

# CRAPPIE-ANGLER'S GUIDE TO WATER CLARITY

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An article by

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Crappie usually exhibit specific behavior patterns in response to different degrees of water clarity, and the angler who knows what to expect will have a better chance of catching fish regardless of conditions.

To start, an angler must first decide how to determine what constitutes muddy or clear water. Our rule of thumb is to lower a white jig in the water. With the line as a measuring stick, if we can see the jig at a depth of 6 feet or more, we consider the water to be clear. If the jig vanishes between 2 to 6 feet deep, the water is stained or colored. If the jig disappears at 2 feet or less, the water is muddy or dark.

### CLEAR WATER

When searching for clear water crappie, a careful, quiet approach is critical. Fishing in limited light also helps. They rely heavily on sight and can see an offering and more readily to chase lures. Be on the water in early morning and late afternoon-early evening when light penetration is minimal and the fish are in the shallows to feed. Take advantage of cloudy days and night-fishing in the summer months.

Line considerations are also very important, because crappie can look closely at the prey before attacking in crystal-clear environment. We use about a 4-pound test because it is more difficult for crappie to detect.

As for lure selections, live baits are always a good choice because there is nothing phony for crappie to observe. When using jigs, we use Creme jigs weighing 1/32 oz. or smaller. Go to lighter, more natural, more translucent colors. A pearl with silver, or spotted minnow, and colors with sparkles mimics baitfish.

### MUDDY WATER

In muddy waters, crappie usually stay in shallow water areas because there are lower oxygen levels in deeper water. The peak feeding times are usually during the brightest hours, in fact, the best fishing in muddy water will often be during midday hours under sunny days.

Because visibility is severely limited, they are less spooky and tend to be object-oriented. They rarely move any distance and usually locate near some type of woody cover. Fishing close to brush, stumps, and other structures can be very productive.

An important thing to remember, that muddy-water crappie rely more on sound, vibrations and odor to find food. Thus, they usually respond better to live baits, because they can home in on the scent. If jigs are used, use attractants such as Berkley Crappie Nibbles or Kodiak paste.

As for colors, opaqueness takes over. Black, Brown, Dark Blue and Dark Red are like silhouettes in mud.

### STAINED WATER

In stained or colored waters, crappie behavior falls somewhere between the clear or muddy water extremes, and fish may display a characteristic of either condition, depending on degree of stain. With water color closer to the muddy extreme, of course, lean towards muddy-water methods. When visibility is in the 4 to 6 foot range, stick more to clear-water techniques.

As water gets more stained, go to brighter colors, such as whites, yellows and oranges. When you reach the point of 2 to 4 feet of visibility, try brighter fluorescents like hi-vis Blues, Pinks, Chartreuse or Lime Green. In water that's stained a dark green or brown, use multi-color combinations. Use Black/Chartreuse or Pink/Yellow, or use something with a little glitter when the water is real dark.

Creme Lures offers many of these colors, and you can get them from your local Wal-Mart Stores.

Be ready to adjust and experiment to changing water clarities. With a little extra work and know-how, crappie usually can be found.