# The Complete Guide To Hooks

**Understanding the best hook to use in certain situations is of paramount importance. The wrong one in the wrong situation can lead to lost fish, so a bit of knowledge can go a long way.**

**PART TWO**

**LEWIS READ** concludes his enthralling two-part feature, exposing myths about common carp hooks.

ANGLER FILE **Lewis Read**

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**OCCUPATION:** Marketing and product development
**UK PB:** 47lb 12oz
**SPONSORS:** Gardner Tackle and Carp Company

Right, in Part One I tried to set out a really solid basis for you, the consumer, to understand the really critical information related to the key specifications that generally govern hook design, strength and function.

In this second part I'm going to try and offer some more general guidance on what patterns to use and when. Rather than, say, use a beaked point for this or a Mugga for that, though, I think it would be way more interesting and thought provoking if we look at this subject in a broader sense – by looking at the factors that govern these decisions, as well as the key characteristics of individual hook patterns.

It's got to be much better to start to build an intrinsic understanding of hooks by relating information to the rigs that you favour. What are you trying to achieve with your rigs? Why would one pattern work better than another and how you can make the most out of the hook patterns you have confidence in by manipulating how they work in relation to 'the hooking mechanism'? A lot of these variables relate to the broader topics of the hook-link material and the nature of the lake bed (silt, gravel, sand, clay). To my mind, though, the key elements are the size and buoyancy of the hook bait you are using.

Plenty of articles have already been written in terms of the logic behind using small hook baits over small freebies, and vice versa, and I have no wish to repeat others' wisdom.

Just like rigs, there are trends that hooks follow. Whether one is driven by the other or they evolve in parallel is open to debate – but a hook that worked well in terms of catching carp 20 years ago should surely work just as well now, shouldn't it? The carp still feed in broadly the same way, don't they? Well yes and no – and this is where the confusion for many carpers, young and old, lies, in that a lot of opinions based on the best hook, line and rod are purely subjective and not based on any hard-and-fast rules because every individual angler's angling experiences, venues and approach vary slightly.

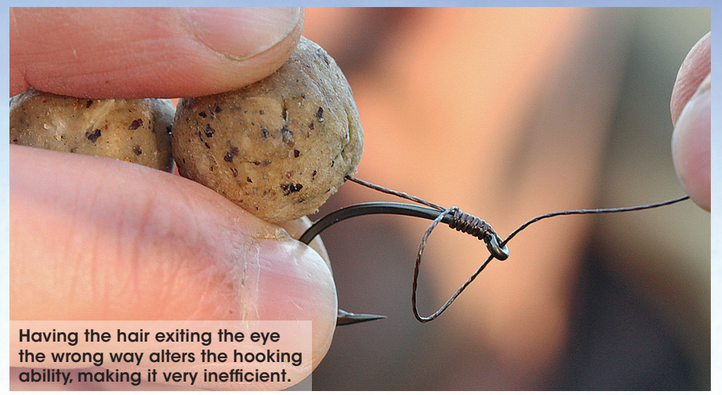
Let's take one rig for example – the chod – because the majority of people know what one of these is supposed to look like and that the finished hook section (as with a hinged stiff rig) is normally tied using a high-memory stiff monofilament, such as Trip Wire, that is formed into a curve.


Hook-link type definitely dictates hook choice.

But the key is understanding why you would use a chod-style hook, epitomised by a medium shank and out-turned eye. In the terms of the chod rig it really is the angle in which the relatively thick monofilament exits the hook eye – and the out-turned eye stops the working gape from being reduced (which could reduce the hooking potential because the point is masked slightly by the hook link). The inherent compromise of this type of hook with a straight point (like the Covert Chod hook) could be that if a chod rig hasn't been tied well with a sufficient curve, or uses an insufficiently stiff hook-link material, the initial manner in which the hook pulls into place may be affected (it may help to consult the diagrams in part one).

However, if we choose to go down the beaked-point chod-hook route the fine details of the rig can be a little bit cruder without ruining it but the potential for the hook to prick a tentatively feeding fish's mouth is also less. It's a fine line, but to my mind if you are competent at tying this style of rig a straight-point hook will catch more.

Is an out-turned eye really necessary at all, though? Well, if your hook has a straight eye the chances are that it will work with a high-memory hook link, simply because you can bend the hook link to position the hook where YOU want it! You are able to use a broader combination of hooks, excluding inturned eyes, than common doctrine would suggest.



Having the hair exiting the eye the wrong way alters the hooking ability, making it very inefficient.

This opens up possibilities of hook patterns with longer hook shanks so that the hook bait sits in a slightly different position in relation to the point, opening up avenues for experimentation with a framework of knowing what works and what doesn't in terms of how the hook should sit, in relation to the hook and the hook link.

How about one of the commonly used bottom-bait and balanced bottom-bait rigs? Is there a right or wrong? Other than having the hook link coming out the wrong side of the hook, or not taking care in attention to the key detail of the hair coming off the back of the shank (rather than the side), you've got to try pretty damned hard to tie a rig that is an absolute no-hoper! But how do you choose the right hook for your angling situation or your own take on this style of rig then?

