



Learn to fish let's go fishing



Let's go Fishing



Sportfishing is good fun. It offers a chance to spend quality time with your family and friends and to enjoy the fresh air and amazing sights and sounds of the great outdoors. Sportfishing combines a nature experience with the thrill of a bobber disappearing beneath the water's surface. It is an activity you can enjoy alone or share with others—and you may need someone to back up your story about the big one that got away.

Anglers are people who fish for fun. If you enjoy your fishing experience, you can call yourself an angler.

Nova Scotia has many places to fish and the opportunity to fish all year round. While catching something is a big part of the fun, anglers can have a great time even when the fish are not biting. You can learn a great deal about the natural environment during a few hours by a lake, pond, or stream. The province's freshwater fishing spots are teeming with wildlife, including insects, frogs, turtles, hawks, eagles, beavers, otters, and other creatures. You should be able to find something interesting around you when the fishing action slows down. For many anglers, seeing what's around the next bend in the stream, visiting a lake or pond for the first time, or just exploring a stretch of the shoreline is a big part of the fishing adventure.



Basic Sportfishing Equipment

Action!

Lets get started! The following information will help you plan, prepare for, and successfully undertake your first fishing trip. Planning and preparation are part of the fun—and part of the learning. As you plan out what equipment you need and what type to buy, you will learn some of the whys and hows of fishing.

Choose a Rod and Reel

You need an effective rod and reel that allows you to try out a good range and variety of fishing techniques, but not an expensive one. You can expect to pay about \$30 for a rod and reel that will allow you to fish successfully. Don't buy the very cheap ones, which are little more than toys. They will not stand up under hard use and will not cast well.

Reels should be matched to the size and style of rod, and to the strength of the line used. Strength is measured in pounds of pull before the line breaks.

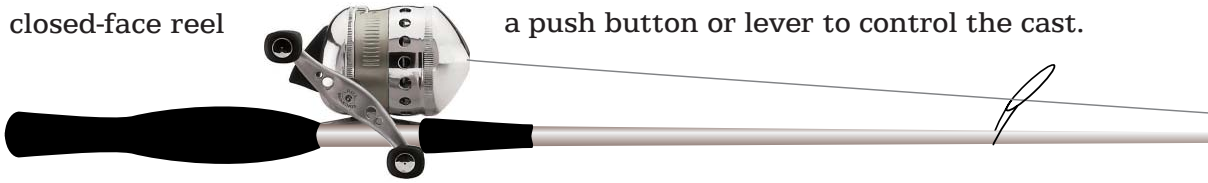
The **line** will be monofilament—a single strand of plastic. It is inexpensive and easy to use, but you must take care when attaching things to it (see knots). You can find a good starter set for under \$30.



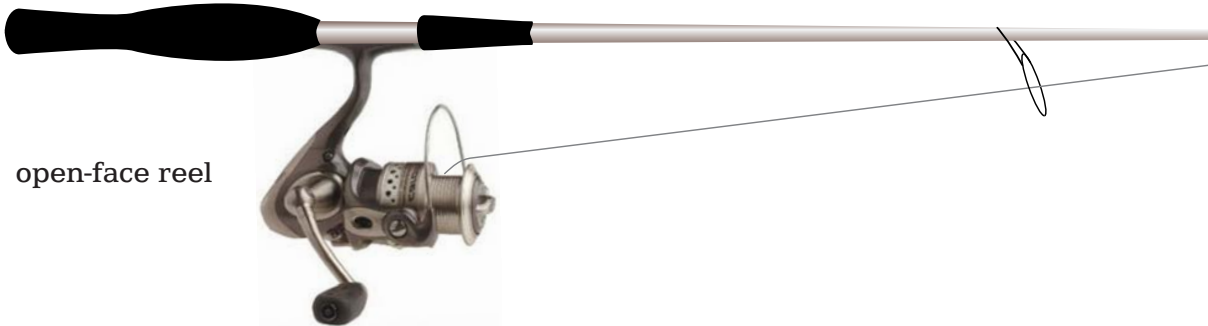
Reels come in two main types:

The easiest reel to use is the **closed-face, spincast reel**. This reel usually mounts on the top of the rod, has a little hole where the line comes out, and uses a push button or lever to control the cast.

closed-face reel



open-face reel



Recommended rod, reel, and line combination for beginners:



light reel



short, lightweight rod

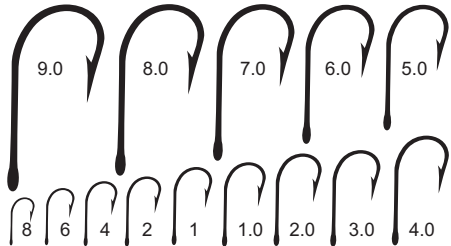
1.3–1.5 m 4 ½–5 feet



plastic monofilament line

2.7– 5.4 kg 6–12 pounds

Planning is
part of the fun—
and part of
the learning.



