

Cuban Yo-Yo Fishing



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<http://sail-delmarva.blogspot.com/2010/04/yo-yo-fishing.html>

If you hail from south Florida or the Caribbean, you should already know this one; the Cuban yo-yo. In its basic form, it is fishing reduced to its origins; hand lining. Popular in Cuba, it has been brought to south Florida and is quite enjoyable for its sheer simplicity. Toss a few Yo-Yos in a bucket and you can catch some fish. Perfect for a crowded cruising boat or a small day-sailer. Rigged as a simple trolling set-up, catching game fish under sail couldn't be simpler.

The Yo-Yo. There are 2 sizes: the 6-inch inside diameter size is best for hand lining and comes loaded with 300 feet of 40-pound test line, a 1-ounce sinker, and a hook; the 8-inch inside diameter size is typically sold empty and is well suited to the trolling set-up I will describe below. Both are simple spools designed with simple features that make a big difference:

- Wide, deep, and smooth, for easy line pay-out and secure storage.
- Lower forward lip for better line pay-out.
- Finger grip inside spool for secure grip while casting or winding in a big fish.

Any Florida bait-and-tackle store will have these for a 3 to 5 dollars.

Handlining. Just bait up and lower over the side. To cast, let out about 3 feet of line, pinch the line against the side with your thumb, and whirl the bait and sinker over your head like a slingshot. Understandably, casting is a bad idea on the deck of a sailboat, but solo in a tender or on the beach it works well. To reel in, simply wind the line back on the spool. If you hope to fight a large fish--and these can mange some big fish--sailing gloves are a good idea, though I almost always forget. You don't actually fight the fish with your hands--you use the reel. We keep two in our tender all summer. We loved "The Old Man and the Sea" and this takes us there. [Yo-yo demonstration](#)

A source for yo yos: [Bass Pro Shops](#)
(Only 6-inch yo-yos. They do not stock yo-yos in the stores.)

Another source: [Palm Bay Bait and Tackle](#)

And yet another source: <http://www.stingraytackle.com/9incubanreelyoyo.aspx>
(I just bought a few 9-inch yo-yos from these folks (March 2011) since I'm not traveling

to Florida soon.)

A source for wooden yo-yos, if you must be completely traditional:

<http://www.fishingyoyo.com/about-us.html>

A source for flat line clips: [Bass Pro Shops](#)

(Flat line clips can also be made from tarp clips for a fraction of the price; available from Home Depot or most hardware stores, simply line the teeth with a layer of athletic tape. [tarp clips](#))

Trolling. Though not the original purpose of the yo-yo, this is where they shine. Although I do carry trolling rods, the yo-yos catch most of our fish, because they are fast to rig and consequently, we use them more often. They are compact, quick to rig because the line, leader, and lure can be stored assembled, and tangle-free.



- Load the yo-yo with 150 to 200 feet of 60- to 100-pound test line. Attach the line to the yo-yo with a slip knot with a fishermans knot or improved clinch knot.
- Add a trolling sinker, 2-6 ounces, to suit typical depths and speed. Some fish (mahi-mahi and other bluewater fish) prefer surface lures that incorporate all the weight that is needed.
- Add a 20 foot leader, to separate the lure from the sinker.
- Pick a lure. I like 6- to 8-inch Rapella diving minnows for bluefish and striped bass. I also use bunker spoons and hose eels. However, the best bet is to match what the local charter boats rig. Rubber fish, feather lures, and squid-types are popular for bluewater game fish.
- Let out all of the line at a suitable speed; 3-4 knots for striped bass, 4-6 knots for blues, mackerel, and bluewater game fish, though these are just guidelines.
- Attach the yo-yo to the stern rail with a sling and carabiner. Some suggest a bungee cord attachment, to help absorb the strike of a big fish. They haven't done the math; the stretch inherent in the 200 feet of line you have out is more than enough--it will easily stretch 10-20 feet with a big fish--and any difference is in the head. I've had a 36-inch rockfish strike while I had the yo-yo in my hand, adjusting something, and the strike was nothing more than a steady pull. I've only lost a few lures, but I believe they were crab pot snags, not big fish. I've caught rockfish up to 39 inches with little strain on the gear.
- Clip the line about 2 feet out to a **flat line clip** (a loop of line will give a cleaner release), removing the tension from the yo-yo and allowing it to hang down; in this way, you can see a hit. The pictures should make this clear: the top shows a

yo-yo with a fish on, while the bottom is set with the line clipped to the trolling release (flat line clip).



The yo-yos are mounted center, port, and starboard, and 2 more on 7-foot outriggers (bamboo poles hidden behind the mainsheet). We tried a variety of lures. For us, large Rapella diving plugs work for rockfish, and yellow hose eels for blues. But I try other thing occasionally, since someone always swears by something different.

Our typical trolling set-up includes 3 yo-yos--one each corner and a trolling rod in the center, though the center line seldom hits. Sometimes we set 5--2 more on outriggers. But when not purposefully fishing, we may just set a single yo-yo on a corner railing. Our catamaran has a 16-foot beam and this gives adequate line separation; with a narrower transom, only two lines should be set. They it store in a cockpit locker and can be set in a minute.



