

# BASIC FISHING

*Catch the Fishing Fever*



Kentucky Department of  
Fish and Wildlife Resources



**W**elcome to the world of fishing. You are about to join the ranks of thousands of like-minded anglers – some of the best conservationists on earth. Each of them started right where you are today...as a beginner. You will learn from experience and from friends and family. You will share lifetime memories with them.

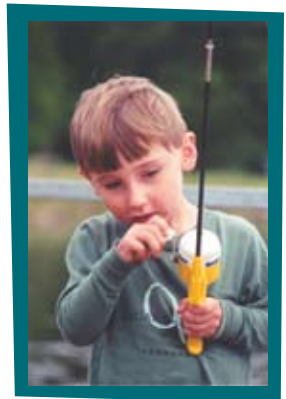
Parents realize how important time management has become. Families must plan to enjoy family activities and events. You are beginning an activity that takes practice and patience to become successful. Try to keep this in mind...fishing is a life-long sporting challenge. It is one you will be able to pass to your children and future generations. It is time well spent.

Fish is definitely good food, and time spent with family is a treasure, but time spent fishing is also healthy for you. Stress is a major factor in today's world, and stress relief can not be better defined than a day's fishing. Fishing also helps each individual develop a sense of stewardship for aquatic resources that support fish and responsibility to maintain a healthy environment.

You'll enjoy fishing. The information in this book will help you find the fishing gear you will need. Don't forget your positive attitude, friendly nature, and a good friend. You'll soon find that you are hooked on a lifetime of enjoyment.

Jon Gasset

Commissioner, Kentucky Department of  
Fish & Wildlife Resources



# BASIC FISHING

A Cooperative Program of the



Kentucky Department of  
Fish and Wildlife Resources  
1-800-858-1549  
[www.fw.ky.gov](http://www.fw.ky.gov)

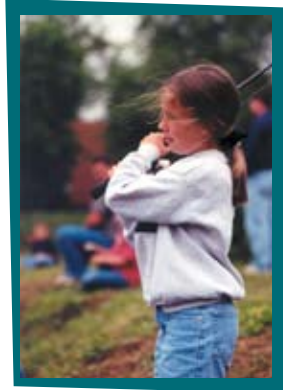


Alabama Division of Wildlife  
and Freshwater Fisheries,  
Alabama Department of Conservation  
and Natural Resources  
[www.conservation.alabama.gov/agfd](http://www.conservation.alabama.gov/agfd)

Originally created by:  
Doug Darr  
Alabama Aquatic  
Education Coordinator

Revised by:  
Lonnie Nelson  
Kentucky Aquatic  
Education Coordinator  
(retired)

**Revised 2010**



## FOREWORD

This written information is adapted from the work of Doug Darr of the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries. It has been edited for use in Kentucky with photographs replacing drawings wherever possible. This edition is intentionally created “state free” so other states can use it without extensive editing. In the original Alabama version, many individuals and state “Fish and Wildlife” departments contributed. This only emphasizes the fact that fishing and the stewardship of our natural resources are national passions, not restricted to any state or agency.

For the Kentucky version, I am thankful for the guidance received from fellow employees John Boone, Information & Education Division, on computer layout, Bonny Laflin, Fisheries Division, for stimulating the internet page, and all Directors who supported this endeavor.

This brochure and web site entry is funded by Sportfish Restoration funds. Fishery management, aquatic education and boating access programs are not funded through general tax money. Fishery management and aquatic education are funded by anglers through license fees and an excise tax on the purchase of fishing equipment. Boating access projects are funded by an excise tax on gasoline.

This material is intended to be used by not-for-profit organizations.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword .....	i
Table of Contents .....	ii
Introduction .....	2
Safety Equipment .....	3
Basic Fishing Skills .....	4
<b>Section 1. TACKLE</b> .....	4
Fishing Pole Selection .....	4
Assembly .....	6
Knot Tying .....	6
<b>Section 2. CASTING PRACTICE</b> .....	9
Body Position .....	9
Beginning Casting .....	10
Advanced Casting .....	11
<b>Section 3. FISHING TECHNIQUES</b> .....	12
Choosing Appropriate Tackle .....	12
Adjusting the Drag .....	14
Holding the Pole .....	14
Retrieving .....	14
Setting the Hook .....	14
Playing the Fish .....	15
<b>Section 4. GOING FISHING</b> .....	15
Think Safety .....	15
Choosing Where to Fish .....	16
What Fish Live Here? .....	18
Choosing Bait .....	20
<b>Section 5. CARING FOR THE CATCH</b> .....	21
Catch and Release .....	21
Catch and Keep .....	22
Cleaning Your Catch .....	23
Final Touches for Fillets .....	29
Caring for Cleaned Fish .....	29
Glossary .....	30
Ethics .....	BC



## INTRODUCTION

This short course is designed to give basic fishing knowledge to those with limited fishing experience and to stimulate anglers to learn more. The objective is to help the new angler have safer and more enjoyable fishing trips. Once they learn the fundamentals, Basic Fishing will be a handy reference as beginning anglers move forward in fishing. Numbered pictures are presented with the text. A glossary of fishing terms is found on the inside back cover.