Create a Fishing Kit

After choosing a rod and reel, you need to select **terminal tackle**—the stuff on the end of the line that catches fish. Here is a basic list of terminal tackle, plus a few things that will come in handy when you go fishing.

Hooks • Hooks are hooks, right? Wrong. You won't believe the variety of hooks available. Stick to single hooks with a long shank, numbers 6 to 10—the higher the number, the smaller the hook. These are good for the smaller panfish that you are likely to catch. Once you get used to reeling in fish and keeping tension on the line, you can make some barbless hooks by mashing down the barb on the end with pliers. You may lose a few fish with a barbless hook, but it is much easier to remove from the fish you do catch and less likely to “catch” skin or clothing.

Sinkers • Many kinds of sinkers are available, but split shot are cheap and versatile. Get several sizes of removable shot. They come together in a plastic dispenser. Removable shot have little tabs opposite the slot for the line. You squeeze them onto the line with your pliers. Most sinkers are made of lead, but more environmentally friendly alternatives are becoming available, such as bismuth and tin.

Bobbers • Bobbers or floats attach to the line and do two things:

- They keep the bait suspended at a particular level.

- They jerk or dance to indicate a bite.

Small-ball bobbers are easiest to use. You clip them on the line at the bottom and the top.

Snap swivels • Snap swivels do two things:

- They keep the line from twisting, particularly with lures that spin.

- When tied to the end of your line, they allow you to easily switch hooks and lures.

Spinners • Spinners are shiny and attract fish. They also give your line a little more weight, which helps you cast.

Needle-nose pliers • Useful for squeezing split-shot and barbs. Also great for getting hooks out of mouths with many sharp teeth. You never know when a chain pickerel may decide to take your perch bait!



Nail clippers • Good for snipping off the tag ends of knotted line.



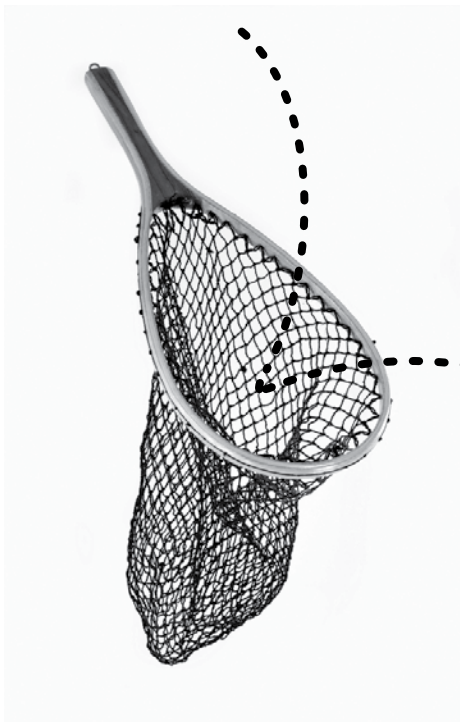
Tackle box • A small tackle box will keep things organized and easy to find. Plastic ones can be inexpensive and won't rust.



Bucket • A bucket makes a great carryall. Besides, you will need something to haul some of those fish home in—or at least something to sit on.

Net • A net is optional, at least to start. Panfish and other small fish can be lifted straight out of the water. If you are releasing the fish, you can remove the hook without taking the fish out of the water at all.

Camera • Optional, but highly recommended for the memories it can capture!



Bait versus Lures

How do you persuade a fish to bite your hook? Your options are live bait or a lure. Live bait is cheap, easy to get, and usually allows beginners to catch more fish. You can even find some live bait yourself. But fish swallow more hooks with bait, and in some areas live bait is not allowed. Also, with live bait, the bait does all the work. If you like more action, you might want to try a lure.

Live Bait

Live baits include worms, minnows, mealworms, and crayfish. With any live bait, wait a second or two after the bobber begins to move or the line jerks. This lets the fish take the bait into its mouth before you set the hook.

- **Worms** are good to start with. You can find them on lawns at night after a heavy rain. You can use whole worms hooked through the collar, but small panfish are adept at nibbling off worms attached in this way. For these fish, use a small hook covered with just a piece of worm. Fish with or without a bobber.
- **Minnows** are good in still water. Hook the minnow shallowly through the back, just behind the dorsal fin. Use a bobber, and let the minnow swim just above the bottom or just over the tops of a weed bed.

Lures

Lures put more action into your fishing trip. You must add the motion that will make the lure look like attractive food. Using lures makes it harder to cast and retrieve, but mastering the motion and actually catching fish using this skill is its own reward.

Other benefits of lures are that you can use them over and over and that fish will often not be deeply hooked. However, if you snag the bottom and lose your lure, it's more costly—for example, a lure may cost \$5.00 and a hook and worm only \$0.15. Also, it's harder to attract and hook your fish using a lure.

