids nor am I about to enter the mind boggling world that is PE.
Needless to say any quality 8 Strand braid will do the job;
again I prefer the known Japanese brands that are proven quality
such as the YGK Varagass Fune.***

***This very low diameter will cut through the water much easier
than a standard 4 Strand which helps to keep the near vertical line
that is required for the jig to act correctly.***

***I've seen overseas reports of Amberjacks to 30kgs and Dog Tooth Tuna
to over 40kgs being caught using Slow Jigging tackle
on light PE line 20 to 30lbs.***

***If you are unfortunate to have a powerful fish dive
back to the Reef structure then we have to accept this could be
game over but weigh this up against an increased
Strike rate using a thinner line and I know where I stand.***

Hooks

Match the Assist Hooks to the Jig as well as the target species.



*The Japanese prefer to fix a twin assist hook to either end of the jig as this can sometimes help the way the jig performs but my recommendation would be to simply use just one twin assist fixed to the top of the jig. **See setup image below.** This will reduce the amount of foul hooked fish and the likelihood of snagging the bottom or structure. (especially for UK fishing)*

Slow jigs are most effective in freefall when their design allows them to act erratically so try not to restrict this movement by adding swivels etc. Keep it light and simple.

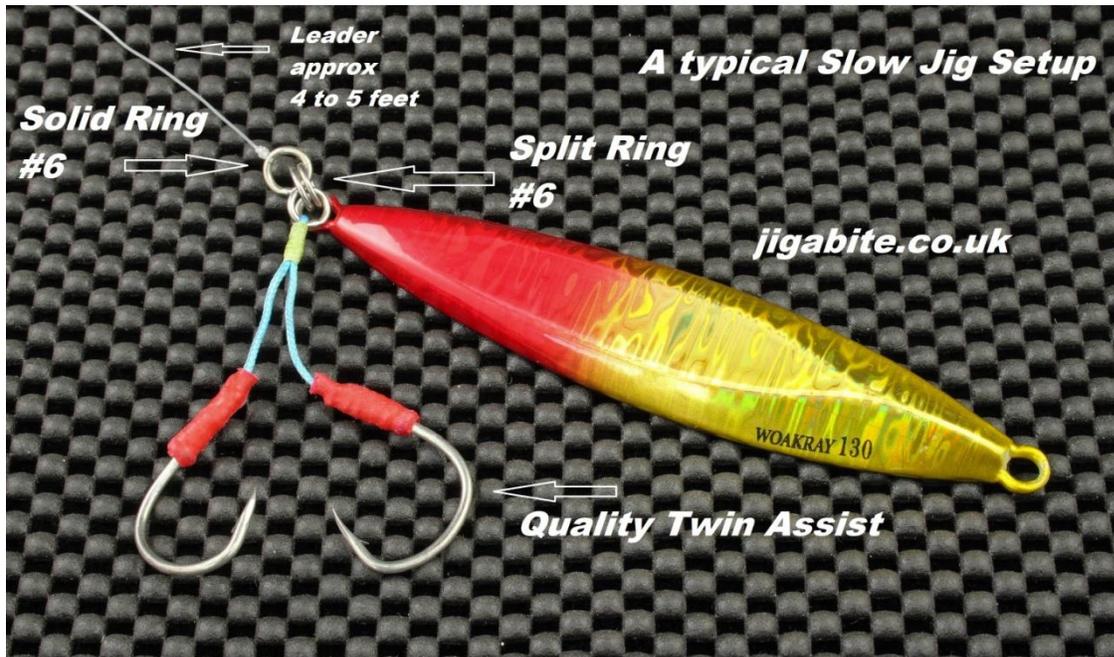
It's also important to use assist hooks rigged with strong but very fine assist cord as this allows the freedom of hook movement that improves the hook-up rating.

Chose from the many purposely designed SPJ Assist Hooks available or tailor your own to suit.

Commonest sizes; 1/0 and 2/0 but up to 6/0 for larger species.

Please use the Hook Sizing guide on the Website as manufactures size differently.

The Setup



A Split Ring (size 4 to 6) connects both the Assists Hooks and the jig to a solid ring (size 5 or 6) that is tied onto a short leader.

*A must have accessory to secure the Jig set up whist in transit or between marks is the Jigabite Jig Wrap. **See below;***

Jig safely held in place protecting the rod especially while in transit



Assist Hooks stowed safely.

Jigging Technique

Where do I start? I suppose you firstly need to dismiss any of your vertical jigging techniques and think more about how to get the jig to do the work for you.

The Slow Jerk technique is broken down into a "Pitch", being one lift of the rod from the five o'clock position up to the two o'clock position where you then hold and wait for the load in rod to rebound back to normal.

This is why it is important to match the rod to the Jig weight. During this Pitch you can vary your action to include anything from a quarter turn to a full rotation of the Reel handle; you can also change the speed at which this is done and sometimes extend the lift. All of the time it is important to feel for how the jig is performing and remember different jig designs will react in different ways.

Once the Rod has returned to its park position, drop back to five o'clock and after a short delay, start the pitch again. By varying the speed and sequence of the pitch you will find out which method suits you, just ensure the jig is allowed to fall freely.

Different jig designs dictate how they move in free fall so take a good look at how your jig reacts at the surface when you allow it to fall of its own accord and adjust your rod action to suit.

At this point it's important to mention that the jig will only perform from as near vertical line as possible.

A large loop of line from rod to jig will result in very little jig action as your rod pitch is simply taking up the slack in the line.

Hence the need for low diameter braid.

When currents make it hard to stay vertical or if fishing in deeper water it is often necessary to use a different technique known as "High Fall".

The longer (6`8") Rod`s are recommended to achieve a much higher and more aggressive "Pitch".

The aim is to impart a strong outward sweep of the rod to drive the jig through the water. By lowering the rod the jig will freefall and flutter often inducing a strike at this moment.

High Pitch Jigs are specifically designed for this style of jigging.

To Summarise;

I know that I have merely skimmed the surface of Slow Jigging here but my aim is to try and simplify some of the basics without going too deeply into the complexities.

This technique can be highly effective and is already popular in a lot of other European countries where it provides a useful alternative especially at times when the fish are not so active.

It is tailor made for UK waters because most of our resident fish are not aggressive feeders when compared to their warm water cousins, preferring instead to feed on easier slow moving prey.

Its important to realise that sea and weather conditions play a large part to the success of SPJ so be sure to pick the smaller tides with less current.

Slack water when most other methods are less effective is often the time to try SPJ.

*It is also a lot of fun and a pleasurable way to fish because of the refined light tackle requirements.
just look how LRF has impacted Light Spinning.*

*Please feel free to contact me if you require any further assistance.
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