## Safety Equipment

When people are learning a new activity, personal safety has to be the first consideration. Safety equipment includes:

- Personal Floatation Device (PFD) or life jackets. While PFDs must be readily available for each person on a boat, they are equally important when you are fishing from shore. PFDs are strongly recommended for all anglers when fishing near deep or swift water. If leading a group of youngsters in these conditions, they should be mandatory.
- Throwable floatation with a rope attached is recommended if several new anglers are fishing in the same area.
- Suntan lotion with a minimum SPF 15 is recommended.
- Insect repellent and medicine may be needed for stings or bites.
- Sunglasses protect the eyes from glare and from errant fish hooks.
- A hat protects the wearer from flying lures.
- Wear appropriate clothes and protective gear for anticipated weather.



## Basic Fishing Skills

Participants who use this information will be introduced to the various types of equipment, tackle, and learning experiences. After learning how to assemble the fishing equipment and stringing the line, budding anglers will experience knot tying and simple techniques used to cast. They will then learn to hook appropriate bait to catch common fish. In all cases, we hope these lessons lead to fishing adventures.

As you plan to go fishing, you need to know where to place your bait. Habitat features that typically attract fish will be described. We certainly hope you catch fish, so fish handling, cleaning and preparation of the catch will also be discussed.

## Section 1. TACKLE

Fishing tackle is the connection between the angler and the fish. The fishing tackle is necessary both to get the lure or bait to the fish and to get the fish to the angler.

### A. Fishing Pole Selection

Fishing poles are named for the reel (or lack of reel) that holds the fishing line. Each type of fishing reel has an appropriate fishing rod that goes with it.

1. **Pole and Line.** (*Figure 1*). The simplest gear is a pole with fishing line attached to the end. It is used with a float and hook or lure. This gear is simple yet very effective for fish in shallow water.
2. **Spincast Gear.** (*Figure 2*). Spincast gear, a simple rod with a reel, is usually the appropriate rod and reel for beginning anglers. The fishing line comes out of a hole in the reel cover. The thumb button releases the line or stops the line from going too far. Spincast gear is used to cast light to medium size lures.
3. **Spinning Gear.** (*Figure 3*). Spinning reels can cast farther than spincast gear. The fishing line on a spinning reel is exposed, and the index finger is used to release the line and to control the line. Various spinning gear is used for casting very light to heavy lures.
4. **Baitcast Gear.** (*Figure 4*). Baitcast gear has more control than spinning gear. In a casting reel, the fishing line rotates the spool as the line comes off the spool. During the cast, the thumb is used to release the line and for control. Bait casting gear is used to cast moderate to very heavy weights farther than other reels.



5. **Fly.** (Figure 5).A fly rod works differently than other rods. In fly fishing the lure is carried by the line instead of the lure carrying the line. The fly rod casts very light lures typically made of feathers, fur or fibers. Fly fishing is not difficult, but it normally takes training and practice to learn properly.



(Figures 1-5)

## B. Assembly

When you buy a new fishing pole, it usually requires assembly.

- Remove all parts from the package.
- Put the sections of the rod together with all guides lined up in a straight line.
- Different reels attach in different ways. Loosen the attachment device and place the reel into the seat of the rod with front of the reel pointed toward the guides.
- Tighten the attachment device snugly but do not use too much pressure, as plastic parts may break or threads will strip.
- Some reels come without line. Follow package directions if line needs to be added.
- Release line from reel and thread line through all guides.
- Attach appropriate tackle for intended fishing or casting.

## C. Knot Tying

Tying quality knots is the single most important skill that should be learned. A knot that connects the hook or lure to your line is the most important knot to learn. There are several that work well, such as Improved Clinch, Palomar, Uni, and Surgeon knots. This pamphlet will describe these knots with diagrams for tying them.

Other knots are used for special purposes such as connecting fishing lines together. When you buy fishing line, maintain the manufacturer's pamphlet in your tackle box. You should pick a favorite knot and master the skill of tying it.