When using a hard-bodied lure, set the hook as soon as you feel a strike or nibble. Otherwise, the fish will spit out the foreign-feeling lure.



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Crankbaits, buzzbaits, poppers, floater-divers—the range of lure types can boggle the mind. Several basic types are described below:



Plugs • These lures are mostly hard-bodied and made from wood or plastic. They come in all shapes and sizes. They can imitate almost anything that can swim and be eaten. Each plug type is designed for different water depths.



- **Topwater lures or poppers** splash and dance across the surface, pretending to be frogs, mice, or struggling minnows.
- **Floater/diver plugs** float and have a plastic lip on the front that makes them wiggle and dive when pulled. You can use a pull/stop, pull/stop motion to make the lure look like an injured minnow. These lures rarely go more than a foot under water. You can use them over weedy shallows containing smallmouth bass, chain pickerel, and perch.
- **Crankbaits** have a larger lip and will dive deeper. The depth depends on the size of the lip and the weight of the plug. They may find smallmouth bass, perch, and chain pickerel lurking near the bottom.



Spoons and spinners • These lures use a wobbling or spinning metal blade to mimic injured baitfish. Their weight allows you to cast accurately, especially when it is windy. They run deeper than the floating plugs, and can be used to catch any fish-eaters. They can be reeled in steadily, or retrieved in jerks. Caution: since spinners “spin,” always use a snap swivel to avoid line twist.



Jigs • A jig is basically a metal head (often eyed) attached to a hook. Jigs may be sold with a tail made of hair or plastic, or the tails can be bought separately. Jigs are fished off the bottom by lifting the rod tip and dropping it again as the lure is slowly reeled in. The idea is to make the lure dance across the bottom looking like food in distress.



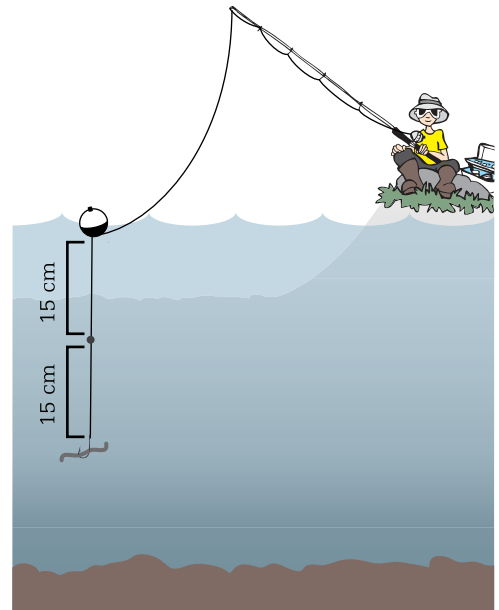
Soft plastic lures • These feel life-like to your fish, so they may hold on to it longer. They come in many shapes. You put them on your hook like the live bait they mimic. They may also have a smell that attracts fish. Some flutter and vibrate when retrieved. Others, like worms, must be retrieved slowly along the bottom for best effect. You can rig these worms to avoid weeds and fish through weed beds.

Put Your Tackle Together

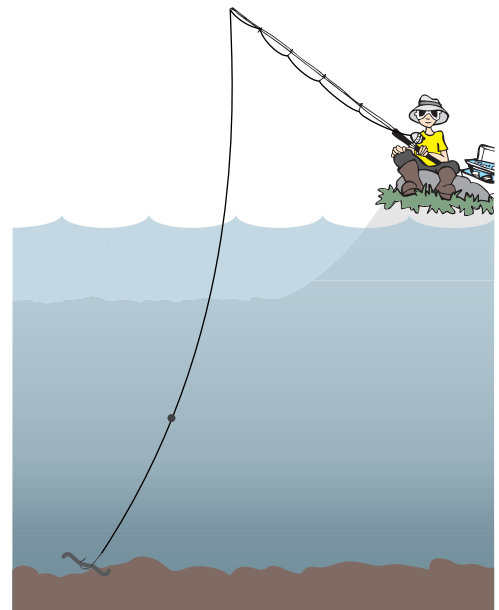
Bait Fishing

When fishing with bait and without a lure, you can use one of two basic rigs:

- **Use a bobber to suspend the bait above the bottom.** Tie a hook onto the end of your line. Place a split shot about 15 cm (6 inches) above the hook. Place a bobber at least 15 cm (6 inches) above the shot. The bobber should float about half way out of the water. If it doesn't, adjust either the shot amount or the bobber size. Fish may be at different depths at different times. If you don't get much action, try increasing the distance from the bobber to the bait. When all else fails, try putting the bait just above the bottom.



- **Place the bait right on the bottom.** Simply remove the bobber and cast the baited hook and sinker. If you want to get fancy, you can use a sliding sinker instead of the shot. The line runs through the sinker, so that the fish can pick up the bait without feeling the weight of the sinker.