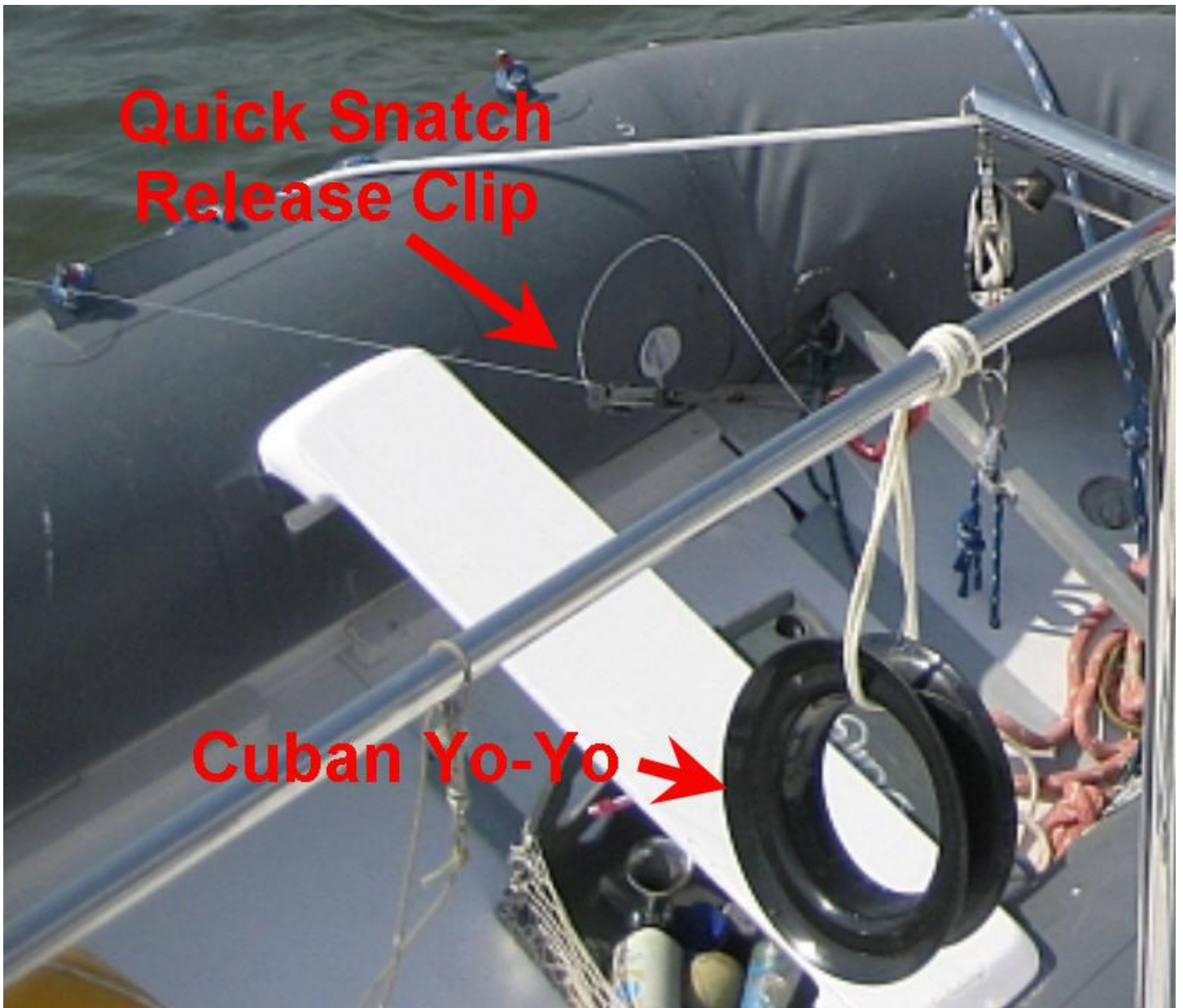
Where to fish? That is the trick, and local knowledge is best. But for a start, channel edges and off the beach in about 25-40 feet of water are good places to start.

It works!

**Quick Snatch
Release Clip**



Cuban Yo-Yo







Cuban Yo Yo hand line for Trolling.

- 1) They are compact,
- 2) Quick to rig because the line, leader, and lure can be stored assembled, and tangle-free.
- 3) Load the yo-yo with 150 to 200 feet of 60- to 100-pound test line. Attach the line to the yo-yo with a slip knot with a fishermans knot or improved clinch knot.
- 4) Add a trolling sinker, 2-6 ounces, to suit typical depths and speed. Some fish (mahi-mahi and other bluewater fish) prefer surface lures that incorporate all the weight that is needed.
- 5) Add a 20 foot leader, to separate the lure from the sinker.
- 6) Pick a lure or cedar plug
- 7) Let out all of the line at a suitable speed; 3-4 knots for striped bass, 4-6 knots for blues, mackerel, and bluewater game fish
- 8) Attach the yo-yo to the stern rail with a sling and carabineer or just a strap. The stretch inherent in the 200 feet of line will easily stretch 10-20 feet with a big fish
- 9) Clip the line about 2 feet out to a trolling release which is a Quick Snatch Release Clip (a loop of line will give a cleaner release), removing the tension from the yo-yo and allowing it to hang down. Once hanging a hit will pull the Cuban yo yo up and straight out to horizontal.
- 10) Have some gloves handy to hand line your fish in.