### Improved Clinch Knot

The improved clinch knot is a basic knot for beginning anglers to use with monofilament line. To tie an improved clinch knot:



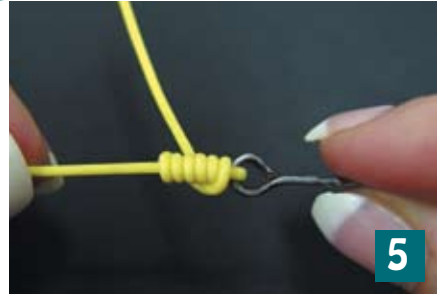
1. pass the line through the eye of the hook,



2. make five turns around the standing end of the line (more for lighter line),



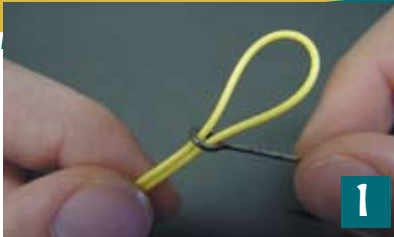
3. pass the tag end through the "tear drop" loop above eye,
4. pass the tag end through the "big loop",
5. moisten the line and slide the knot tight against the eye.

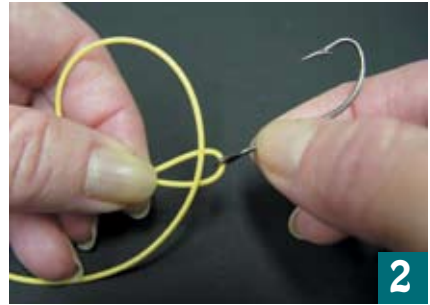
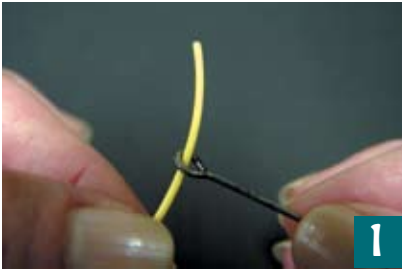


## Palomar Knot

The palomar knot is also a good knot for beginning anglers, as it is strong and easy to tie. To tie a palomar knot:

1. double about 4 inches of line and pass loop through hook or lure eye, (for small openings, pass line through, then pass through in opposite direction creating the loop)
2. tie an overhand knot with loop and doubled line,
3. pass hook or lure completely through line loop, and
4. moisten line and pull knot tight against the eye.





**REMEMBER !**  
**Standing end:** Line leading back to pole or rod  
**Tag end:** End of fishing line

### Uni-Knot

The uni knot is a third option. It is a very reliable knot for tying hooks to line or flies to leaders. To tie the uni knot:

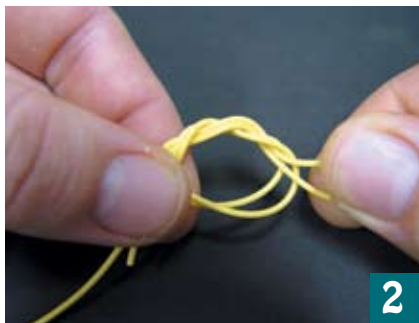
1. pass the line through the eye of the hook,
2. pull 5-6 inches through the eye and form a loop above the standing line,
3. take the tag end around the standing line and inside the loop four to five times,
4. bring the tag end out the top of the loop,
5. pull on the standing line to tighten the knot.

### Surgeon's End Loop

The surgeons end loop is used to tie a loop at the end of a fishing line. To tie a surgeons end loop:

1. double about 4 inches of line and tie an overhand knot with it,





2. bring doubled end through the loop once again, and
3. hold both the standing end and tag end and pull loop to tighten knot.



For all knots, when the knot is complete, cut the tag end cleanly about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch from the knot and discard the tag end properly.

## Section 2. CASTING PRACTICE

*(Group activity explained, works for individuals)*

### A. Body position

Before using a fishing rod, new anglers should understand body position and hand and arm action.

- Start with caster's feet and shoulders square to the target. This is accomplished by having them point the toes of both feet at the target area.
- Next, toss a tennis or ping pong ball overhand (action similar to throwing a dart) a few feet for accuracy (hit my hand). Make sure they keep their shoulders square.

This is the desired body and arm action for accurate casting. Release of the ball is at a similar position as thumb release when casting. Now transition to fishing rods, with spincast rods recommended.

## B. Beginning Casting

When learning to cast a fishing pole for the first time, it is recommended to have new anglers tie on a casting plug without hooks, using newly learned knots.

- As safety is an important habit to establish, each person should check the immediate area around and above him/her to be sure each caster has plenty of space.
- Reel in line so casting plug hangs a few inches from the tip of the rod.
- Line all casters across the casting area.
- Have all anglers point the fishing rod at an object on the horizon with the hands comfortably at the waist. (Some youth may have difficulty holding the pole with one hand, so the rod may be held with one hand or two.) This is the 3 o'clock position.