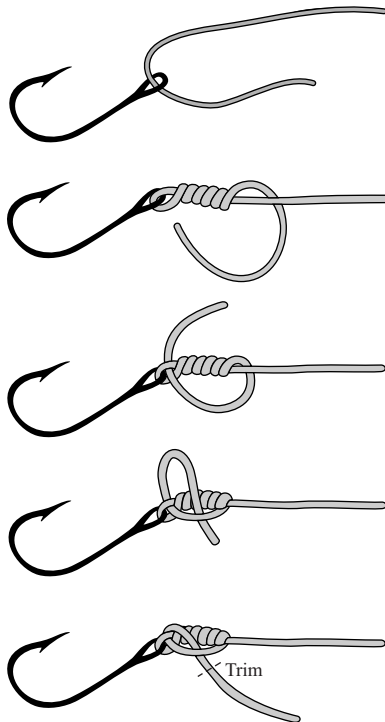




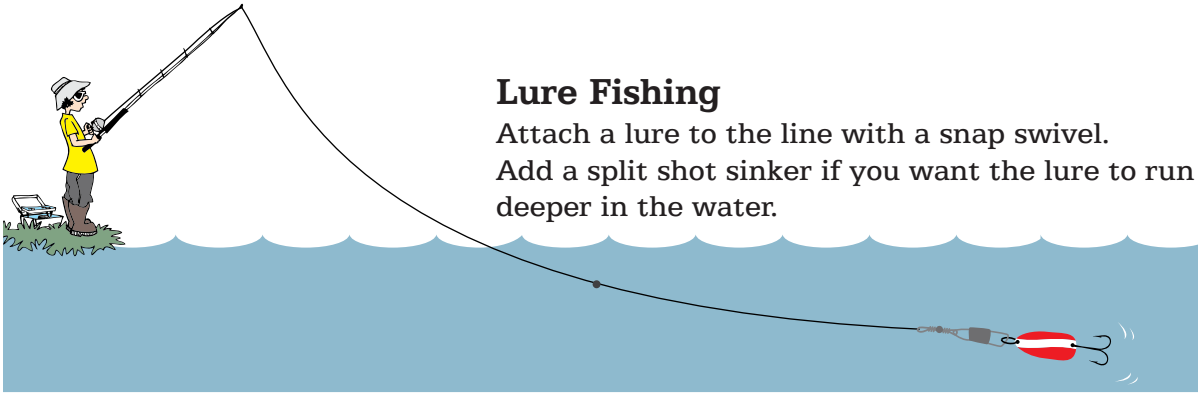
Tie a Clinch Knot

Two warnings about knots in monofilament fishing line: they can slip out, and they can break. The clinch knot is both strong and easy to tie.

How to tie a clinch knot:



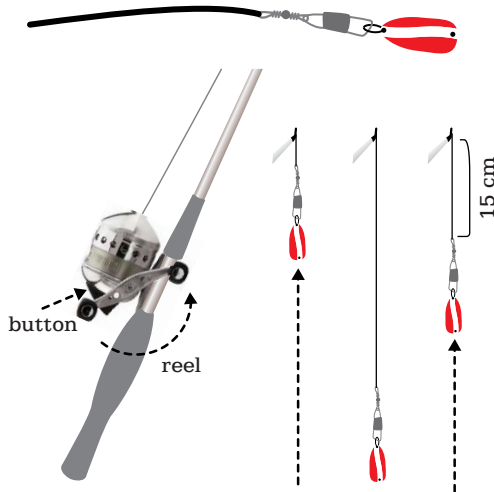
- Pass the end of the line through the eye of the hook, swivel, or lure.
- Double back and make 5–7 turns around the standing line.
- Pass the end of the line through the small loop above the eye and then through the larger loop.
- Moisten the knot and pull slowly to tighten—make sure the coils snug up to each other and with no overlap.
- Test the knot and clip off any excess line.



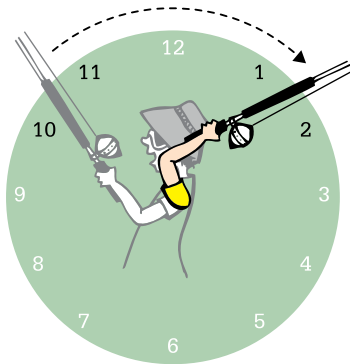
Lure Fishing

Attach a lure to the line with a snap swivel. Add a split shot sinker if you want the lure to run deeper in the water.

