

Light Tackle

Strip It!

Change lines fast.

By ARIEL CABRERA

Swapping out your lines regularly is an essential part of fishing anywhere the action is heavy—a single day of pulling snook out of the mangroves can wipe out a spool of mono, and even microfiber lines have to be switched out as the fibers begin to fray.

When you need to take some or all line off your fishing reels, few tools do it better and cheaper than a rechargeable drill and plastic water bottle. This combo can go anywhere in a boat bag for that offshore trip or even that fishing charter off Costa Rica.

And even if you're not about to discard your line, occasional line removal is essential to inspect your reel spools for corrosion. All lines retain moisture, and prolonged exposure to salt will inevitably corrode the spool.

To make a power line stripper you'll have to collect a couple of inexpensive hardware parts. A 3/8-inch or 1/2-inch round head bolt, approximately 3 1/2 inches long, with matching nut, two flat washers and a lock washer are needed to create the "bit" that will hold the arbor—a plastic water bottle—in place. Select an empty bottle that will accommodate your needs according to line capacity. For example, if you are changing lines on freshwater and inshore equipment, water bottles of the 16-ounce size will suffice. Bluewater equipment will require larger bottles to remove line in less time—the larger the bottle, the faster it removes line, and the more line it

holds. Try a few bottles and discover what works best for you.

The next step is to unscrew and remove the bottle cap. Using the appropriate-sized bit for the bolt chosen, drill a hole through the cap. Now put a washer on the bolt, just slightly smaller than the bottle cap so that it fits inside. Pass the bolt through the plastic bottle cap with the threaded shaft facing outwards. Make sure the bolt is straight, as any bent or gnarly shafts will cause a lot of wobble in the power winding process we'll look at later. The final step is to add a second flat washer plus a lock washer on the outside, then tighten the nut on the shaft, securing it to the bottle cap. The bolt now protrudes several inches from the cap, and will provide you with a "bit" to fit into your drill. Place the bottle cap and bolt assembly back on the bottle and tighten it securely. Add a little Loctite or other glue to make sure the cap stays put.

Attach the plastic bottle to your cordless power drill as you would any drill driver bit or accessory, by sliding the bolt into the chuckhole and tightening it into place. That's it; your "invention" is ready to go.

The following sequential steps and tips are suggested to help you safely remove line:

1. Remove the line from the guides.
2. Place the rod in a vertical rod holder; this frees both your hands to control the drill and feed the line.
3. Open reel bail.
4. Make a few turns of line around the plastic bottle and secure with a knot.
5. Use a glove to hold the reel while depressing the drill trigger. Start slow and then build up speed so you don't get a backlash.
6. Layer the line evenly on bottle as it comes off reel, not allowing it to build up on one location.
7. Stop the drill before emptying the reel. Slow down gradually so you don't get an over-run.



PowerWasher lets you wash and dry salty line.

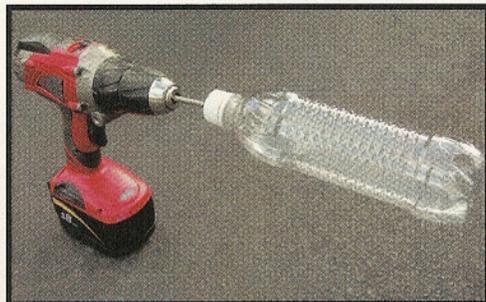
Cut the line. If you let it hit the end at speed, you could have problems.

Inspect your spool and make sure there is no visible "caking" caused by salt residue, or any corrosion damage from line wicking and moisture. Clean the spool and apply a lubricant compatible with your line.

You'll probably just replace mono, but with microfiber, you may want to clean it and re-install. Braided lines are durable (and expensive), so you won't necessarily toss them with every reel cleanup. A bath using a commercial cleaner/conditioner like Line & Lure Conditioner (www.lineandlure.com) will make it supple for long casts and also provides anticorrosion protection for the spool, reportedly without adding a fish-repelling oil scent. There are other similar products suitable for this job. The stuff just sprays on. Alternatively, you can dip the whole bottle/line into a bucket of warm, soapy water to help get the salt out. You'll want to let it dry in the sun for an afternoon before re-installing if you go this route.

Refilling your fishing spool will be easy with fresh line from a brand new spool. If you restock using the old line you removed and cleaned, take care to avoid tangles and line slipping off the bottle; it's do-able so long as you keep tension on the line. Or, you can go the easy route and buy a commercial rig like the PowerWasher (www.swiftymfg.com), which looks something like the arbor of a fly reel, and holds the line securely and tangle-free while you wash it and then respool; pricing begins at around \$15.

If you're not a McGyver type, you can also buy a commercial line stripper like the battery-powered job from Berkley—they're about \$10, but are designed only for line you're going to get rid of; www.berkley-fishing.com.



Household items make this line maintenance tool.