Top 7 Wooden Lure Making Tips!
Hi,

If it’s true that we learn from our mistakes then wooden lure makers must be amongst the smartest and most learned people on the planet! I tell you, in 30 years of making wooden lures I must have come close to making every lure making mistake possible!

And over the last 10 years I’ve had the privilege of showing a lot of other people how to make wooden lures, so I’ve had the benefit of learning from their mistakes, too. And I’ve enjoyed helping to solve a lot of lure making challenges.

And yet, I don’t feel any closer to being a genius. Go figure!

But I do feel that I’ve learned a fair bit about how to make wooden lures. For starters, I now know that there’s a hard way (working it out for yourself) and an easy way (getting someone to show you the tricks). I’d like to share that knowledge with you.

In the dark ages (the days before internet) there wasn’t much of a choice between easy and hard. Unless you were one of the lucky few who knew someone who knew something about making lures you were doomed to spend countless hours making countless dud lures until you unravelled the secrets.

These days I don’t understand why anyone would suffer through all of that. I mean, would you pick up a violin and just keep trying until you figured it out? Of course not, that could take a lifetime – or may not ever happen. No, you’d get lessons, watch dvd’s, take an online course. You’d have options that would have you playing like a pro in just a few years (keep practicing!)

Let’s think about lure making (and I’ll spill the beans now: I can have you making great lures in days). For some of us the fascination with lure making is figuring out how to make something that works. I’m one of those, or I’d have given up trying to make lures decades ago! But most of us are not like that – In fact, the majority of people who try to make wooden lures will fail and give up!

Nope. Most of us are interested in one thing and one thing only - what the lures will do for us! They’ll give us the edge that only pro anglers normally get – super quality, custom made lures! We want to catch fish in heavily fished waters, we want to catch bigger fish, imitate our local baitfish better, make lures that dive deeper and so on, and so on.

No one is born knowing how to make great lures, but most of us just want to make lures that will catch fish. Now. Today, not next year!
My goal is to encourage a lot more people to get started with making wooden lures – and to stick with it. And I’ll do this by continuing to produce high quality wooden lure making information like my Complete Wooden Lure System and by growing an excited community of like minded lure makers with my Wooden Lures Inner Circle membership site.

This ebook is a tiny sample of the kind of information that’s available through my membership site and wooden lure system, but I hope get some pearls that will put you on the path to lure making success! There is lots more wooden lure making information available through my website, and through my lure making blog and ebooks, so please click through these links and pay me a visit!

And remember – “Life’s Too Short To Use Bad Lures!”

Regards
Greg Vinall
Creator of the
Complete Wooden Lure System

www.makewoodenlures.com
1. Lighten up for better crankbaits!

A principle that guides my wooden lure making is to always keep my crankbait bodies as light as possible.

Sure, light lures are hard to cast, but when you study the physics that cause crankbaits to have such an enticing, fish catching wiggle it’s all about weight and how it’s balanced in the lure. To make crankbaits jump to life with the strongest, most pulsating action you need the lure to be fighting hard against nature, because it’s the opposing forces of forward movement and upward buoyancy that create the instability that gives lures action. And that is why companies like Rapala continue to make wooden lures from one of the most lightest woods anywhere – Balsa!

I know it doesn’t seem to make much sense, but you’ll even get better results with your sinking and suspending crankbaits by using a light weight wood. Why? Because buoyant wood that has been weighted in just the right way creates a kind of internal keel that keeps them the right way up in the water.

Using wood that is very light gives you the flexibility to decide exactly how to position the weight so your lure is perfectly balanced and maximises those forces you need to tame for getting that perfect crankbait action.
2. Harden up for durability

We have a saying on my boat whenever someone starts to whinge about the cold, the wind, the heat, the insects or any other minor inconvenience that should never get in the way of another cast or two.

“Harden up, Princess!”

It’s a response that instantly puts a stop to the moaning and puts the focus back on fishing.

When it comes to lure making, my focus is always on quality, so I add an extra step into my process that 90% of wooden lure makers don’t even think about. I refer to this process as “hardening up” which always raises an eyebrow or two!