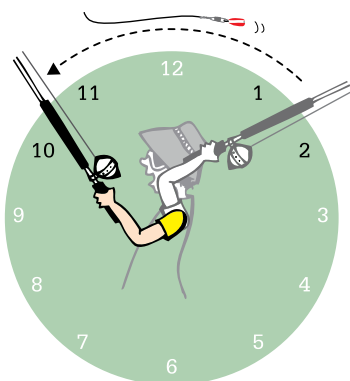
Practice casting • A little work in the back yard can save a lot of frustration by the water. The basics of spincasting are simple. The trick is knowing when to let go.



- 1 Tie a sinker or a hookless plug onto your line just in case you hit something, or someone.
- 2 Reel the plug up to the rod tip. Push down on the reel button and then release it. The plug will plummet to earth. Begin to reel in. You may need to pull slightly on the line near the reel to get it to take up until gravity kicks in. You will hear a click. This engages the drag and keeps the line from freely running out again. Reel the plug to within 15 cm (6 inches) of the rod tip. Now you are ready to apply what you just learned to an actual cast.



- 3 Stand in an open space, with lots of room in front and behind you. Hold the rod in front of you at about 10 or 11 o'clock. Keeping your elbow bent at a 90 degree angle, hold the reel button down and move the rod tip back over your shoulder, bending your wrist back to put the tip at about 1 or 2 o'clock.



- 4 Snap your arm and wrist forward, pointing the rod tip at your target and release the button at 10 or 11 o'clock. The plug should arc smoothly toward the target.
 - If you overcast and it heads for your neighbour's picture window, press down on the button again. This will stop the line and the plug will drop straight down.
 - If the plug arcs too high and drops short, you released the button too soon.
 - If it doesn't arc and drives into the ground, you released too late.
- 5 Fiddle with the timing of your release until you can drop the plug into a 1.8 m (6 feet) diameter circle from varying distances.

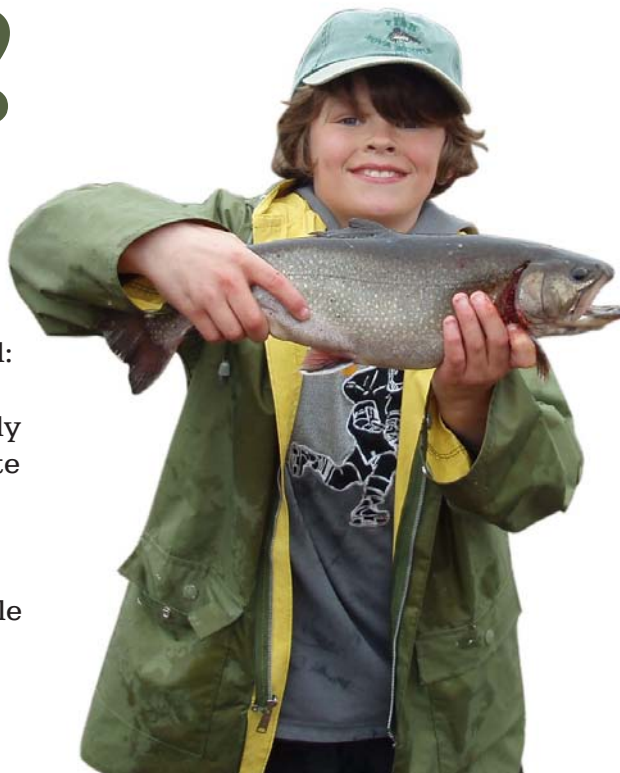
Now You're Fishin'!

Good planning, practice, and preparation are essential, but real fishing can only be done on site. Follow these steps to ensure that your trip is fun and your chances of catching fish are good:

Find a good spot • Fish are not distributed evenly throughout a lake or stream. Selecting a good site may have more to do with your fishing success than anything else. Ask your fishing friends, the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Natural Resources local office, or a bait and tackle dealer for good panfish (small fish) locations nearby.

Small lakes or ponds with public access are better places to start than streams. When you get there, walk along the shore. Look for what is called "structure": places where fish might hide or find food. Structure includes rock piles, drowned trees, the edges of weed beds, places where the shallows drop quickly off to deeper water, and dock pilings. Also try the mouth of streams or creeks.

Select a method • How you fish will depend on what fish you are after. For example, try to catch trout using worms from your garden.



Cast carefully • That first cast can be truly exciting, so much so that all else is forgotten. Your job is to remember to look behind, to know when to release, and to know where to cast.



When can I fish?

General Fishing Seasons

Inland Waters - April 1 - September 30

Tidal Waters - April 15 - September 30

Winter Fishery - January 1 - March 31

Do I need a fishing license?

If you are under the age of 16 you do not require a licence, except for salmon.

Licences are also not needed to fish in saltwater.

Where can I buy a fishing licence?

Fishing licences are available from hundreds of vendors and at local offices of the Department of Natural Resources throughout the province. You can find a list of vendors on our website.

