



FISHING

Catch Me If You Can

Fishing is a delightful way to get outdoors, to match wits with nature, to spend time with your friends, and even to keep yourself fed. That doesn't mean fishing is always easy. You have to find the fish first and then know how to catch them—and that can vary due to the weather, the time of day, the time of year, and other factors. But when you outsmart the fish and reel in a champion, you will be hooked—no pun intended!—and you will want to keep coming back for more.

Scouting's founder, Robert Baden-Powell, was an avid fly-fisherman and a pioneer of "catch and release" fishing. He said, "When you catch your fish, do as I do—only keep those you specially want for food; put back the others the moment you have landed them." He also said, "Every Scout ought to be able to fish in order to get food for himself."

Fishing has been part of the Scouting program from the beginning. The Angling merit badge (now Fishing) was one of the very first merit badges, and more than 2 million Scouts have earned it since 1911. Today, Scouts can choose two different fishing-related badges: Fishing and Fly-Fishing.

Objectives

This month's activities should:

- Introduce basic fishing skills to Scouts who have limited exposure to fishing.
- Improve the fishing skills of Scouts at all levels of experience.
- Ensure that Scouts have a reasonable chance for success by teaching them how to find fish, how to fish for them, how to set a hook, and how to play fish to land them.
- Teach Scouts what equipment is needed, how to cast efficiently, how to rig their outfits effectively, and how to take proper care of all the gear.
- Introduce important knots, including where and why each is used.
- Teach Scouts how to release their catch or prepare it for cooking.
- Cover possible risks and health threats while fishing and how to deal with the most likely problems.
- Emphasize conservation and the role that no-trace guidelines play in sport fishing.

In 2002, Baden-Powell was inducted into the International Game Fish Association's Fishing Hall of Fame, an elite group that includes Isaak Walton and Ernest Hemingway.

RELATED ADVANCEMENT AND AWARDS

- Tenderfoot requirement 1b
- Second Class requirements 1a and 4
- First Class requirements 1a, 6b, and 10
- Fish and Wildlife Management, Fishing, and Fly-Fishing merit badges
- Complete Angler recognition
- William T. Hornaday Award
- Ranger: Fishing elective



Leadership Planning

As a leadership team, you may want to discuss the following items during your planning meetings when choosing fishing as your program feature.

1. Where can we find qualified fishing instructors to teach during the weekly meetings? (Merit badge counselors or BSA-trained angling instructors would be ideal.)
2. Where is the best location for a fishing event?
3. What fishing equipment will we need, and where can we acquire it?
4. What rules and regulations apply in our area? Do Scouts need fishing licenses?
5. What lures or bait should we use to attract the fish that live in our selected fishing location?
6. How will we prepare for the expected weather conditions?
7. To meet our needs, what should we change in the sample meeting plans?

PARENTS CAN HELP WITH THE FISHING PROGRAM FEATURE BY:

1. Sharing their fishing equipment, lures, boats, etc.
2. Providing expertise in instruction at weekly meetings and assistance and leadership on the fishing trip
3. Helping to identify good fishing locations
4. Helping to find good fishing talent to provide quality instruction
5. Contacting your state aquatic resource education coordinator, who may provide equipment, supplies, and perhaps instructors

6. Providing transportation for the main event
7. Maintaining current Youth Protection certification, which is required of all adults providing transportation for or participating in outings.

HOW TO CATCH AND HANDLE FISH

Where to Fish

To identify good fishing locations, visit a local tackle store, or talk with fishermen you know. You can also find destinations through the Take Me Fishing website, www.takemefishing.org. Just look for the "Places to Boat and Fish" section.

Fishing Gear

The gear you will use depends on where you choose to fish, the type of fish you want to catch, and the kind of equipment you can get. To get recommendations, contact local fish and wildlife agencies and tackle stores, and talk to friends or neighbors who fish. Your Scout camp may offer equipment, but it may be incomplete, so prechecking and repairing may be needed. Many families own fishing gear you might be able to borrow, and some state and local agencies have equipment they will loan. Just be sure to return gear in better shape than you receive it.