Hardening up is about giving my lures an extra plate of armour. It’s about making them tougher, more dent proof and longer lasting.

How do I do this? Simple, I give all of my lures a treatment with a good quality, water based, penetrating wood hardener. Wood hardeners are used in the building trade to give strength to wood that has partially rotted, and they work by soaking and then curing to reinforce the wood fibres.

And I’m generous with the hardener, too. I don’t just brush a coat on, I immerse my lure bodies just before assembly. This allows the liquid to soak well into the exterior, which gives the lure a tough outer coating. But it also allows the liquid into holes, slots and grooves I’ve cut for fitting hardware. This not only hardens the wood, but also makes it waterproof at every point where water could get in.

Sure, it adds another step to my lure making process.

Yes, it slows me down - I usually prefer to let my lures dry for at least 5-7 days before I continue.

But it’s just one of the differences between average wooden lures and extraordinary wooden lures - And I don’t do average wooden lures!
3. Strengthen up to avoid lost fish!

What’s the difference between a Holden and a Ferrari?

At the end of the day they are both just cars. Either one of them will get you where you want to go. But when you buy a Ferrari you are buying something special – and you’re paying for special performance.

Fishing lures are the same. When you spend the extra money on a good brand, you expect better quality and higher performance than a cheap import from the department store bargain bin. Whether you are a commercial or recreational lure maker, part of building seriously well-made wooden lures is paying attention to the quality of the components you use.

Now on that note, here is a question that I get asked a lot, and hopefully I’ve already given you the answer:

“Wouldn’t it be quicker and easier to just use screw eyes?”

Hooo, yes! If only I had a buck for every time I’d been asked that one! The truth is, sometimes, on some lures I actually do use screw eyes.

But as someone who takes pride in making the highest quality wooden lures, I can think of nothing worse than worrying about whether a hook hanger or towpoint might pull once a fish is hooked.

Think about the commercial wooden lures out there: The Rapala’s and Nilsmasters, for example. Not to mention the many custom wooden lures that can cost anywhere upwards of $100 each. How many of those are made with screw eyes? None, zip, nada, nil. All of them get made with a stainless steel wire that goes right through the lure, so even if a fish chews the wood in half, you’ll still get it to the net.

Now, it’s much quicker and cheaper to use screw eyes and for any company in the manufacturing sector, time is money, right? So if screw eyes were really good enough you can bet that every commercial lure maker on the planet would be using them to make their business more profitable.

They don’t – because quality is important to them.

www.makewoodenlures.com
If you want your wooden lures to be the Ferraris of the lure world (and the piece of mind that you won’t lose that trophy fish), take the extra time to make and use stainless steel through wires!

4. Hook up!

What’s the quickest way to turn a brilliantly made wooden lure into a worthless piece of crap? Load it up with the wrong hooks and rings!

Think I’m exaggerating?

Look, there what hooks to use on your lures is just one big thing to consider. But what’s the point of making seriously good wooden lures only to load them up with the wrong hooks?

No matter how good your lures are, you can kill the action dead by fitting heavy hooks, or you can vastly reduce your hookup rates by choosing the hooks poorly. You make wooden lures so you have the best, right? Then don’t be a sap! Think carefully about what hooks you will use right from the start!

Here are some tips for choosing hooks and rings:

◆ Weight is the enemy of lure action, so keep it down. As a rule of thumb, go for the smallest and lightest gauge hooks you’ll get away with for a given fishing application. On the other hand, red line drag settings for tough fish in heavy cover mean heavy hooks, so if this sounds to you like a relaxing weekend you’ll need to design lures that can handle heavy hooks!

www.makewoodenlures.com
Consider the shank length. My preferred weapons are usually wide-gaped, short-shanked hooks, which help keep weight down and improve the exposure of points which in turn increases the hookup rate.

There is little that is more annoying than making a perfect cast tight against heavy cover, only to find that the front and rear hooks have linked together and ruined the action. This is less of a problem with short-shanked hooks, but good lure design can end this forever.

Get the right orientation. Treble hooks have a left and right side, and most wooden lures have two or more sets of trebles swinging from them. Rigging them so the points are offset will increase your hookups.

