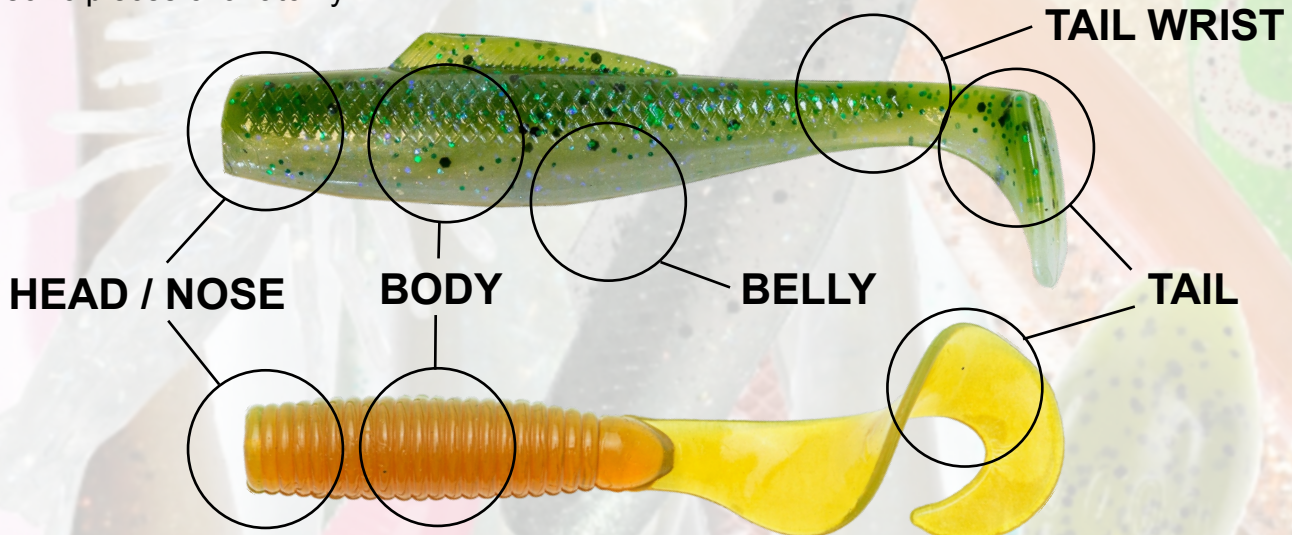


Chapter 3 - Soft Plastics Anatomy



Although there are many different styles of soft plastics, including curl tails, paddle tails, jerkbaits, frogs and crustaceans, there are many common terms that refer to the anatomy of a soft plastic. These are terms that you will see commonly used in fishing videos and articles about soft plastics and their associated rigging, fishing and even customising them. Let's start with a few basics and then move into more specific features of soft plastics and the function served by these more specific pieces of anatomy.



Head / Nose - The head of the plastic is often flat on the end so that the jighead sits flush against the plastic, looking natural and minimising water pressure that may want to push the plastic back down the hook. A standard jighead is threaded in through the centre of the head and down through the centre of the body.

Body - The body of the plastic is where a standard jighead hook passes through and exits when rigging. The jighead hook is generally housed in the body, leaving the tail free to produce maximum action.

Belly - Many 'grub' style plastics are cylindrical and in turn don't have a 'belly' as such, while the belly is often referred to when discussing paddle tail, jerkbait and crustacean style plastics.

Tail - The shape and size of the tail of the plastic will often dictate its action, meaning different plastics have different actions that may make them preferable for fishing different depths, speeds and when targeting different species. ZMan's 10X Tough, super-soft and flexible ElaZtech construction has revolutionised the actions that can be achieved in many plastics that may have been rendered stiff and lifeless with traditional plastic materials.

Tail Wrist - The tail wrist joins the body to the tail of the plastic and in the past this was often trimmed thinner to try and increase the action of the plastic, while in turn weakening the connection. Again the flexibility and strength of the ZMan plastics means that no trimming is required and the plastics will have a lively tail action and body roll straight out of the packet.



We will look at the different types of tails in more detail in future chapters, however here's a quick look at the different types of tails and a couple of associated benefits.

Curl Tails - Curl tails are an excellent option for beginners, while also being deadly in the hands of experienced anglers. The reason for this is that curl tails have loads of action when sinking and when being retrieved, while also moving with the water when at rest on the bottom. This means they are effectively fishing at all times and they are also extremely effective when a slow presentation or little movement is required.



Paddle Tails - Another popular presentation, paddle tails again have plenty of action and the super-soft and flexible ZMan plastics will also 'swim' on the sink. A great baitfish imitation that can be retrieved at a wide range of speeds to target a wide range of species.