How to Detect a Strike and Set the Hook

If you are using live bait such as worms or artificial bait like Gulp or PowerBait, cast your line into the water, let the bait sink, and wait for the fish to take it. When you see the line move unnaturally (not with the current), a fish is taking the bait. Raise the rod tip sharply with a short tug. You should also feel the strike in the rod and see the rod tip bend, if only slightly. Set the hook in the same manner, and then the fight begins.

If you are using a lure that imitates a minnow, leach, frog, or other similar bait, you must cast it out and make the lure swim. You will retrieve the line by reeling it back toward you. This can be



done slowly, somewhat intermittently, or rather fast. Different fish respond differently to the retrieve; some study and practice will reveal the best method.

How to Play and Land a Fish

The object is to bring the fish to you as quickly and efficiently as possible without having it break your line or unhook itself. It is important not to allow too much slack. The fish will determine how you need to play it. Keep the rod tip high as the flexibility of the rod will absorb the bursts of pressure the fish brings. If the fish is strong enough to take the line out, set the reel's drag system to keep tension but still let the line go off the reel without breaking. As the fish tires a bit, begin to reel it in until it makes another run. This is called playing the fish. Once you have control, either net it or bring it on the bank.

How to Remove the Hook and Release a Fish Safely

To handle a fish you wish to release, first wet your hand. Hold the fish gently, remove the hook, and get the fish back into the water quickly. You may need to hold the fish in the water facing forward and into the current, and move it back and forth gently to force water through its gills. It will then swim from your hand.

To learn how to clean and cook a fish, refer to the Fishing merit badge pamphlet.

Staying Safe While Fishing

1. Health and safety for Scouts is a no-brainer.
2. Always use the buddy system.
3. Let others know where you are fishing and when you will meet or return.
4. Dress appropriately for the weather.
5. Be observant to ensure that no one is in harm's way while you are casting.
6. Watch for steep inclines at the water's edge and for rocks and stumps while wading.
7. If someone is hooked, all parties must stop and not move. Remove the hook only if it is on the surface of the skin or on the clothing; otherwise, seek help for proper hook removal.
8. Safety glasses or sunglasses are highly recommended.
9. A wide-brimmed hat is advisable to prevent overheating, reduce glare, and fend off any stray hooks coming your way.
10. Be sure to have ample drinking water to avoid dehydration.
11. Review the standard safety procedures concerning cuts, scratches, and other wounds.
12. Understand that hypothermia can be a risk even during the summer months, and be sure you know how to prevent and treat heat exhaustion and heatstroke.
13. A fishing rod can become a lightning rod. During thunderstorms, set your rod down until the weather clears.

FISHING TACKLE CHECKLIST

- Tackle box
- Fishing rods, reels, and line
- Appropriate live bait and cool storage
- Assorted lures, hooks, and flies
- Bobbers, snap swivels, and sinkers
- Nail clippers, pliers, and forceps
- Backup monofilament line and leaders
- Landing net and measuring device

For comfort, safety, and being prepared for the weather conditions, consider rain gear, a bandanna, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses.

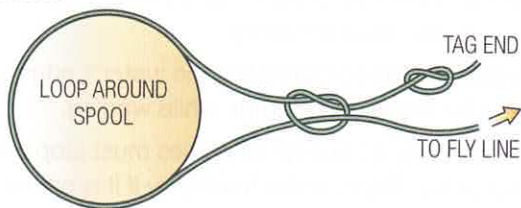
- Fish identification booklet
- Stringer for keeping fish
- Fish-cleaning knife and cooking equipment
- Fishing regulations and license (if required)
- First-aid kit
- Proper shoes and spare socks
- Sunscreen (with an SPF of at least 15) and insect repellent



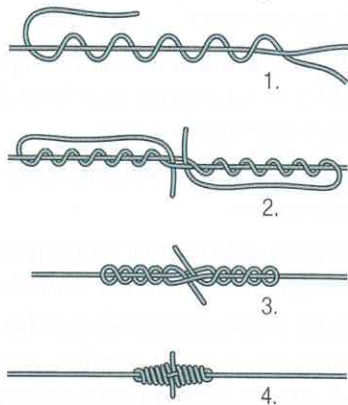
Fishing Knots

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and a fishing line is only as strong as its knots. It's sad to lose a nice fish because of a poorly tied knot. In fishing, several knots serve specific purposes; several other knot options serve the same purpose. Here are some knots you should know.