Using double or even single hooks instead of trebles is a secret trick of some very smart anglers. A double hook rides closer to the body of the lure and weighs less than a treble, which makes lures really stable. And because double hooks don’t require split rings, the weight is reduced even further, so lure action improves.

Experiment with different hook sizes. Nothing says the hooks on a fishing lure must be equal in size. Although it might look a little strange, try replacing the tail hook with one of a slightly smaller size and/or the front hook with one of a larger size. It may look a little strange at first, but you’ll find that the action of the lure is stronger and your hookup rates increase.
5. Double up to have copies of all your best lures.

For an artist, creating one-off originals that can’t be reproduced is a gift.

But lure makers want to create a work of art and then make as many exact copies as they need. And that is a great challenge to lots of guys who are starting out in lure making. This was certainly the case for me - it almost caused me to give up wooden lure making, such was my frustration.

I would make a lure that I was extremely happy with and one of two things would happen: either the lure caught fish so well that I would use it in preference to any other. Of course, the more often you cast a lure into a snagpile, the more likely it is that you’ll eventually leave it there!

The other possibility was that I would not use the lure, but would tuck it away in a safe corner of my tackle box where it wouldn’t become snagged and lost – but it’s no the lure in your box that catches fish, it’s the one on your line.

So you see my problem! I just had to find a way to copy my best lures over and over again, so I could make a bunch of them, and when I lost the lot? We’ll, I could always make another bunch!

**Consistency** is the key to making a batch of identical lures by hand so that each has the same action, creates the same noise, vibration and flash as the others.

Part of the solution I developed (and still use right to this day) is lure making templates. These help me get consistency in the size and shape (and therefore the buoyancy) of my lure bodies, plus the location of tow points and hook hangers, the size, shape and angle of the bib/lip, location of rattles and so on.

My next trick is to batch the whole lure making process. I am continually surprised at how few wooden lure makers actually do this – it’s one of the common reasons why so many lure makers struggle to make identical copies.
For example, let’s say I’m planning a batch of 20 identical lures. Rather than take a piece of wood, make a lure, finish it and then start another, I’ll approach it like this:

1. Cut 20 pieces of wood into blanks of the same size, from the same plank of wood.
2. Mark all 20 blanks using my templates.
3. Prepare all 20 blanks for towpoints, hook hangers, internal weight, rattles, recessed eyes, bib slots and whatever other features are required.
4. Rough down all 20 blanks at once, making a few cuts to each blank before going on to the next and repeating the process until all the lure bodies are rough shaped to the same stage.
5. Final shape each of the lures, checking progress against the templates regularly
6. Coarse sand each of the lures in turn, then fine sand each of them.

6. Match up your lures with the baitfish

“Matching the hatch” is a fly fishing term that describes the art of making flies to mimic whatever insect is hatching at the time and increase your chances of fooling a single-minded trout.

Baitfish aren’t quite comparable to insects, but the concept of “matching the hatch” is just as relevant to lure fishermen as it is the fly man. Carefully crafting your wooden lure to look like the baitfish you imitate will substantially improve your strike rate.

Now this is a very important point – In fact it’s the main reason I’m still making wooden lures after 30 years. I can make lures that mimic local baitfish so well that my catch rate increases substantially.

Most wooden lure makers jump to the conclusion that “matching the hatch” is about painting lures intricately to look exactly like baitfish. It’s not. You really don’t need a work of art to fool fish!

In fact, Color is the last thing on my mind when I’m making a lure to mimic a specific bait species!
So what comes first?

◆ **Size and shape**

Folk who go into a seafood restaurant usually go looking for fish, even if steak might be on the menu. Fish that are feeding on herring or shad are more likely to take a lure that’s the same size and shape as a herring or shad. If they are feeding on minnows a long, slender lure will hook more fish. Put something in front of them that’s a different shape and they may well ignore it. There’s always the exception, but generally this rule rings true.

◆ **Swimming action**

The action of your lure, the way it "swims" with enticing wiggles, tight shimmies, rolling wobbles or erratic jerks is the next most important thing that will fool a fish into thinking a wooden lure is edible. Fish “feel” vibration long before they see your lure, even in clear water.

