

SEASONAL WALLEYE PLAYBOOK

12 months of walleye tactics for Midwest lakes

Where to fish, what to throw, and when to be there — month by month. Based on real MN, WI, and ND DNR data from 11,842+ Midwest lakes.

walleyewranglers.com

Get personalized, lake-specific strategies powered by AI + real DNR data

How to Use This Playbook

Each month covers the same five things: where the fish are, how to catch them, what species are active, the best time window, and one pro tip that can make your trip. These patterns are based on typical Midwest conditions — your specific lake may vary.

For lake-specific depth, species, and stocking data, use the AI at walleyewranglers.com. It pulls live DNR data for 11,842+ lakes — just name your lake and ask.

January — Ice Fishing

Mid-winter walleye are deep and slow. Target main-lake structure in 20-30 ft.

Where to Fish

- Main-lake humps and points in 20-30 ft
- Deep mud flats adjacent to structure
- Near the base of steep drop-offs

How to Catch Them

- Vertical jig with 1/4 oz glow jig tipped with minnow head
- Slow lift-and-hold cadence - less is more
- Dead stick with live minnow on tip-up as second line

Quick Facts

Target species: Walleye, Perch (bonus in 15-20 ft shallower)

Best time: Sunset bite window (last 45 min of daylight)

Pro Tip: *Drill extra holes during the day so you're not spooking fish at prime time.*

February — Late Ice

Walleye stage near creek mouths and rocky points as days lengthen.

Where to Fish

- Creek mouths and inflows (current brings oxygen)
- Rocky points in 15-25 ft
- Narrows between lake basins

How to Catch Them

- Jigging Rapala or Slab Rap in glow patterns
- Tip-ups with medium sucker minnows for pike
- Increase jig cadence slightly - fish are more aggressive than January

Quick Facts

Target species: Walleye, Pike, Perch

Best time: Sunset is the magic hour - set up 30 min before dark

Pro Tip: February full moons produce some of the best ice fishing bites of the year.

March — Ice-Out

Ice deteriorating. Walleye push shallow near spawning gravel. Safety first.

Where to Fish

- Near inflows and rocky shorelines in 4-10 ft
- Gravel/rubble spawning areas
- Dark-bottom bays that warm first

How to Catch Them

- Small jigs (1/8 oz) tipped with minnow in shallow water
- If open water: cast jigs along rocky shorelines
- Slow retrieve - water is still cold

Quick Facts

Target species: Walleye (pre-spawn), Pike (spawning in marshes)

Best time: Afternoon when sun warms shallows

Pro Tip: Check ice thickness every 50 yards. If you punch through slush, get off.

April — Post-Spawn

Post-spawn walleye scatter along rocky shorelines. Aggressive feeding window.

Where to Fish

- Rocky shorelines and riprap in 6-12 ft
- Wind-blown points (wind pushes baitfish to the bank)
- Adjacent to spawning areas - they don't go far

How to Catch Them

- 1/4 oz jig tipped with minnow, fan-cast rocky shorelines
- Shallow-running crankbaits (Shad Rap #5) in 4-8 ft
- Pitch to rocks and slow-roll back

Quick Facts

Target species: Walleye (hungry post-spawn), Crappie (moving shallow)

Best time: All day - post-spawn walleye feed aggressively in daylight

Pro Tip: *This is the most aggressive walleye bite of the year. If you only fish one month, fish April.*

May — Prime Time

Water temps climbing. Walleye and bass both active in shallows. Post-spawn feeding frenzy.

Where to Fish

- Emerging weed edges in 8-12 ft
- Sand-to-rock transitions
- Points with green weed growth

How to Catch Them

- Pull crankbaits along new weed edges
- Jig and minnow on wind-blown structure
- Slip bobber with leech over emerging weeds

Quick Facts

Target species: Walleye, Bass (pre-spawn/spawn), Crappie (brush piles 8-12 ft)

Best time: Dawn and dusk, but midday bite can be strong too

Pro Tip: *Bass are on beds and easy to sight-fish, but consider catch and release during spawn.*

June — Transition

Bass spawn wrapping up. Walleye transitioning to summer spots on weed edges.

Where to Fish

- Weed edges where green meets sand/mud
- Sand-to-rock transitions at 10-18 ft
- Cabbage weed flats

How to Catch Them

- Crawler harness trolled at 1.0-1.5 mph along weed edges
- Topwater for bass at dawn (buzzbaits, poppers)
- Lindy rig with leech on bottom transitions

Quick Facts

Target species: Walleye, Bass (post-spawn and hungry), Bluegill (beds)

Best time: Low-light: first/last hour of daylight

Pro Tip: June is when walleye and bass overlap in the same areas. Target both.

