

# Uncle Stan's Quick Guide To The The Zebco 33 Fishing Reel



The Zebco 33 is a great **freshwater reel** for beginners and experienced anglers alike. There have been times I had a young scout come up to me and say, “Uncle Stan, my reel won’t work”. I bet you have too!

Well, here are a few tips on how to keep those times to a minimum.

Yours in Scouting and FISH ON!

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(Prepared by the BSA National Fishing Team)

## Before Your Scouts Start Fishing

A little preventive maintenance and giving some instruction to Scouts, leaders, and parents alike, can go a long way to preventing problems and keeping your Scouts fishing.

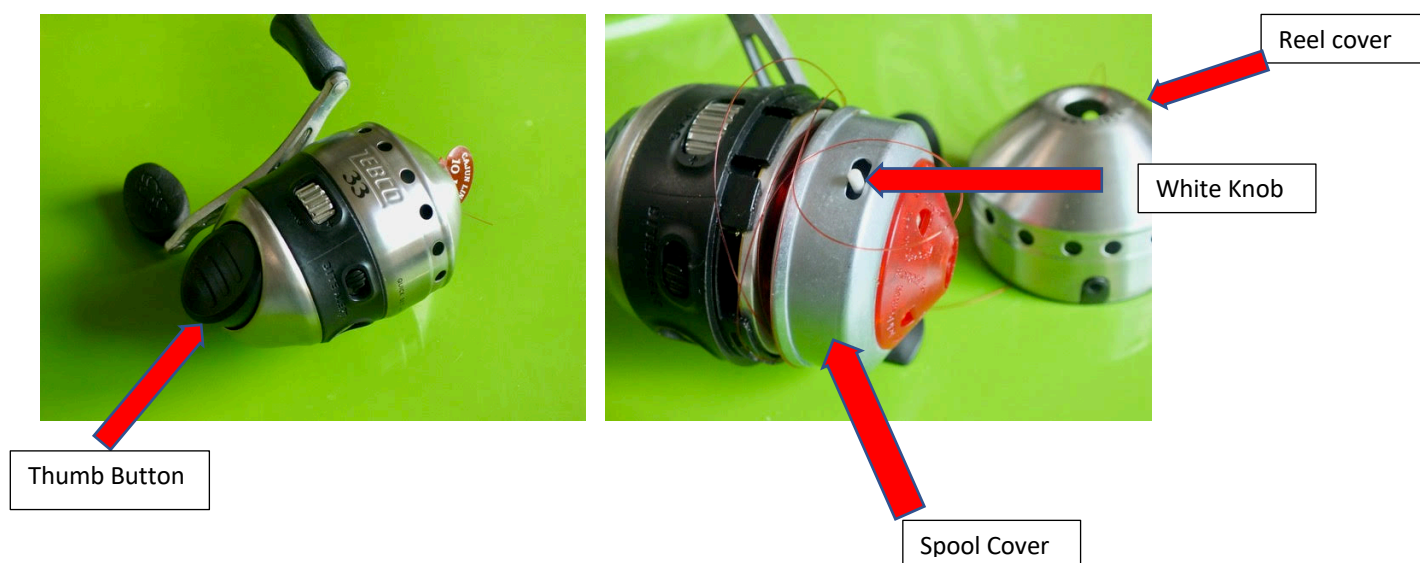
### Check the reels

- Are they working?
- Do they need to be cleaned?
- Do they need a little drop of oil or dab of grease?
- What is the condition of the line?
  - Is there enough?
  - Does it need to be cleaned?
  - Is it nicked? Does it need to be replaced?
  - Don't over fill the spool with line.

### How does the reel work?

When you push the thumb button in, there is a little white or silver knob that slips back into the hole allowing you to cast the line out. When you turn the reel handle the little knob pops up, catching the line as shown in the picture, allowing you to reel in the line.

Make sure you tell your Scouts to keep tension on the line when they are reeling it in. Otherwise, the loose line will create a “birds nest” under the spool cover.



### Adjust the Drag setting on the reel.

If the drag is too loose, the reel will not retrieve line when the handle is turned.



### Check the “Bite Alert”.

That’s the little switch that allows the handle to turn backwards or locks it so the handle only turns to retrieve line. Sometimes scouts turn the reel handle backwards and this causes a backlash inside the reel, and everything locks up.



**Put the “Bite Alert” switch** in a position where you can only turn the reel handle in one direction.

**Tape or glue the drag and Bite Alert in place.** Take a piece of black electrical tape and cover both the Drag and the Bite Alert so the kids (and adults) cannot play with it. I have also heard that a drop of glue from a Hot Glue Gun on the “Bite Alert” switch works too.