For more information

Nova Scotia Fisheries and Aquaculture

Phone: (902) 485-5056

Website:

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/fish/sportfishing/>

Email: inland@gov.ns.ca

Control your line • When fishing with bait, keep it still. Don't move the bait around, or jerk the rod tip. Keep the line fairly tight without pulling on the terminal tackle. You want a direct line to the bait or bobber, with little of the line coil showing. Keep the rod at about a 45 degree angle.

Watch for nibbles • Keep your eye on the line or rod tip. Unless a fish hits immediately, your eyes can wander. Remember to keep checking your line for action.

Set the hook • This skill will come with experience. When using bait, including artificial worms, wait until the bobber goes under the water or the line begins to move off. Set the hook by firmly snapping the tip of the rod back over the shoulder. With lures, set the hook as soon as you feel the bite.

Play the fish • Reel in steadily, keeping the rod tip up. Avoid the temptation to rush. Hold the tip up and let the fish tire. Increase the drag slightly if you can't reel in at all—a dial on your reel allows you to adjust the tension or "drag" on your line. With too much drag, the line may break. Quickly reel in any slack. Be ready for another short burst when the fish becomes aware of you or sees your net.

Land the fish • Landing your fish is easiest with a net. Keep the net stationary below the fish in the water. Guide the fish over the net and then raise the net. Panfish can be lifted straight out of the water, but may flip off the hook as they come up. Bass can be lipped—grasp the lower lip firmly between thumb and index finger and lift the fish out of the water. Support the fish under its belly with your other hand if you hold it out horizontally. You might need help with landing a fish at first, but as you gain experience you will be able to do it by yourself.

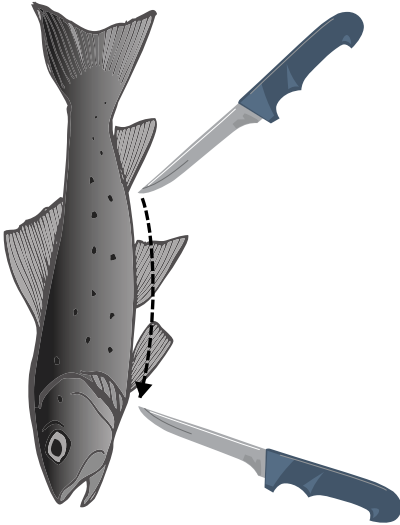
Handle carefully • All fish should be handled carefully and with respect. Take particular care with fish that you plan to release. You can often keep the fish in the water as you work the hook out. If you want to take the fish out of the water for a photograph, use wet hands and hold your breath. Carefully grasp the fish from one side, folding down the sharp dorsal fins. Note that catfish have spines by their front fins as well. Put the fish back before you need a breath.

Keeping your catch • Kill the fish as quickly as possible, by bending back the head or neck area. Put your fish in a bag on ice in a cooler to take home and enjoy.

Releasing your catch • Use a barbless hook, or pinch the barbs back on a regular hook. When you do hook a fish, keep your catch in the water, gently remove the hook as soon as possible, and then release.



Cleanin' and Cookin'



How to Clean Your Catch

You have caught a fish! Congratulations. Now you must clean the fish before you can cook and eat it.

Things you need:

Sharp, short-blade knife
Fresh water

- 1 Turn the trout upside down. Look for a little hole where the fish poops and pees.
- 2 Insert the knife in the hole and cut a straight line up to the gills.
- 3 Remove all the insides with your hands, including the stomach and intestines.
- 4 Use your thumb to remove the large blood line or artery that runs up the backbone. Start from the opening. Push your thumb down and move it all the way up to the top. This gets out all the blood.
- 5 Wash the fish in the lake or river, then go over it again to make sure you have removed all the insides and no blood is left.
- 6 Cut off the head.
- 7 Place your cleaned fish in a storage bag on ice.

Stinky hands?

Try cleaning them with a little lemon juice.



Easy Trout Recipe

Little pan fry trout are tasty this way

Beat one egg in a bowl large enough to hold your fish.

Put about **1/4 cup of flour** on a plate.

Add **salt and pepper** to the flour if you wish.

Heat up a fry pan with **butter or margarine**.

Dip and roll whole fish in egg.

Then dip and roll whole fish in flour.

Put fish in fry pan.

Cook one side, then flip and cook other side.

The fish is done when the meat turns opaque and flakes.

Cooking time: about 5–7 minutes a side, depending on size of fish.