If the target bait species swims with a tight shimmy, like most open water baitfish, they will emit a high frequency vibration and your lure should do the same. Slower baitfish species, like gudgeon and crawfish emit a lower frequency vibration, so your lures need to have a wider, rolling action to mimic these species.

◆ **Dive depth**

Here is a famous quote from bass fishing legend Mike McClelland in his book "Walleye Troubleshooting":

"The foundation of effective crankbait fishing is very simple; know the depth your crankbaits run. Until this knowledge is in hand, all the other crankbait questions are very insignificant. After all, if you can’t get the bait to the fish, how could color, shape, action, or models of crankbaits make any difference whatsoever?"

Getting the dive depth right is critical.
Lure color

In ninety percent of cases, once you get size, shape, action and dive depth right, color becomes irrelevant. Why? Because often the fish will be hunting by feel rather than by sight. Like when it's dark, when the mud has been stirred up, when algae are growing, the water is foamy or there is lots of vegetation.

Every now and then color really does make a difference, especially when the water is very clear and the fish have a lot of time to inspect the lure. But as a rule, color is the very last thing on my mind when I'm designing or selecting lures.

7. Look up! A Couple Of Visual Cues That Can’t Be Ignored!

There are some other visual cues that tend to attract fish particularly well, and in some cases from quite a long way away:

- Eyes

Lots of seriously good lure makers would argue that putting oversized eyes on lures will always increase catch rates. After all, don’t fish home in on the eye? Isn’t that thought to be one of the visual cues that make predatory fish attack?

Well, sometimes a lure is moving so fast that fish couldn’t see an eye, and other times the water is too dirty or there are some other factors that make an eye (or any other feature) painted on your lure body almost impossible for a fish to see.

But there are certainly times when fish do home in on the eyes of their prey, and to be honest I can’t think of any time when fish might reject a lure that has a really obvious eye painted on it. So I guess the short answer is that I always paint eyes on my lures, and I don’t mind if they are quite big and quite visible, either.
**Flash**

I reckon this is one of the unsung heroes of getting fish to eat lures. Fish can see light flashing off a lure a very long time before they ever see color.

Let’s think of a human example. How many times have you seen a flash of light of in the distance? It’s so far off that you can’t even begin to see what it is that the light reflects off, and yet your attention can be attracted to that spot just waiting for the next flash. Eventually, you might make out that it’s a boat coming towards you, but it will still be a long time before it’s close enough to tell what color that boat is.

OK, now let’s imagine that you are a predatory fish that has to constantly find baitfish or die of starvation. Do you think you would be especially tuned in to something that pinpoints the location of your next feed? Predatory fish are incredibly tuned in to notice flash and will always go and investigate!

So, give your lure plenty of flash! Polish the clear coat, design the body shape to maximise flash, adorn it with foil, whatever it takes to make those predators home in on your lure for miles around.
Are you serious about learning to make wooden lures?

**Wooden Lure Inner Circle** members get access to my exclusive, members-only wooden lure making blog site, where they can tap into the full power of my **Complete Wooden Lure System**! This is wooden lure making on steroids!

- Over 100 pages of simple techniques to make any kind of wooden lure, from basic stickbaits to complex swimbait. All kinds of crankbaits, from floating to sinking, suspending jerkbaits, broke-back crankbaits, even lipless crankbaits are covered in loads of detail. And of course I show the techniques for making any kind of topwater lure you can imagine, including chuggers, skipping poppers, prop baits and crawlers.

- Templates, design specifications and step by step instructions for dozens of proven wooden lure designs. Even novice lure makers can make these lures while they are still learning the above techniques. In fact,

“This is the secret that lets me teach you to make wooden lures in just days, not years!”

- And the icing on the cake is **Wooden Lure Inner Circle** membership that gives you access to an amazing and constantly expanding range of wooden lure making information, resources and special deals! Not to mention – personal assistance from myself when you post questions to my members blog!

**Warning: To enable me to continue delivering high quality support to wooden lure makers, Inner Circle Membership is strictly limited!**

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