- Have each caster raise the rod to 1:30 clock position (normal release point), push the push button with their thumb, and practice sliding thumb off the button (release the line). If line does not come out, pull line slightly to start. Reel the plug back to original position, a few inches from the tip. Repeat as necessary.

- When ready to cast, the casters should slowly move the rods to point them slightly behind the shoulder of the casting arm, the 11 o'clock position. Hands should be slightly above and in front of the shoulder with forearms nearly straight up and down. Hold this position momentarily to concentrate.



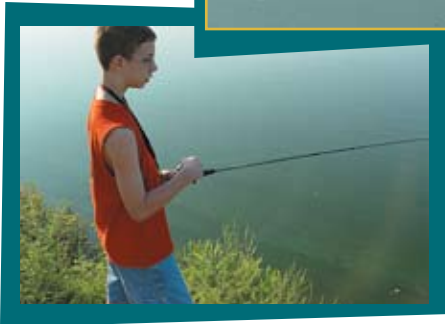
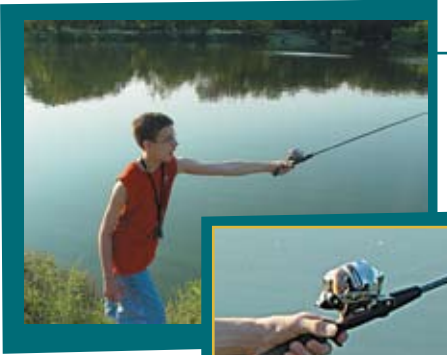


● With the thumb of the casting arm, push and hold the push button on the reel. To cast, the hand should go up slightly and forward as the caster extends the arm.

● By rotating the wrist, move the rod back toward the 3 o'clock position in a quick motion, extending the arm forward.

● Slide the thumb off the button at the same point as they originally released the ball (approximately 1:30 clock position).

● Stop the fishing rod with it pointed slightly above the original target.



**If the lure went too high and fell short, angler released the button too soon. If the lure went too low and fell short, the button was released too late.**

### C. Advanced Casting

When anglers advance from spincasting to spinning or baitcasting, the overhead cast is the easiest cast with which to start. However, after mastering basic casting with each type of equipment, the angler needs to vary the position of the rod for different situations. Advanced casting can include a quick transition from 3 o'clock to 11 o'clock and back forward (constant motion) to add the rod's "catapult" action.

## Section 3. FISHING TECHNIQUES

### A. Choosing Appropriate Tackle

Terminal tackle is the tackle between the fish and the rod.



**Hooks.** Hooks keep fish attached to your line.

Hooks must be kept sharp. Hooks come in many sizes and types. Ask your bait and tackle dealer what is appropriate for the species you are trying to catch and the bait you are using. The size fishing line or leader you are using should be dependent on the size hook you are using. If you get nibbles, but you are not catching them, switch to a smaller hook.

**Snaps and swivels.** Most hooks and lures are more effective without snaps or snap-swivels attached. Crank baits (wobbling lures) are the exception. If you are trying a variety of lures, a small but strong snap will make changing lures easier. A swivel or three-way swivel can be used to attach a dropper that keeps bait or lures off the bottom.



**Weights or Sinkers.** Only enough weight should be used to cast the bait and keep it at the desired depth. More weight will be needed in windy weather or swift water. To prevent losing a fish, weights should be attached carefully, especially when they clamp on the fishing line directly between the hook and the angler.

**Floats.** Floats are used to keep baits off the bottom and to assist with detecting a bite. The float should be just large enough to do the job; if the float is too large, the fish will feel it and may not become hooked.





Other tackle that is helpful in fishing (Figure 10) includes a tackle box to hold all equipment. A sharpening stone keeps hooks and knives sharp. A lure retriever frees lures. A rag keeps your hands clean. Fingernail clippers or scissors safely cut fishing line. A pair of long nose pliers with wire cutters is useful for holding and removing fish hooks.

A fish basket keeps smaller fish alive until you finish your fishing trip. Some anglers land fish with a net after they are hooked; landing nets are more critical for large fish, fish with spines such as catfish, and fish with sharp teeth such as musky, sauger and walleye. A cooler with ice keeps your catch fresh. A thin, flexible fillet knife makes it easier to clean fish. An inch ruler measures fish to verify legal length. An angler's diary helps you become a better angler by reminding you of how fish were caught, what the weather was like, and what the fish were eating.



