

Catching a Fish

- Fish like cover such as overhanging or downed trees, docks and weeds. Make your cast near these areas.
- Watch your bobber. If it starts to go under the water, a fish is biting.
- When you think a fish is biting, quickly lift the rod and start reeling in quickly. This will set the hook in the fish's mouth. Don't wait too long, or the fish may swallow the hook. If it does, clip the line close to the hook rather than ripping it out.

Handling Fish

• Spiny-Rayed Fish

– Some fish such as perch and bluegill have a spiny dorsal (top) fin. Handle these fish by sliding your hand over the head towards the fin and slowly pushing down the fin.



• Largemouth/ Smallmouth Bass

– Hold a bass by its lower lip. Place your thumb inside its mouth and squeeze the jaw between your thumb and index finger. Support larger fish by the belly.



• Catfish/ Bullhead

– These fish have spines on their top and side (pectoral fins). Slide your hand along the bottom of the fish until your thumb rests behind one pectoral fin and fingers rest behind the other.



• Pike and Pickerel

– Hold pike, pickerel and other fish with teeth behind the head, while supporting the body with your other hand.



TRY A WACKY RIG

Bored with using natural bait or just want to move onto a more advanced fishing technique? Give Wacky Rigging a try. This easy and extremely effective technique is a great way to catch bass and other species. Here's how:

- Rig a 5-inch plastic stick bait (Senko® type) with an O-ring in the middle of the bait. A wacky rigging tool (available at most tackle shops) can help with this. Purple or watermelon colors are effective in most waters.
- Tie a 1/0 or 2/0 circle hook to your line and slide the hook under the O-ring.
- Cast towards cover and let the bait slowly fall to the bottom. Retrieve it in a twitch-pause pattern.
- If the line begins to move or you feel any resistance, reel steadily (do not set the hook) until the hook is set in the fish's mouth.



Additional Information

If you have questions or would like to request a printed copy of the I FISH NY Beginners Guide to Freshwater Fishing, email fwfish@dec.ny.gov, or download it at www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/98506.html.



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

I NY FRESHWATER FISHING BASICS FOR BEGINNERS



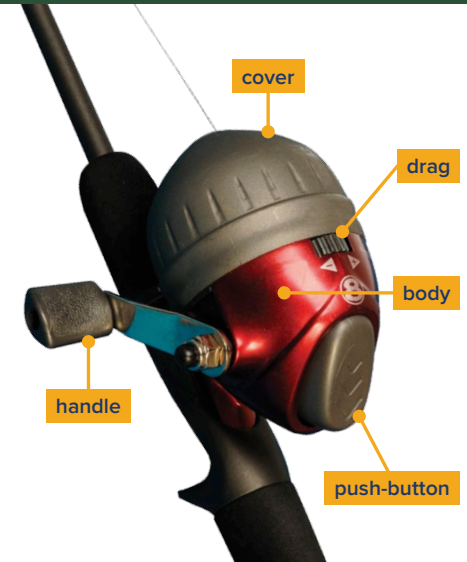
BASIC GEAR AND BAIT

Rod and Reel

Start with easy-to-use spin-casting tackle. Spin-casting tackle consists of a push-button, closed-faced reel mounted on a light- to medium-action rod. ("Rod action" is indicated just above the rod handle.) Choose a rod that is your height or shorter for better control.

Fishing Line

Monofilament line is the best choice for beginning anglers. Fishing line comes in different strengths called "pound test." Eight-pound test is a good all-around weight for a variety of species.



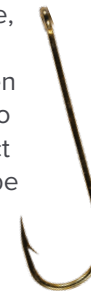
A spin-casting rod and reel is a good first choice.

FISHING LICENSE

If you are 16 years of age or older you must have a freshwater fishing license. Licenses can be purchased online at www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6101.html, or by calling 1-866-933-2257, or at many sporting goods and large discount stores and town clerks offices.