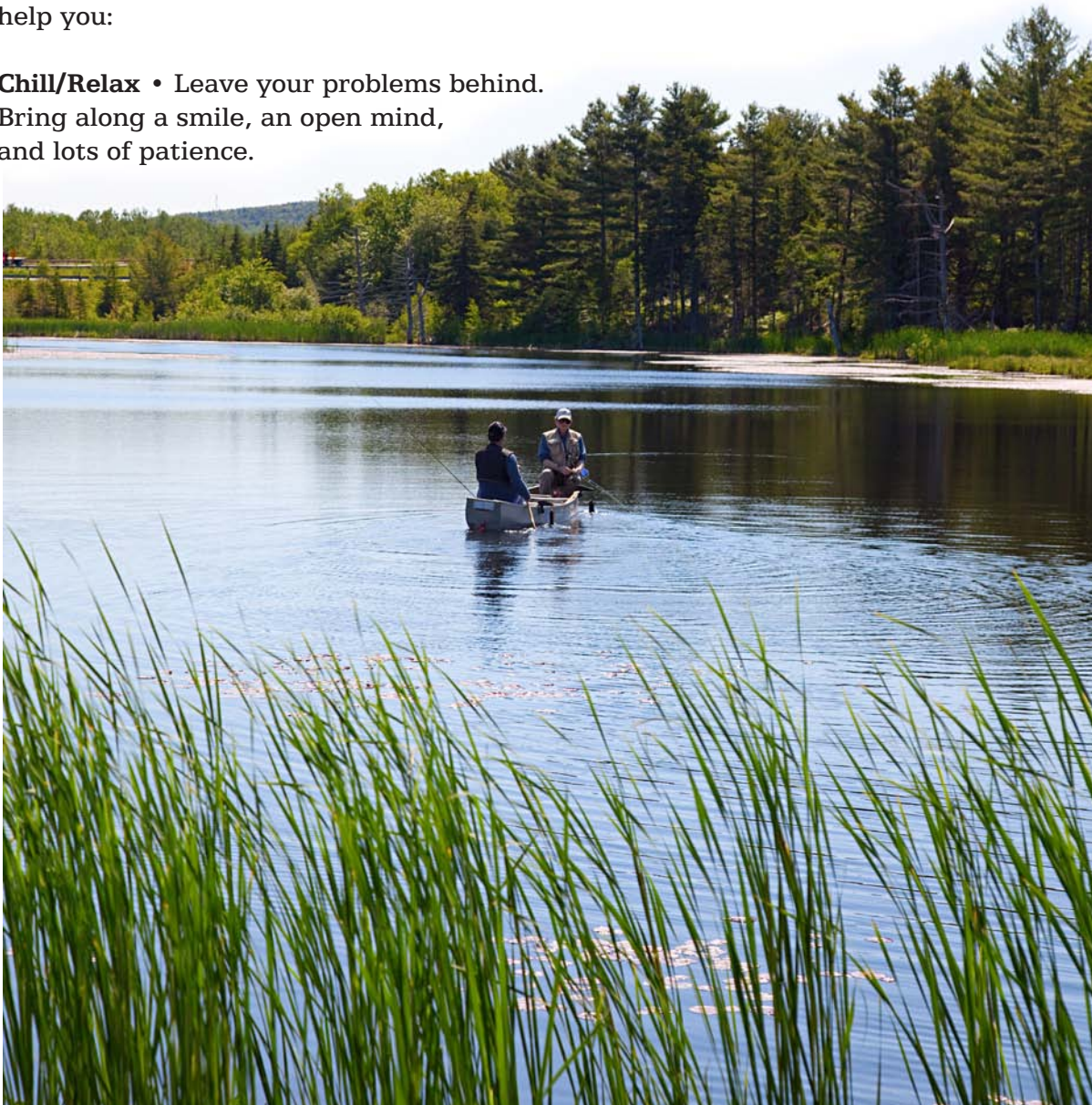


Fishing Tips

Things to Remember when Goin' Fishin'

Few things match the excitement of a first fishing trip, especially that first "tug" at the end of the line. If you want a positive sportfishing experience, the most important thing you can do is keep it simple. Listed below are a few tips to help you:

Chill/Relax • Leave your problems behind. Bring along a smile, an open mind, and lots of patience.





**Keep an open mind,
go with the flow
and above all,
have a good time!**

Start simple • Simple equipment in good working order helps avoid frustration. An inexpensive rod and reel, with live bait and a bobber, gets you off to a good start.

Make it a shore thing • Fishing from shore allows you to stop and start when you feel like it. It gives you the option of moving off on your own or staying close to friends.

Fish for little fish • Catching fish is important, size or species isn't. Perch and other pan-sized fish are often plentiful and easily caught by beginners. Larger fish demand greater skill—after you've mastered the basics.

Have fun • Having a fun, safe time is more important than the size or number of fish caught. Be proud of your fishing. If you get bored, explore the natural surroundings.

Be patient • One challenge of fishing is mastering skills. Lines tangle. Hooks get snagged.

Fish stop biting? • Try to figure out why. If you are not catching fish, change the distance of the bait from the float, move the bait closer to underwater rocks, logs or weeds, or try another bait or lure. Experiment.

Be flexible • If you don't like sitting still with a bobber and live bait, change tactics. Try a lure that you can cast and retrieve. Move up and down the shore to look for a better spot.