Figure 10. Tackle that is helpful to the beginning angler: (a) stringers or floating fish baskets can help keep fish fresh, (b) bait containers, (c) tackle box, (d) a landing net is useful with large fish, (e) a fillet knife is designed specifically for fish, (f) long nose pliers are a useful all-around tool, (g) finger nail clippers for clipping line.

## B. Adjusting the Drag

See the reel diagram for your reel to find the drag adjustment. There are two ways to adjust the drag. One is to tighten the drag (toward the + sign) until the line can be pulled directly from the reel with some resistance. (If a friend is helping, have him/her pull line from the pole, while you hold the pole as if fighting a fish). The other way is to use a weight that is equal to 1/3 the tensile strength of your line. Attach the weight to the line as if fishing and adjust the drag until the weight can just be lifted from the floor with the pole.

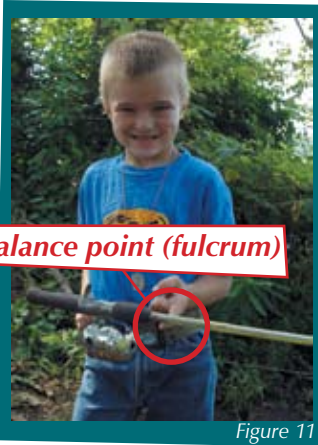


Figure 11

## C. Holding the Pole

Every pole has a balance point (fulcrum) with the reel and lure attached (*Figure 11*). If the angler holds the pole at this point, leverage to fight the fish is greater than when the pole is held behind this point. This also allows the angler to place the end of the pole (butt end) against the belt to fight larger fish.

## D. Retrieving

This is the act of bringing a bait or lure back to the angler (*Figure 12*). After casting, live and prepared bait are often left in one spot until retrieved. Some baits and most artificial lures are most effectively presented while retrieving. The retrieve can be slow or fast; it can be steady or erratic.

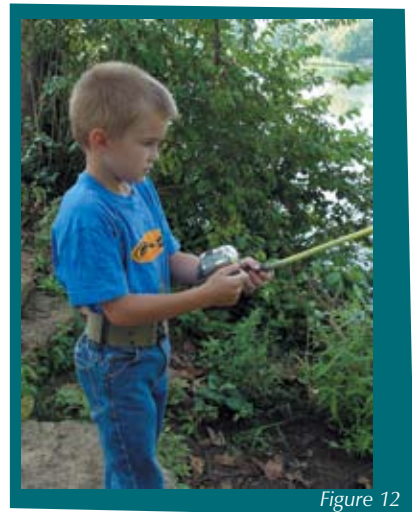


Figure 12

## E. Setting the Hook

Once the fish bites the lure, the hook must be pulled into the fish to hold the fish. If using barbed hooks, pull hard enough to pull the barb into the jaw. Then the fish can be brought to the angler (*Figure 13*). When the fish bites, the fishing rod should be quickly pulled up to

set the hook into the fish. The force needed to set the hook depends on the rod, line, species of fish, and the lure or bait used. For example, a crappie caught on a light line and minnows will need only a gentle lifting of the rod to set the hook. A bass angler, fishing with heavier line and the hook buried in a plastic worm, will need a vigorous rod sweep to force the hook through the worm and into the bony mouth of a bass.

## F. Playing the Fish

After setting the hook, the line should be kept tight so the fish will not shake the hook loose. The fishing rod should be held between a 10 o'clock and a 12 o'clock position. Allow the rod to fight the fish. Properly adjusted drag will allow the line to

release prior to breaking. Large fish must be moved by a pumping action; a large fish is repeatedly pulled toward the angler with the rod. After pulling the rod to the 12 o'clock position to move the fish, reel in the fishing line to maintain a tight line as the rod is lowered back to the 10 o'clock position.

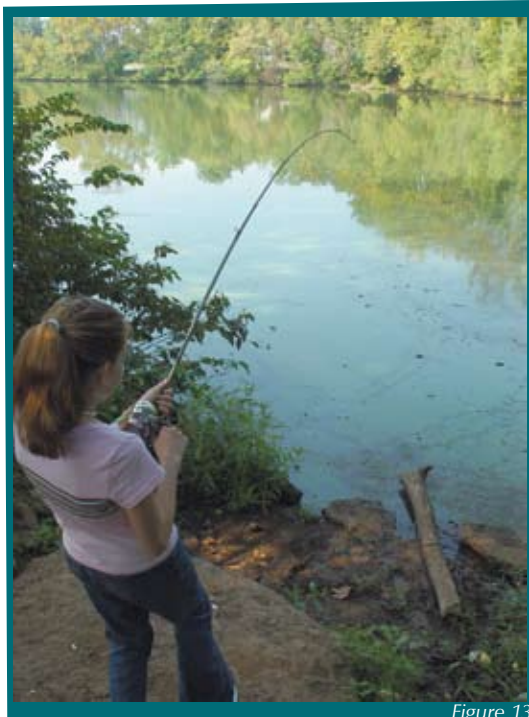


Figure 13

## Section 4. GOING FISHING

### A. Think Safety

When taking a new person fishing, it is important they have an enjoyable experience. Therefore, find a pond, lake or stream that is safe and easily fished. As they learn and advance their skills, new challenges can be introduced; however, always include the safety equipment required for the new situation.

