

Choosing the best spinner blade

By: Captain Lance Valentine

Each fishing season countless walleye are caught on crawler harnesses and worms or what most walleye anglers call “spinners”-simply a 2-3 hook snell with some beads, a clevis and a blade. Get two or more fisherman together, ask what their favorite spinner combination is, step back and watch the debate! While everyone has their personal favorites and “go to” spinners, looking at a few factors can help you pick the best spinner blade for the conditions you are faced with.

1. **Blade Size:** Spinner blades come in a large selection of sizes, from the miniscule 00 up to giant #12 for musky fishing. Most walleye fishing is done with blades from size 3-6 most days. Smaller blades are usually favored in smaller lakes and when fish are holding close to the bottom and/or near cover, while larger blades are usually preferred when chasing walleye in open water. If I had to pick, I would choose size 5 and 6 in Colorado, and 4-5 in Willowleaf (more on shape in a minute) In any case, it is always best to choose a spinner blade that is close to the size of the forage the walleye are currently feeding on. Creating the right profile for the fish to see is an important part of the presentation puzzle
2. **Blade Shape:** Again the selection is overwhelming, but most walleye fishing is done with the two most common blade shapes-Colorado or Willowleaf. Each one has different characteristics that can make it excel. Colorado blades are a “round” shaped blade and give off LOTS of vibration and little flash. Colorado blades are a great choice in cloudy or stained water, low light conditions or heavy cover—anytime a walleye must be able to “hear” a presentation to help him find it. Colorado blades also do a great job when the walleye are feeding on big bodied bait like shad and alewife. Willowleaf blades are long and skinny and give off LOTS of flash and little vibration. Pick a Willowleaf blade when fishing in clear water, open water or in current. In today’s cleaner waters, we have seen a progressive switch in some areas to Willowleaf blades.
3. **Blade Rotation:** Because the shape of the Colorado and Willowleaf blades are different, their rotation around the spinner line is different and effects the flash, vibration, depth and action of the spinner harness. Colorado blades spin at about a 45 degree angle to the spinner shaft (or line), which creates a loud “thump” as it spins and sends out lots of vibration. This wide rotation gives the Colorado blade more “lift” and will cause the spinner to run a little higher in the water than a Willowleaf. The wide rotation also gives a spinner with a Colorado blade a little “wobble” as it moves through the water-an action that sometimes can attract fish. Because of the wide arc of the Colorado, it takes the more speed to keep turning than skinner blades. The Willowleaf blade spins at about a 30 degree angle to the spinner, causing it to rotate faster, causing more flash and less vibration. Willowleaf blades run very “straight” through the water and keep their depth quite well. The narrow profile of the Willowleaf means it takes the less amount of water resistance (speed) to keep it turning, making it a great choice when fishing in current.
4. **Blade Finish:** Most days the finish of a spinner blade is more important than the actual colors on the blade. Three finishes are the most popular-silver, gold and copper. When picking a spinner blade be sure to get one of these finishes-avoid brass or nickel finishes since they actually do NOT reflect light when they get a few feet below the surface. Buy a quality spinner blade with 14 carat or higher gold,

real silver and genuine copper finishes-you will catch more fish! The best finish each day is a constant trial and error process, but here are a few rules I use when starting a fishing day:

<u>Sky</u>	<u>Water</u>	<u>Upper Water Column</u>	<u>Lower Water Column</u>
Clear	Clear	Silver	Silver or Gold
Clear	Stained	Gold	Gold
Clear	Dirty	Gold	Copper
Cloudy	Clear	Gold or Silver	Gold
Cloudy	Stained or Dirty	Gold	Copper

Now these are MY personal choices, but I think a good guide. Once you start catching fish, start experimenting to see what the fish tell you. A tip on blade finishes---when you are catching fish on the BACK hook of your harness, they are coming from behind to hit---pay attention to the finish on the BACK of your spinner blade more than the colors on the front!!

5. **Blade Color:** If you want to get totally confused when choosing a spinner blade, take a walk through a good tackle shop and look at all of the blade colors available today. Every color, pattern, dots, stripes---it never ends! Be sure to stock your tackle with a good assortment of colors, but experience has shown us that certain colors ALMOST ALWAYS produce. Make sure you have blades with purple, red, orange, pink, blue, chartreuse and white on them. Either alone or in combination (my favorite!) and you should be able to catch fish every day, on any water. If you are catching most of your fish on the FRONT hook of the harness, pay close attention to what color, or colors are on the front of the blade because the fish are hitting from the side or front, and are seeing more of the front of the blade than the back.

Well, there you have it-a quick guide on picking a productive spinner blade for walleye fishing. Remember to experiment when you start catching fish, and the fish will tell you what THEY want each day. If you need more information or need to stock up on blades, beads, hooks, clevises or anything else for spinner fishing, including Lance's favorite blade colors and finishes, check out our store link at www.teachinfishin.com