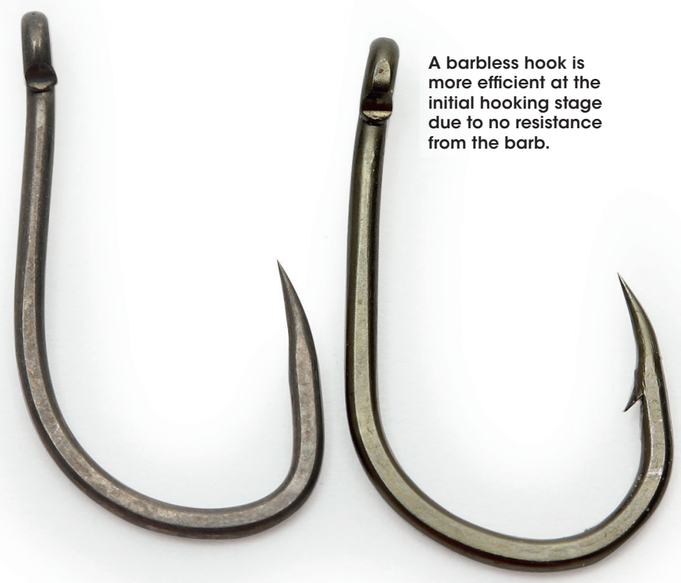
Well, the best advice is to tie up some rigs with a few hook options – taking into consideration the bait size as the primary factor in deciding the hook size, and using a hair that allows a little flexibility between hook and hook bait without going to either one extreme or the other.

A good starting point is that the hook bait touches the bend of the hook. I'd look at the choice between beaked point and straight point in the context of these rigs on the simple basis of the rig's length. For instance, the very short hook link that is commonly concertinaed into a solid PVA bag is naturally better suited to a beaked-point hook. The angle of pull from the outset is likely to be narrow on the short rig and, due to the small particles and pellets used, the fish will not be moving its head far, feeding virtually on the spot to hoover up the tasty morsels (hence the short rig is most effective).


Stiff hook-link materials work best with out-turned eyes.

A straight-pointed hook wouldn't be wrong in this scenario but there is a slightly higher chance that the ultra-short rig could cause the hook to penetrate poorly early on and even lead to a failure of the hook-hold when you tighten up.

With a longer, conventional-length hook link, the angle of pull will allow the straight-point hook to initially work in more smoothly. While a beaked point would still work in either situation, it's once again a case of assessing the slight increase in the hook's capacity to take an early hold against the manner in which it penetrates that is most important. In reality, it's only in the first moments that the hook has started to take hold



A barbless hook is more efficient at the initial hooking stage due to no resistance from the barb.

## Killer Kit Of The Pros


Instead of drastically changing the hook point, Lewis likes to give the hook a touch up with the Point Doctor. The rubberised block is abrasive, allowing the point to be sharpened, improving hooking efficiency.

A fish known as Fagburn. Lewis' hook choice was key to its capture.

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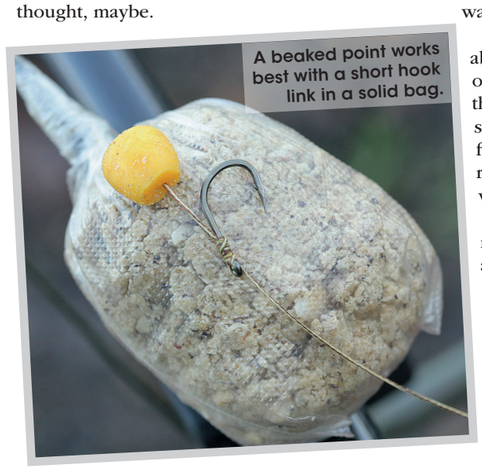
that this early stage of penetration is an issue. Once the hook is set securely and the point is fully embedded to the bend its job is done and you are unlikely to suffer a hook-pull.

These really do happen mostly before the hook has set fully. Talking of which, here is an extremely real benefit of barbless hooks – the lack of barb definitely reduces the force required and speeds up the way a hook goes all the way in. Food for thought, maybe.

In my brief for this article, the editor asked me to stipulate my assessment of what hook is best for what method, and while I have favourites for certain applications – like small Mugga hooks for zig rigs and hook aligners; Wide Gape Talon tips for solid bagging; Chod and Incizors for chods, hinged stiff and D rigs – beyond this the broader scope for my suggesting the right hook choice for every possible permutation is arguably the wrong way to go forward.



A beaked point works best with a short hook link in a solid bag.

Of course, I have an absolute undying belief that our (Gardner) hooks cover the vast majority of angling situations! Having caught fish on every pattern in the range I know that they all work.

Nevertheless, it is far more constructive to offer a fundamental insight into how the hooks work and hope that readers appreciate the frankness and the logic that has gone into developing and evolving our hook range over the decades that Gardner Tackle has been designing, producing and selling specialist carp tackle.

The truth of the matter is that with a little thought, as an angler YOU can easily make most hooks work for a specific rig requirement – whether that's a pop-up or bottom-bait boilie, a small bunch of maggots or a piece of fake Enterprise corn. If you understand how hooks work then it's very easy to achieve the end goal of tying rigs that hook and land carp. The ongoing 'tweaks' and adjustments – adding a piece of shrink tubing here, or a rig ring there – really are about allowing the hook to work to its full potential. As long as you don't inhibit the mechanical action that most hook designs naturally offer, you can play around to your heart's content!

One of the greatest insights that running a team of anglers has offered me is the realisation that there's a hugely diverse range of rigs that catch carp! Find a bait that works for you, with a hook and rig you favour and the rest is really straightforward. If you want to give the point a stroke with a file and then a buff with a Point Doctor do it! You can't be too fussy – and if it gives just a single per cent of confidence, then go for it. TC