## B. Choosing Where to Fish

Some fishing areas are better than others. The quality of fishing depends upon the water's productivity, the fish species present, and the size of the fish present. Productive water has more fish than unproductive water; up to a point, the greener the water is, the more productive the water. In some waters, undesirable fish compete with desirable fish. Fishing is better in a lake with a high proportion of the right size fish. Check the fishing forecast for predicted "hot spots."

Habitat is the key to fish survival, and fishing near habitat will result in more bites. Stumps, weed beds, and man-made fish attractors are all good examples of fish habitat. During summer, fish can be found near fishing or boating docks, as they prefer shaded areas.



In streams and rivers, anglers focus on riffles, the swift areas that bring food into the deep, slower portions. Fish congregate in this area and feed more actively as water begins to rise and carry more food. Also you should try areas that fish use for resting. Fish rest in areas where the current is slowed by rocks, trees or in eddies near the swift water.

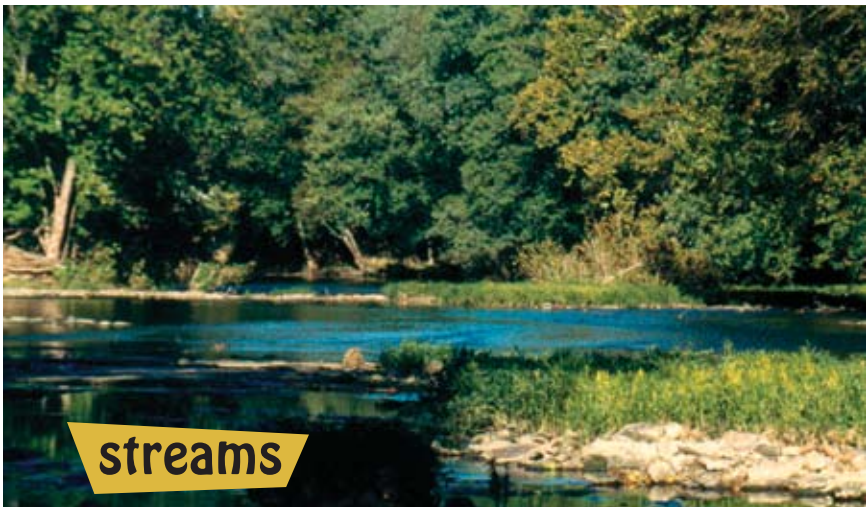
Current attracts fish in reservoirs as well as in streams. Current flow rates are higher under bridges; therefore, bank fishing from highway bridge approaches or near bridges from a boat can be good. Safety should be a top priority in these bank areas, including the use of life jackets.

The areas below dams are called tailwaters. As fish migrate up river to spawn, they sometimes encounter a dam. Since many fish are migrating together, fish are concentrated. Fishing can be very good



at specific times of the year. Caution should be used in these areas, including the use of life jackets. If fishing these areas from a boat, maintain appropriate distance from the discharge areas for safety and as required by law.

**1. Private Waters.** Private ponds, streams and rivers are often excellent places to fish. The permission of the owner is required to fish water when you are walking on private property. A few simple courtes-





## tailwaters

sies will help you get invited back.

- If you desire to keep any fish from a stocked pond, ask how many, what species, and what size fish you may keep.
- Ask the owner if they would like any of your catch.
- Ask before you bring anyone with you.
- Do not litter.
- Close all gates behind you.
- Report any problems immediately to the owner.

**2. Public Waters.** Larger lakes are normally managed by public entities such as the Army Corps of Engineers, Tennessee Valley Authority, state wildlife agency or perhaps a power company. Public access points allow anglers boating and fishing access. For more information contact the information division of your state fish and wildlife agency.

## C. What Fish Live Here?

Most ponds have a combination of large-mouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, and channel catfish. Larger lakes will have more variety. Streams and rivers will have many of the native fishes, plus a few introduced species.

### Bluegill



**Smallmouth  
Bass**



**Pumpkinseed**

**Largemouth  
Bass**



**Rock Bass**



Check the fish identification booklet from your state fish and wildlife agency to find the proper habitat to fish for a given species.