The **arbor knot** is used to attach fishing line to the reel arbor, keeping the line from coming loose on the reel.



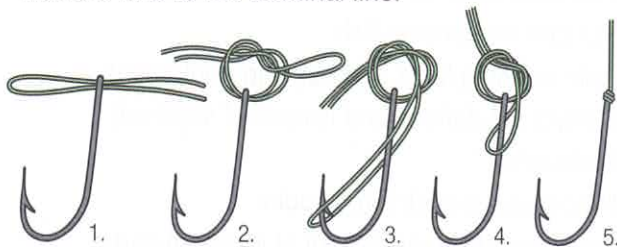
The **blood knot** (or **barrel knot**) attaches two lengths of monofilament lines together.



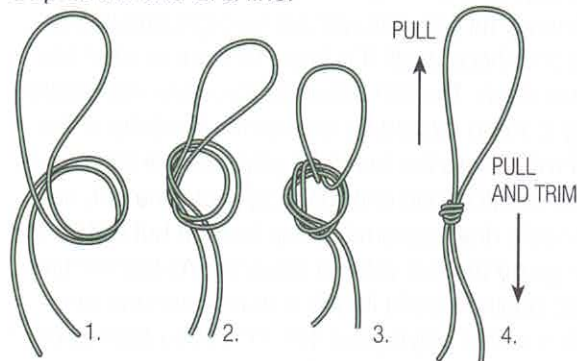
The **improved clinch knot** attaches the terminal line to a hook, lure, or swivel.



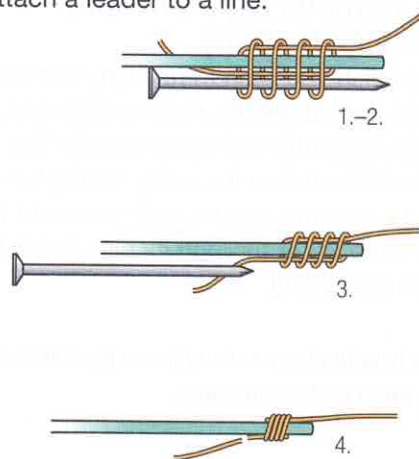
The **Palomar knot** is another option to attach a hook or lure to the terminal line.



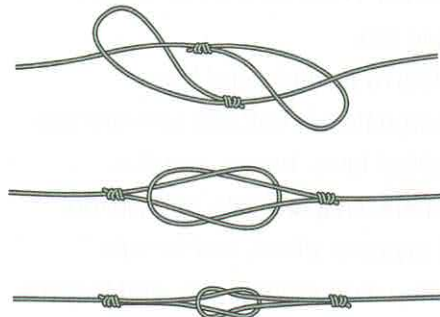
The **double surgeon's loop** creates a secure open loop at the end of a line.



The **nail knot** is used to tie a fly line to the backing or to attach a leader to a line.



The **loop to loop knot** is a very effective way to connect two loops together.



For tying instruction, see the *Fishing* and *Fly-Fishing* merit badge pamphlets. You can find animated tying instructions at www.animatedknots.com/indexfishing.php. These pamphlets also have safety and first-aid information related to fishing.



FISHING GAMES

Fish Identification Challenge

Equipment: Several Backyard Bass (plastic casting targets shaped like fish, available at backyardbass.com), pictures of different fish, clear packing tape, permanent marker



Preparation: On the underside of each Backyard Bass, attach a picture of a fish with clear packing tape. Using a permanent marker, write a point value from 1 to 5 on each fish. Assign lower point values to fish that are easier to identify, such as bluegills, and higher values to more difficult fish, such as sturgeon.

How to play: Give each Scout three to five opportunities to cast and catch fish. (Do not use hooks; use only hookless lures or casting plugs.)

Scoring: Award points to Scouts only if they can identify the picture of the fish they catch.

Variation: Award points for catching a fish and bonus points for identification.

Casting Accuracy Challenge

Equipment: Several Backyard Bass, hula hoops or plates, caution or surveyor's tape

Preparation: Use the tape to create a line simulating a shoreline. Spread the Backyard Bass and hula hoops or plates on the lawn.

