

# GEAR

TOP-SHELF QUALITY AT BARGAIN-BIN PRICES DEFINES THIS YEAR'S CROP OF FISHING TACKLE  
BY TODD KUHN



**TIP**  
When cleaning your reels, rinse them by gently trickling water over them. Spraying them with high pressure forces water inside, affecting performance over time.

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With the economy swirling in an abyss for the past half decade, new fishing equipment is probably low on your list of priority purchases right now. On the bright side, spring is near and the best antidote for financial doom and gloom is to forget it all and go fishing. Lucky for us, tackle manufacturers have taken notice of the downturn in spending, and much of the new tackle is priced with our national belt-tightening in mind.

This year's crop of rods and reels is rich with features, too. High-end amenities found previously on premier models are now standard on lower-priced offerings, and pricing has plummeted across the tackle landscape. The average price of the reels in last year's test was \$250; in 2012 the average cost is \$158. The average price of the rods we tested last year was \$251. That figure has dropped to \$146 in 2012.

We spent five days last October torture-testing these newly affordable rods and reels against big redfish and largemouths in the marshes of southern Louisiana. Here's our take on the best new tackle of 2012.