## D. Choosing Bait

Every angler has a favorite bait or lure to catch fish. It works because that lure is on the line most often. By sharing information with new anglers, we help them be successful while learning the variety of fishing techniques.

Live bait simulates food items that fish normally eat. Bait that is alive and moving after you hook it will catch more fish. Some bait is available year-round and some is seasonal. See your state's fish ID book for ideas on what baits work for which fish.



**Meal worm** - Insert a size 6 - 8 hook into the underside of the meal worm (note tiny legs) near one end. Run the hook inside and bring the point of the hook out near the opposite end.

**Red worm** - Run the hook, usually a size 6 - 8, through the worm about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from one end. Go through the worm about every inch leaving  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch wriggling at the other end.



**Night crawler** - Use larger hooks, such as size 2. Can either be hooked like a red worm or in one spot only. To give the worm a natural look, run the hook inside the worm to hide the shank and barely bring the point of the hook through the skin of the worm.

**Minnow** - Size of hook varies depending on size of minnow and target fish. Two methods: 1. Run hook through both lips of the minnow. 2. Run hook through the back behind the dorsal (top) fin (be careful not to pierce the spine).



**Cricket** - Use a size 8, long shank hook. Looking at the back of the cricket, run the point of the hook under the sheath behind the head. Bring the point of the hook out behind the sheath.





**Artificial lures** - If you do not want to use live bait, you can select from a variety of artificial lures.

## Section 5. CARING FOR THE CATCH

Before your fishing trip begins, you should plan how you will care for your catch. The decision to catch and release or keep should be made before you catch your first fish.

### A. Catch and Release

If the decision is to release fish, all fish should be handled as little as possible and fish should be returned to the water as quickly as possible. The best method is to hold the fish in the water, reach to the fish and remove the hook with needle nose pliers (*Figure 14*). If you need to remove the fish from the water, return it as quickly as possible. In warmer water, moving the fish back and forth with water entering the mouth will help the fish recover more quickly. However, in some cases, fish caught from deep in a lake (cool water) can not swim back down to the cool water due to air bladder expansion. They may not survive if released in warm surface water, and anglers should consider keeping legal fish rather than releasing them.



Figure 14

## **B. Catch and Keep.**

Anglers who choose to keep and eat the fish they catch should refer to their state's annual fishing guide for the latest updates on creel and size limits plus fish consumption advisories. By knowing how many fish you intend to keep and what size (selective release), you can plan for other equipment. Many fish are kept in floating fish baskets or on stringers; however these work best in cooler weather. In warmer water, fish tend to die quickly due to stress from heat and from being caught. All fish are best when they are kept fresh on ice. To keep your cooler clean and to keep fish out of the water, use a plastic bag to isolate your catch.



## C. Cleaning Your Catch.

After you leave the water with your catch, you want to properly prepare it for eating. There are two different ways to clean your catch: filleting and dressing.

**1. Filleting** (Figures 15-19) involves cutting the edible part of the fish away from the inedible part; no bones are left in the edible portion.

**2. Dressing** (Figures 20-22) implies taking off parts that cannot be eaten, and most bones are left with the edible portion. Some fish, like catfish, have a skin that must be removed (Figures 23 and 24). Other fish have to be scaled with a knife or a spoon (Figure 20).

# FILLETING



*Figure 15.* Filletting fish, such as bass, removes all bones from the meat. To fillet a bass, place the fish on its side on a firm, flat surface. Make a cut behind the gill plate from the top of the fish to the belly and into the flesh to the backbone. Do not cut through the backbone.



*Figure 16.* Without removing the knife turn the blade toward the tail, cut through the ribs, and continue on the tail, closely following the backbone as a guide. Do not cut through the skin completely at the tail, but leave a half to one inch intact.



*Figure 17.* Flip the fillet over, skin side down, and insert the blade between the skin and the meat.



*Figure 18.* With a sawing motion, follow the inside of the skin closely with the blade and cut the meat away from the skin.



*Figure 19.* Cut the ribs away from the skinless fillet. Repeat the steps for the other side of the fish.

# DRESSING



*Figure 20.* Small fish, such as bream (sunfish), are usually dressed. Dressing a fish leaves some of the bones in the meat, but less meat is lost during the cleaning process.



*Figure 21.* To dress a small fish, place the fish on its side on a firm, flat surface. Use one hand to hold it in place by the head. Scrape the scales from the tail toward the head by using a fish scaler, spoon, or dull knife. Remove the scales on both sides of the body.



*Figure 22.* Use a fillet knife to cut along both sides of the dorsal fin. Grasp the dorsal fin and pull forward to remove. Spines should pull out with fin. Repeat process to remove the anal fin and spines.



