# Getting the Most from Crankbaits That Run Deep

## Understanding What Makes a Crankbait Dive Deep

Fishing with crankbaits is one of the most effective ways to cover water and find active fish, but not all crankbaits behave the same way once they hit the water. The ones that run deep are built for a specific job: reaching fish that hold near the bottom or along steep drop-offs. To get the most from them, you need to understand how they work, what affects their performance, and how to choose the right one for the conditions you face.

A crankbait's diving depth is mostly controlled by the size and shape of its bill, sometimes called the lip. A longer bill that sits at a wider angle relative to the body will generally pull the lure deeper. The bill material also matters. Plastic bills offer a consistent action and a certain amount of flex, while metal or polycarbonate bills tend to be stiffer and can deflect off structure more aggressively. When you are fishing over rock piles or submerged timber, a stiff bill can help the lure bounce off cover instead of hanging up on every contact.




## How Body Shape and Buoyancy Affect Depth and Action

The body shape of a crankbait influences not just how it looks in the water but how it dives and how it behaves at the end of the retrieve. A slender, minnow-style body cuts through the water differently than a thick, round-bodied plug. The latter displaces more water and tends to have a wider wobble, which can trigger reaction strikes from bass that are holding deep. The crankbait weight also plays a role. A heavier lure casts farther and gets down quicker, but it may also have a tighter wobble unless the body shape is designed to counteract that.

Crankbait buoyancy is another factor that many anglers overlook. A floating crankbait will rise when you stop reeling, which lets it climb over obstacles on a pause. A sinking model stays down and can be worked slowly along the bottom. For deep water, a floating crankbait is often preferred because it can be cranked down to depth and then, when the retrieve stalls, it rises up and avoids snags. That pause can also trigger a fish that is following but not committed.



One common mistake is assuming that any deep-running crankbait will reach the same depth with every rod and reel combination. In reality, the diving depth is a product of the lure's design and the retrieve speed, line diameter, and rod angle. Thinner line cuts through the water with less resistance, allowing the lure to dive deeper. A longer rod held low during the retrieve also helps push the lure down. If you are fishing with a short rod or holding it high, you will shorten the effective running depth.

## Matching Retrieve Speed to the Lure and Conditions

Retrieve speed is one of the most adjustable parts of fishing a crankbait, but it is also one of the most misunderstood. Many anglers think that cranking as fast as possible is the way to get

a lure deep. That can work, but it often makes the lure run too fast for the fish's mood. A better approach is to vary the speed until you find a cadence that feels right for the lure and the water temperature. In cooler water, fish are less willing to chase a fast-moving target, so a slower, steadier retrieve can be more effective. In warmer water, a faster retrieve can trigger aggressive strikes.

When you are fishing deep diving crankbaits, it helps to pay attention to how the lure feels during the retrieve. You should be able to feel the vibration or wobble through the rod. If the lure feels dead or erratic, it might be fouled with weeds or spinning instead of tracking straight. A good crankbait rod, one with moderate action, will load up on the retrieve and help you keep in contact with the lure. That contact lets you know when the lure bumps bottom or ticks off a rock, which can be the moment a fish decides to eat.

## Reading the Water and Choosing the Right Crankbait

Not every deep-water situation calls for the same crankbait. If you are fishing a flat that drops into a channel, a crankbait that runs 10 to 12 feet deep might be perfect. But if you are working a steep bluff wall that plunges to 30 feet, you will need a lure that can get down quickly and stay in the strike zone. The lip shape and the angle of the bill determine how fast the lure dives. A bill that is set at a steep angle will dive fast but also have a tighter wiggle. A shallower angle gives a wider wobble but takes longer to reach depth.



There are times when a deep diver is not the best choice even in deep water. If the fish are suspended well off the bottom, a shallow- or medium-running crankbait can work better because it stays in their face longer. The key is to experiment. Start with a lure that runs in the mid-range of the water column and adjust from there. If you are not getting bites, try a different crankbait action or a different color. Sometimes a slight change in the wobble or profile is all it takes to turn a follow into a strike.

## Practical Tips for Fishing Deep Diving Crankbaits

One of the most effective ways to fish deep diving crankbaits is to cast them into the wind and retrieve them against the current, when possible. That helps the lure track straight and gives

you better control over the depth. When the wind is at your back, the lure can blow off course and lose contact with the bottom. Another tip is to use a snap or a split ring to change the action of the lure. A larger split ring can increase the wobble, while a smaller one tightens it up. That is a simple way to adjust the lure without buying a new one.

It is also worth paying attention to the line you use. Monofilament has more stretch than fluorocarbon or braid, which can help absorb shock when a fish hits and also lets the lure run a little shallower. Fluorocarbon sinks, so it can help a floating crankbait get down an extra foot or two. Braid has no stretch, which gives you more direct feel but can also pull the lure up slightly because of its smaller diameter. Experimenting with different lines can be as important as choosing the right lure.

Finally, remember that deep cranking is a physical technique. You will be reeling against the resistance of a deep-diving lure, sometimes for hours. A high-speed reel with a smooth drag makes a big difference. Take breaks and switch to a different rod or lure if your arm gets tired. The best technique is the one you can execute consistently throughout the day.



Fishing deep water with crankbaits is a skill that improves with time and attention. By understanding how lip shape, crankbait bill material, crankbait weight, and crankbait buoyancy all work together, you can select the right tool for the situation and present it in a way that fish find hard to resist. The next time you are on the water and the fish are holding deep, try a few different deep divers and vary your retrieve until something clicks. That is when the real fun begins.