Hooks

Many hook styles are available, but the best for beginners fishing with bait is an Aberdeen hook. Use a hook that is not so big that a fish can easily detect it, but not so small that it can be easily swallowed. For panfish and trout, use a number #6 or #8 hook.



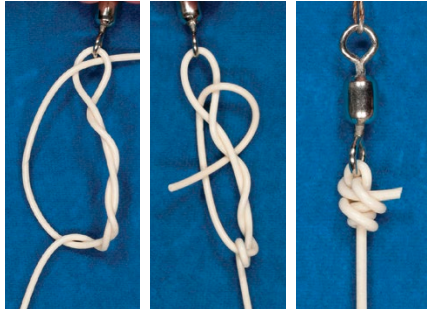
BARBLESS HOOKS

Some beginning anglers or parents of young anglers are more comfortable using barbless hooks, which are easy to remove if you accidentally hook yourself. Make hooks barbless by simply crimping down hook barbs with a pair of pliers. Though barbless hooks are safer for you, a fish can wiggle off easier, so keep a tight line when reeling your fish in.

Tying a Hook to Your Line

The improved clinch knot is an easy and strong knot that helps ensure a fish does not break your line. To tie it:

1. Thread the line end through the hook eye and bring it back toward the line.
2. Twist the end around the line six times.
3. Thread the end back through the loop nearest the eye, then bring it back through the big loop.
4. Moisten the line, then, holding the hook, pull the knot tight until it looks like the knot shown.



Bobbers

A bobber or float:

- Suspends bait above the bottom, weeds or other cover.
- Indicates when fish are striking (biting or nibbling).
- Provides additional weight when casting.

Use the smallest size bobber that you can easily see and that holds your bait without sinking. The smaller the bobber, the less resistance a fish will feel and the more likely it will hold onto the bait. Slide the bobber up or down the line to set the bait depth.



Bobber and Bait Rig

This is the best rig for beginners because the bobber lets you know when a fish takes the bait. You can use this rig with all types of live bait. A split-shot sinker is optional and should only be used if necessary to improve casting or keep your bait down.



Baits: What Types Should I Use?

Natural Bait

More fish are caught on natural bait than artificial lures and baits combined. Of the many types of natural bait, earthworms are the easiest to find and can be used for a variety of fish species. Purchase worms at any store that sells bait, or look for them under leaves or rocks. Keep worms in the shade, in a can with moist soil. Hook them in one of the ways shown.



Synthetic Bait

Synthetic baits scented with fish attractants, such as Gulp!® and Powerbait®, can also be very effective and are a good alternative for anglers who are uncomfortable using live bait.

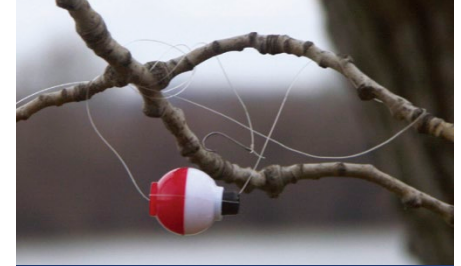
BASIC TECHNIQUES

Casting

Practice casting before going fishing. Your backyard, a park, or a ballfield are perfect places to practice. Use the plastic casting plug that may have come with your rod and reel, or buy one at a sporting goods store.

Here's how to cast with spin-cast tackle:

- Let line out by pressing and releasing the reel's push-button.
- Turn the reel handle clockwise and reel in the plug until it is about 6 inches below the rod tip.
- Look behind you to make sure you won't hit anyone or anything while casting.
- Press and hold down the push-button.
- Bring the rod back over your shoulder to about the 10 o'clock position.
- Sweep the rod forward and take your thumb off the button when the rod reaches the one o'clock position in front of you.
- Turn the reel handle clockwise to engage the reel. This will allow you to reel the line back in.



A good way to practice casting is in your backyard with a practice plug