July — Deep Summer

Walleye go deep during the day. Find the thermocline (18-28 ft) and work structure.

Where to Fish

- Main-lake structure near the thermocline (18-28 ft)
- Deep weed edges where weeds stop growing
- Rocky humps and sunken islands

How to Catch Them

- Trolling crankbaits (Berkley Flicker Minnow) at thermocline depth
- Bottom bouncers with crawler harness
- Vertical jigging over deep structure at dawn

Quick Facts

Target species: Walleye (deep), Bass (weed edges and shade), Panfish (docks and weeds)

Best time: First light is king. Fish before 8 AM or after 8 PM.

Pro Tip: Use your electronics to find the thermocline. Walleye will be within 5 ft of it.

August — Dog Days

Dog days - early mornings or bust. Target deep points and humps.

Where to Fish

- Deep points and humps in 20-30 ft
- Mud flats where walleye feed on mayfly hatches
- Current areas (river inflows, narrows)

How to Catch Them

- Crawler harness is deadly this month - slow-troll at 0.8-1.2 mph
- Lindy rig with jumbo leech on mud flats
- Jig and minnow vertical on deep structure

Quick Facts

Target species: Walleye, Perch (starting to school up)

Best time: First light (5-8 AM). Don't bother midday unless it's cloudy/windy.

Pro Tip: If you find a mayfly hatch on a mud flat, anchor up. Walleye will be there.

September — Fall Turnover

Fall turnover scatters fish. Key on wind-blown shorelines and rocky points.

Where to Fish

- Wind-blown shorelines and rocky points
- Transition areas where shallow meets deep
- Weed edges that haven't died yet

How to Catch Them

- Crankbaits at medium depth - cover water fast
- Jig and minnow on wind-blown structure
- Blade baits ripped off bottom on deep breaks

Quick Facts

Target species: Walleye (scattered), Pike (starting fall feed), Bass

Best time: All day during turnover - fish are on the move

Pro Tip: Find the wind. During turnover, wind-blown shorelines concentrate baitfish and predators.

October — Trophy Season

Walleye feeding hard before winter. This is the best month for big fish.

Where to Fish

- Deep structure: main-lake points and humps in 20-35 ft
- Rock/gravel transitions near deep water
- River channel edges in reservoirs

How to Catch Them

- Jig and minnow (large fatheads or shiners) slow-hopped on bottom
- Blade baits vertically jigged over structure
- Trolling deep-diving crankbaits along break lines

Quick Facts

Target species: Walleye (peak weight), Pike (aggressive), Muskie

Best time: Midday can be strong in October - sun warms deep structure

Pro Tip: Use bigger bait in October. Trophy walleye want a meal, not a snack.

November — Cold Water

Cold water means slow presentations win. Walleye hug bottom near structure.

Where to Fish

- Deep breaks and structure in 25-40 ft
- Near fall feeding areas (they haven't moved far)
- Rocky points with adjacent deep water

How to Catch Them

- Slow-roll a jig with large minnow right on the bottom
- Vertical jigging with blade bait - subtle lifts
- Dead-stick approach: let the bait sit for 10-15 seconds between lifts

Quick Facts

Target species: Walleye, Pike (cruise shallow on warm days)

Best time: Midday (warmest water temp of the day)

Pro Tip: Patience wins in November. Slow down your presentation by 50% from what feels natural.

December — First Ice

First-ice walleye hang near fall feeding areas in 8-15 ft. Check ice thickness.

Where to Fish

- Near fall feeding areas: points and humps in 8-15 ft
- Shallow weed flats for panfish (8-12 ft)
- Rocky structure near spawning areas

How to Catch Them

- Small jigs (1/8 oz) tipped with minnow or wax worm
- Jigging Rapala in glow UV patterns
- Tip-up with medium shiner for walleye/pike

Quick Facts

Target species: Walleye, Perch, Crappie, Pike

Best time: First-ice = all day bite. Fish move constantly.

Pro Tip: *First ice is the most dangerous ice. 4 inches minimum for walking, check every outing.*

Want Lake-Specific Data?

This playbook gives you the seasonal patterns. The AI gives you the exact lake data — depth, species, stocking records, and a strategy built for YOUR lake, YOUR conditions, right now.

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