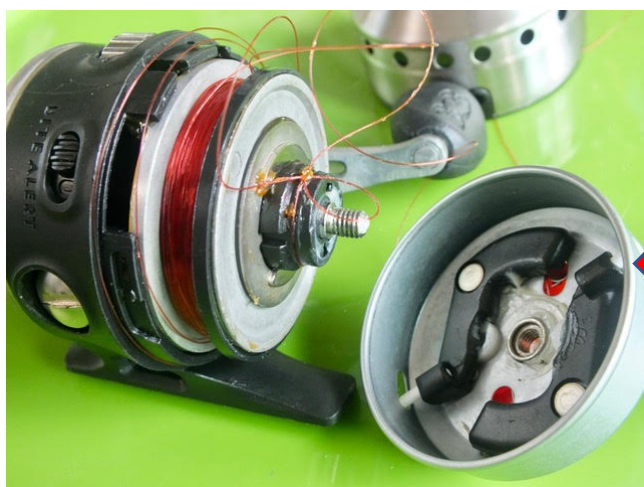
## What A Mess! How Do Things Get So Tangled?

Here are some quick fixes.

### Removing the reel cover and removing the spool line cover.

To remove the reel cover, just give it a slight counterclockwise twist, it pulls right off).

Now remove the metal spool line covering. It unscrews to the left. You may have to hold the reel handle as you unscrew this cover.



Spool Line Cover

(Note: This is easy to do with the Zebco 33, but for some reels, like the one shown below, you may need to hold on to the shaft with a vise grip. (Be careful not to bend the shaft.)

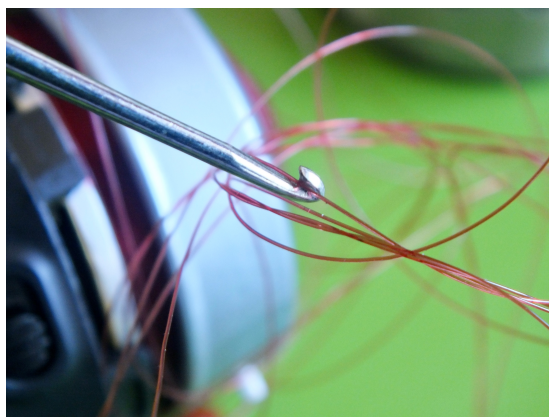
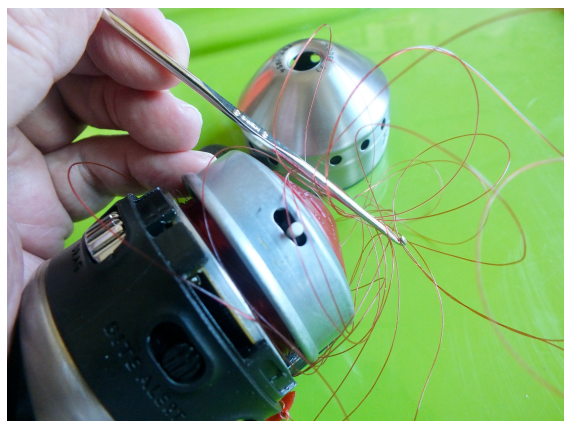


Reel Shaft



**Here are some examples of how to use a crochet hook to untangle a “birds nest”.**

Try using a crochet hook to untangle a “birds’ nest”. (Birds nests are knots, loops, and twists in your fishing line.) The little hook on the end of the crochet hook can reach into a tangle with accuracy to grab a loop of line where “fat fingers” cannot go.



**Start un-winding.**

Once you unravel the “birds’ nest”, you just have to start un-winding until the line comes off easily.



**Start re-winding.**

Now that you have all the line free, you can wrap it back around the spool. Be sure to keep tension on the line. Replace the spool cover by screwing it back on. Then snap the reel cover back in place and lock it with a slight clockwise twist. You are ready to go.

**Sometimes it is just not worth fixing.**

Don't spend a lot of time trying to fix a Zebco 33 or any other inexpensive reel during or after your event. There comes a point that it is just easier and cheaper to buy a new one! Have a few spares available.

**Additional Resources:****[Zebco Spincast Reel Manual](#)****Zebco Resource Center**

<https://www.zebco.com/en/adventure>

**Zebco Reel Support**

<https://www.zebco.com/en/tips-maintenance>

<https://www.zebco.com/en/troubleshooting>

**Check out the videos on “How to put line on a Zebco Closed Face Reel”.**

**Remember- Keep it simple, Keep it fun, and FISH ON!**