Jerkbaits - Jerkbait profile plastics have a single straight tail or forked tail and this means they have very little built-in action. The reason for this is that this tail creates little drag in the water, allowing it to sink quicker, making it a proven performer in deeper water and especially offshore applications. The action is imparted by the angler, using the rod tip to twitch and hop the plastic.



Outside of these three main categories of soft plastics there are also crustaceans, frogs, creature baits and more. Each of these categories of plastics have other features that create their actions, such as claws, legs, antennae and feet. Here's a few examples.



Crustaceans - There are a range of crustacean plastics, such as ZMan CrusteaZ and Turbo CrawZ, that achieve their action via their claws. Their claws are designed much like curl tails to ripple, twist and flap through the water in turn attracting predators. They are generally rigged from the tail and with ZMan being bouyant the claws will float up in a natural defensive pose when at rest on the bottom.



Another style of crustacean is the shrimp or prawn, such as the ZMan EZ ShrimpZ. Prawn profiles are generally rigged from the head and their action is in the form of a natural and realistic flick and glide, created by their fan tail. They also often feature legs and feelers for added realism and water movement.



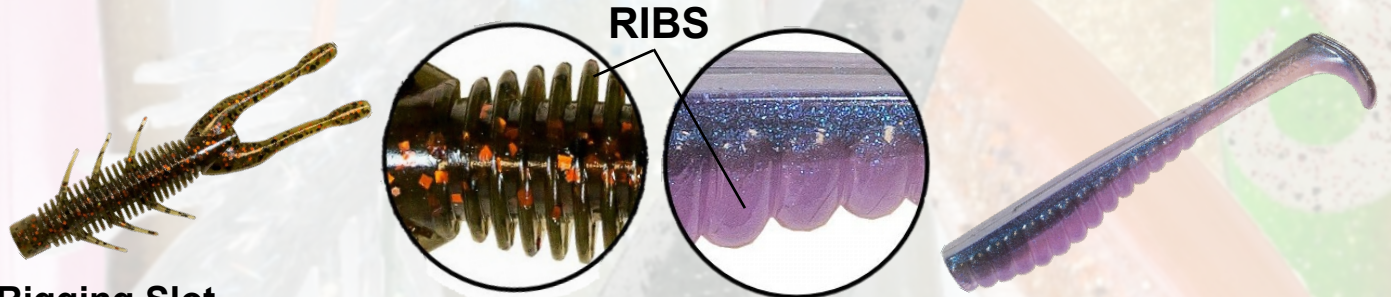
Frogs are extremely effective fished on the surface to create noise, movement and a bobble trail as they swim across the surface, weed and lilies. They can also be pulsed sub-surface to represent a frog kicking and pausing as it swims below the surface. Their action is achieved via their paddle feet that catch the water as they are retrieved.



Creature Baits often feature antennae, legs, feelers and other features that are designed to represent a range of natural, moving strike triggers that fish recognise, be it insects, crustaceans, or other aquatic or terrestrial life. These often provide subtle actions and movements that lend themselves to being fished slower. They are especially effective on hard to tempt species and pressured waterways.

Ribs

Some models of soft plastic feature 'ribs' which are basically a series of lumps or bands around the body of the plastic that are designed to create additional water movement and vibration, in turn attracting predators. Ribs can add to the realistic look and feel of the plastic, while also assisting with the retention of added scents. Definitely not an essential feature on a soft plastic, however it is a feature that will be referenced in articles and videos.



Rigging Slot

Some models of soft plastics will feature a slot in the belly section that is generally referred to as a belly slot or rigging slot. This slot is designed for weedless rigging, ensuring there is less resistance on the plastic when a fish strikes, allowing the plastic to slide easier and clear the hook point for a more effective hook set. This slot also makes rigging a standard jighead quicker and simpler as there is no need to thread the hook through the belly of the plastic. Simply thread the jighead in through the head / nose of the plastic and into the rigging slot, push the plastic onto the grub keeper, twist the plastic around so that the hook point can be pushed out through the back / top of the plastic, measure the final jighead position to ensure the plastic will be straight and push the hook through the back. The rigging slot is also an ideal spot for adding a squirt of Pro-Cure Super Gel scent to attract fish and trigger strikes.



Hook Pocket

Located on the top / back of the plastic when rigging, a hook pocket is effectively another rigging slot, however this time it is designed to house the point and barb of the hook when weedless rigging. This increases the resistance to fouling and snagging by further concealing the hook point, while again reducing the resistance to clearing the hook when a fish strikes. If your plastic doesn't have a hook pocket on the top you can just pull the barb and hook point down firmly onto the back of the plastic when weedless rigging or even bury the hook point slightly into the back of the plastic.

