

PROTECTING YOUR INVESTMENT

Tournament season is just around the corner so odds are you'll soon be sorting through your fishing gear, items such as your rod & reel combos, back up reels, extra line, lures, terminal tackle and storage boxes. If you haven't done it yet, you need to get your gear ready and the following tips could prove useful in organizing your tackle and protecting your investment. For now we'll focus on the Rods & Reels and in our next installment we'll discuss care and organization of tackle.

Reels can be a significant investment toward your chosen hobby ranging in cost upwards of \$200 or more so it only makes sense to take good care of them and get as many days use as you can. Talking with Dave Suttle from *Adirondack Reel Service* he says keeping your reels properly cleaned and lubricated will certainly extend the life of the reel. I used Dave's reel service this past winter and he had my reels looking and operating great in a couple of weeks. Suttle also recommends backing the drag off anytime a reel sets idle for a few days and especially during the off season, doing this prevents the disks from getting over compressed and it helps ensure a smooth drag is available when you need it most. If you desire to service your own reels, be sure to keep the manufacturers schematic diagram that comes with the reel; disassemble the parts and lay them out on a clean cloth in the same order you take them off, this helps with reassembly when its time.



Ardent makes a great reel cleaning kit that includes everything you need, oil, reel butter, brushes, swabs and cleaning cloth, and all items are stored in a handy carrying case. For the do it yourself kind of person I think the Ardent reel cleaning kit is well worth the investment.

Another simple yet often overlooked action is a good visual inspection before each outing. Always check the reel face and body for any loose screws or nuts and keep everything set to the manufacturer's original settings. Also consider using reel covers whenever the fishing day's over. There are several makes and models on the market. I like the ones made by [Bass Pro Shops](#), they offer covers for low profile and traditional round bait casting reels as well as spinning reels and they work great for me. They're easy to attach, prevent excess dirt and grime from getting on the reel and they protect the reel's finish very well. For anyone that travels a lot I highly recommend you consider purchasing a set to protect your favorite reel.

Rods are no less important with some models costing as much as \$300 or more, so they too are an investment worth protecting. First is the rod blank itself; some blanks have a plain matte finish, others sport a hi-gloss lacquer coating, and others still host a combination of the two finishes. Regardless of your rod's finish odds are you want it looking good the next time you pull it out for a day's fishing and here are few simple tips you can employ to clean and protect your rod with items you likely already have on hand.

The matte finish is best cleaned with the use of simple dish soap applied with a lint free cloth and warm water. Simply soap up the rod to remove any excess grease or grim, rinse the soap off, then wipe the blank down with a clean damp cloth. For the hi-gloss finish rods the same approach works well and once it dries I like to apply a light coat of spray-on furniture polish. I find this helps preserve that hi-gloss finish and it also doubles as a sealant / water repellent.

After the rod blank is cleaned I check the rod line guides for any nicks or scratches by simply swishing a standard Q-Tip inside the guide. If there is a burr or nick it will most likely grab the cotton swab and quickly reveal itself. From there it's simply a matter of buffing the burr off (*I've found my wife's fingernail emery boards work well for this task*), or simply replace the line guide with a new one if required.

The last area I clean on the rod is the reel seat and the cork handle. The reel seat is no challenge, again simple soap and water work best and I use an old tooth brush to clean the threaded portions as needed. For the cork I use an 800 -1200 grain sandpaper to remove any dark stains from the cork. It doesn't require a lot of pressure so be careful, but when sanded correctly, and lightly, it restores the cork to that like new appearance.

Once I'm satisfied my rods are clean and ready for action I use [The Rod Glove](#) to protect them. These rod covers are made of a woven synthetic material that works along the same premise as the old Chinese finger cuffs. Compress the ends to expand the diameter of the cover, insert the rod tip in the open end and then pull the cover down toward the reel seat. They come in several colors designed for both bait casting and spinning rods that allow me to match my rod colors.



I use [Dobyns rods](#) and they have three series available, the Savvy Series (black matte finish blank), the Champion Series (blue matte finish blank) and the Champion Extreme (brown/copper hi-gloss finish). [The Rod Glove](#) has a color that matches each category of rod to give it a real clean look and it works well for me.

Remember it doesn't matter if you spent \$100 or upwards of \$300(+) for a rod & reel combo. It's a piece of equipment you purchased to do a specific job; so take care of your equipment and it will take care of you