*Figure 23.* Cut off the head immediately behind the gills and remove the organs. Wash in cold, clean water. The fish is now ready to freeze or cook.

*Figure 24.* Some fish, such as catfish, are usually skinned. To skin a catfish, first remove the spines to prevent puncture of a hand or finger. Cut through the skin around the head and pectoral fins. Do not penetrate the body cavity.



*Figure 25.* Using a pair of pliers, pull the skin away from the meat, working from the head toward the tail. Break or cut the head away from the backbone and remove the internal organs.



*Figure 26.* The finished product, ready for the skillet.



## D. Final Touches for Fillets

Many fish have a dark strip on the “skin side” of the fillet. This is what is left of a blood vessel that took blood to the tail. It is also a place where fat has been stored, and fat is associated with some of the pollutants that accumulate in fish flesh.

Using a fillet knife, lift that fat and dark area out.

- (1) Make a “v-cut” the full length of the fillet from both sides of the dark area.
- (2) Now lift out the dark meat out, gently cutting underneath it, and discard that portion.

Next look on both edges of the fillet for white or yellow fat. Trim that fat and your fillet is ready for your fish fry!

Eating fish, even fish from an area listed in fish advisories, is a choice you make as an angler. By limiting your consumption rate, selecting smaller fish to eat (less time to accumulate pollutants), removing as much of the potentially polluted flesh (fat) as possible, and cooking it properly, you lower your risk dramatically. For more information on fish advisories, see your state’s fishing guide.



## E. Caring for Cleaned Fish

Once fish are cleaned, they should be washed thoroughly, then frozen immediately or refrigerated and cooked within three days. Frozen fish may develop freezer burn unless they are tightly wrapped or frozen in water. When freezing fish in water, you should use just enough water to cover them. Plastic freezer bags work well for fillets, if they can be sealed without leaking.

There are numerous cookbooks that have a variety of recipes and methods for cooking fish for the table. By trying many different ways of fixing fish, the angler finds those dishes that best suit individual tastes.

# GLOSSARY

**bait** - usually refers to something natural or live that is used to attract fish to bite. The terms bait and lure may be used interchangeably.

**bite** - when a fish tries to take a bait (or lure). Also called a strike.

**casting** - the skill of propelling a bait or lure into the water.

**cleaning** - preparing your catch for eating.

**conservation** - the wise use of natural resources.

**creel limit** - the number of fish an angler can keep in a day.

**dressed** - fish prepared for eating complete with bones.

**dropper** - a separate line tied onto the main line near the hook. It is used to attach a weight to a separate line or to fish two hooks.

**fillet** - cleaning a fish by cutting the edible portion from the bones.

**fishing line** - special flexible fiber; connects fishing reel to the hook.

**float, bobber or cork** - maintains bait at given depth, indicates bites.

**habitat** - combination of food, water, shelter and space that attracts given animal.

**land** - bringing the fish to the land or to a net for capture.

**leader** - the piece of line attached to the hook.

**lunker** - a large specimen of a species of fish.

**lure** - usually refers to man-made bait used to entice fish to bite.

**monofilament** - fishing line with a single strand of material.

**multifilament** - fishing line that is several strands woven together.

**playing** - process of bringing a fish to the angler so it can be landed.

**reel** - a device that holds and retrieves fishing line.

**retrieving** - the act of bringing a bait or lure back to the angler.

**rigging** - how you hook your bait and where you put your hook, snap or swivel, weight and float.

**rod** - a pole with guides that is used to cast a lure or bait.

**selective harvest** - personal ethics that includes reduced harvest within established legal size and creel limits.

**setting the hook** - pulling the rod up sharply when a fish bites.

**sinker** - used to help cast or help sink the bait or lure; a weight.

**slot limit** - a limit to protect fish between specified sizes. Usually extends life of predators or reduces number of small fish.

**snap, swivel or snap-swivel** - a small metal device tied onto fishing line; used to quickly attach lures to the line. Keeps line from twisting.

**strike** - when a fish takes or tries to take a lure (or bait).

**structure** - any area that causes fish to be concentrated.

**tailwater** - area below a reservoir.

**terminal tackle** - placement of tackle at the end of the line.

## Notes

# Ethics

An ethical angler:

- Keeps only the fish needed...
- Does not use illegal live bait...
- Uses only native aquatic species for bait and does not release aquatic bait...
- Properly disposes of trash and waste, including old fish line...
- Observes all applicable laws and regulations...
- Practices safe angling and boating...
- Hones angling and boating skills and passes knowledge to others...
- Respects the rights of other anglers and property owners...
- Supports local conservation efforts.



*Kentucky*  
UNBRIDLED SPIRIT™