

## Ask Professor Flounder

Capt. Tommy Thompson

GOFC Newsletter

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Q: What about chart and map programs for my computer? I'd like one that's easy to use and doesn't take too much computer knowledge to run.

A: It seems to me that simple chart programs just give simple answers and complicated ones give vast amounts of information.

My personal favorite is Maptech's *Chart Navigator* program. It's great, and does tricks like show nautical charts side-by-side with aerial photos or USGS topographic quad maps. It also will allow you to manually enter GPS waypoints on the screen or to download them from your GPS unit. You can also upload to GPS units, plot courses, determine distances and check tides at most locations. I like the ability to print small letter-size charts to carry in the boat when I'm fishing a specific area. This is a program that is very complicated and takes lots of computing horsepower (and computer skills) to master.

Another interesting program, written by UF student Steven Richardson is *SkyFishing*. It's a real simple program that links a large index map to infrared high-altitude aerial photos that line up to the USGS quad maps. It's a near-coastal product (Steven got the idea for the program talking with some *air boaters*!) but is really nice to use if you're looking closely at creek mouths and oyster and barrier bars. This is a nice, simple program that will be of value to the inshore angler with limited computer knowledge.

*Chart Navigator* is available from West Marine. Information can be found online at [www.maptech.com](http://www.maptech.com). If you're interested in *SkyFishing*, Judy at The Tackle Box has a demonstration version and can take orders.

Q: Can you give me a brief lesson on how to use my marine radio?

A: Books have been written on the subject, but here's a brief answer:

Basically, if you have a marine (VHF, it's called) on board your vessel, you are required to keep it on and to monitor Channel 16 while you're afloat. That's the listening and hailing channel. If you want to talk to someone, you call him on 16, and after making contact, have him switch to an open channel, like 68 or 73. To call someone, repeat the name of his vessel three times ("Bite Me, Bite Me, Bite Me...") and then identify your vessel ("...this is Photo Opportunity"). Don't do a Burt Reynolds' imitation and say "Breaker One-Six" or any of that silly CB nonsense! Identify yourself and the other boat as soon as you change channels, and then have your conversation. If you end a sentence and are expecting an answer, say 'over'. If you're ending the conversation, say something to the effect that you're 'standing by' on that channel or that you're 'clear of channel X' and moving to another one. Theoretically, you should move back to Channel 16, but most of us just monitor 68 or 9.

Another good thing to remember when communicating by VHF is to speak clearly and slowly. Avoid slang (and cursing) and use letter names (Alpha, Bravo, Charlie...) if necessary. If you understand a transmission, it's OK to say 'roger' and don't hesitate to ask someone to 'please repeat' the transmission.

Other channels are also used. The Coast Guard reserves 22A for its working channel. Usually Channel 9 is for bridge tenders, but it's also the public channel up around Steinhatchee (where there aren't many

drawbridges!). Some guides use Channel 73 for communicating with each other and the GOFC uses Channel 68 for communications during tournaments and get-togethers.

Q: I notice that you get lots of photos published in *Big Bend Angler*. How do I submit photos and in what format?

A: I'm glad you're interested. I really don't want the magazine to become an 'infomercial' for Tommy Thompson, but it seems I've been sending in the right kind of photos.

First of all, your pictures need to be clear and sharp and you need to take special care to get close to your subject. You want the fish to be a big part of the image, but be careful not to block the fisherman's face with it. I also try to get the subject in good light, with the Sun to my back, or I use flash. If you're in doubt, try a shot with flash and one without.

Once you have that 'photo of a lifetime', you need to send it to Charlie Courtney, our Editor. Be sure to get everyone's name and be sure to tell him where you caught the fish (GPS numbers are good, if it's a big grouper! —just kidding!), the tackle, bait and any particulars as to size and species. You can submit the photo in a number of ways, but we prefer either a very good quality 4x6" print (send by mail) or the best quality digital image (send by attaching to an email) your camera can make. A 3+-megapixel image of 'fine' quality is suitable for the cover. If it's 'cover' material and you shot film, we might want to borrow your negative to scan to a large file size. If necessary, we'll do the conversion to black-and-white for the inside shots.

Charlie also needs good fishing-related stories. If you have an idea, contact him for guidelines.

Q: I'm confused about what pound-test line to use for redfish and trout on the flats. I saw some bass fisherman at Cedar Key the other day and they were using 17# test Stren on some of their spinning rods and 20# Power Pro on others. That sounds heavy.

A: I guess they figured they were going to have to 'horse' some reds out of those lily pads over near Snake Key!

Folks need to give the fish a chance. I see no reason that light spinning tackle (Shimano 2000 and 4000 size, for example) be rigged with anything heavier than 10# mono or braided line. You can actually use your drag to fight the fish rather than jerking his eyeballs out. I use 6# mono when I'm fishing the flats, but do shift to the tougher 10# braided (Power Pro or FINS) when I'm near the oysters. If I'm using my baitcasters, I do use the heavier 17# and 20# lines. I only do so because it loads better and doesn't get buried in the spool. I do use 15# test monofilament line on my big spinning reels (Shimano Baitrunners) when I'm tarpon fishing—I just use lots of it!

And speaking of line lengths, I don't think you really need much over 100 yards of line when fishing inshore, particularly for trout and reds. I figure if a fish can spool me, he deserves to get away!

Remember, FISHING IS A SPORT!

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