Be responsible • You are a role model. Set a good example by respecting the environment, private property, and other anglers. Don't litter. Leave the area as good or better than you found it. Properly release fish you aren't planning to keep—and make good use of those that you do keep.

Don't stay too long • When you get bored, go home.

Don't make the first trip your last • Plan another trip. Talk to your fishing buddy about what was fun and rewarding, what was bad and boring. Plan to make the next trip even better.

Fishing Safety

Accidents can spoil your fun or even ruin your trip. A few precautions and additions to your equipment list reduce the chances that your trip will be memorable—for the wrong reasons.

Glasses or sunglasses • Always wear eye protection when sportfishing. Remember those hooks? You must wear glasses or sunglasses when participating in the Learn to Fish program.



Hats • If you can't find shade, you need a hat. Hats increase the time you can stay in the direct sun—so more fishing! Broad brims that circle the hat are best.

Sunscreen • Sun reflects off water. Even with hats and long sleeves, the sun can burn your face. Protect yourself with sunscreen, especially when wearing tee shirts and shorts.

Footwear • Plan on feet ending up in the water. In warm weather, choose old shoes that you don't mind getting wet. In cooler weather, waterproof boots are the best choice.

Insect repellent • Water and bugs go together. The best time to fish also happens to be mealtime for the little critters—in spring and at dawn and dusk. Using a good repellent makes you less delicious, but still a tasty meal. So as you occasionally swat, remember that if there weren't any bugs, there wouldn't be any fish.

Caution: Some people react to repellents. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you have concerns. Some repellents weaken monofilament fishing line, take off lure paint, gum up plastic lures, and repel fish—so rinse your hands before touching anything.



First-aid kit • A basic first aid-kit prepares you for the nicks and scrapes of outdoor activity. Be sure to include a spray or salve for insect bites and stings. Remember to bring any special medications that you may need, such as allergy or asthma medicine.

Knives • Believe it or not, sharp knives are less dangerous than dull ones. They require less force to cut, so the knife is easier to control. But minimize knife use. Use nail clippers for cutting line. Use scissors for part of the fish-cleaning process. You still need a good, sharp knife for filleting.

Hooks and casting • Hooks are sharp. They are the most likely cause of accidents while fishing. Barbed hooks create special concerns. Handle all hooks carefully, and always look around before casting. A hook in a bush is bad enough—a hook in your skin is worse. If a hook penetrates below the barb, get medical help.

Casting needs your full and constant attention. Stay away from power lines. However, in spite of your best efforts, a power line may reach out and grab some terminal tackle. If it does, cut away the tackle and forget it. Never try to remove the tackle, even if it was your favourite lure.

Water • Water can be dangerous. You never know when that big fish will come along and pull you in. Or perhaps you just slip. The easiest and safest thing to do is to wear a properly fitted personal flotation device (PFD) at all times.

Take care when picking your fishing spot. Choose an area where the water is shallow near shore and the bottom slopes gradually. Besides being safer, it is also good for wading around and searching for critters when the fishing is slow. Avoid areas with casting obstructions, strong water currents, and rocks near shore. Choosing a good location will minimize safety concerns, but not eliminate them. Keep a reaching pole and a throwing ring and line at hand, plus towels and blankets, to deal with the unexpected.

Never fish near power plant intakes, dams, weirs, or quickly flowing water.



Fishing Ethics

We all should respect our natural environment. Our aquatic resources belong to all of us—our lakes and rivers and the creatures that live in and around them. We need to take care of them. If we don't take care, we may not have fish to catch in the future. All living things deserve respect, even those—perhaps especially those—that we may kill to eat. What does “respect” mean? When you respect your natural environment when fishing, you behave in these ways:

- Don't litter. Litter is ugly. It can harm fish, birds, and other living things. Fishing line is especially dangerous to wild animals.
- Take back everything that you brought on your trip. Try to leave the area looking better than you found it.
- Have fun, but not big boisterous fun. Noise can bother other people and animals. It can also spook the fish.
- Obey the law. You can find out what the law says in Nova Scotia Anglers' Handbook and Summary of Regulations. You can get this booklet from stores that issue fishing licenses—your local bait and tackle, sporting goods stores, and hardware stores—and from our sportfishing website
- Keep only those fish that you plan to eat. Handle fish carefully. Release fish you don't plan to eat quickly and properly. If you plan to release a fish, have wet hands when you touch it.

Other ways to help fish and their habitat include recycling; not putting chemicals, soaps, or detergents down drains; and not destroying shoreline vegetation.





For more information about

- Stocked lakes
- Guides/outfitters
- Maps
- Derbies
- Regulations
- Licences
- Fish species
- Free Sportfishing Weekends

Visit the Nova Scotia Fisheries
and Aquaculture website

www.gov.ns.ca/fish/sportfishing