How to play: From the shore, Scouts practice casting to catch the Backyard Bass or hit the hula hoops or plates. (No hooks; use only hookless lures or casting plugs.)

Scoring: Assign points for each successful cast. For example, you could give 1 point for hitting inside a hula hoop, 2 points for hitting a plate, and 3 points for catching a Backyard Bass.

Fishing-Knot-Tying Relay

Equipment: Two 12-inch fishing lines per team (two different gauges with a large hook and cork to guard the hook point, or a simulated hook with an eye), 6-foot length of braided nylon cord or rope, clothespins, cards with the names of fishing knots (one knot per card)

Preparation: Tie the cord between two poles or three trees. Attach the cards to the cord with clothespins.

How to play: Teams line up in relay formation. On a signal, the first player runs to the suspended cord and ties one of the knots. A judge inspects the knot and either leaves it in place or unties it. Either way, the player runs back to tag the next player. Continue play until one team ties all the knots correctly.

Scoring: The first team to tie all the knots correctly wins.

Fishing Tackle Matching Game

Equipment: A variety of fishing tackle, such as an open-face spinner reel, a closed-face spinner reel, a bait casting reel, a fly-fishing reel, a plug, a spinner, a jig, and a streamer

How to play: Place the tackle on a table. Scouts must match each lure or fly with the right reel.

Scoring: Give 1 point for each correct answer.





E.D.G.E. Ideas

Explain how it is done—Tell them.

Demonstrate the steps—Show them.

Guide learners as they practice—Watch them do it.

Enable them to succeed on their own—Have them practice/teach it.

EXPLAIN

- Explain how Scouts can benefit from learning to fish.
- Discuss how fishing enjoys a strong history with Scouting.
- Review the basics of fishing tackle.
- Explain the physics of casting.
- Present the reasons to learn proper fishing knots.
- Review fishing safety and how to avoid negative incidents.
- Explain how to catch fish.

GUIDE

- Have Scouts practice casting on a lawn using hula hoops or plates as targets.
- Teach Scouts to tie basic fishing knots and practice.
- Have Scouts research types of fish in the surrounding area and identify them.
- Have available samples of live bait and show how to hook them for fishing.
- Bring a variety of lures and have Scouts describe how to fish each.

DEMONSTRATE

- Show examples of fishing tackle and demonstrate how to cast.
- Present examples of terminal tackle and show how to rig it.
- Demonstrate how to tie the five basic fishing knots.
- On diagrams of lakes and rivers, show where you are most likely to find fish.
- Using an orange or apple, demonstrate how to properly remove a hook lodged in the arm.
- Review gear needed for a fishing trip.

ENABLE

- Take Scouts fishing and catch fish.
- Let Scouts clean and cook a fish.
- Present challenging games to test Scouts' casting skills.
- Present challenging games to test Scouts' ability to tie knots.
- Encourage Scouts to complete the Fishing and Fly-Fishing merit badges.
- Utilize experienced Scouts to coach others on the weekend fishing trip.

MAIN EVENT SUMMARIES

● ESSENTIAL	■ CHALLENGING	◆ ADVANCED
Day or Overnight Activity	Overnight Activity	Weekend Activity
Fishing fundamentals outing—Plan a rewarding opportunity to take a fishing excursion. This could be a one-day trip to a local pond or stream or a weekend campout to a productive fishing location. You can find destinations through the Take Me Fishing website at www.takemefishing.org , under the "Places to Boat and Fish" section.	Fish and hike overnight—Plan a weekend where moderately experienced Scouts can expand their skills by using more advanced gear such as open-faced spinning tackle, mastering the fishing knots, and trying to catch more species of fish. Experience a wider variety of baits and lures. This will ideally be an overnight event that includes evening fishing plus using pack rods on a hiking trip to a more remote lake or river. Those who haven't earned the Fishing merit badge should be expected to complete all the requirements on this outing.	Fly-fishing and bait-casting weekend—Take a full-fledged fly-fishing or bait-casting weekend to work on the Fly-Fishing merit badge. A fly-fishing trip can include a variety of opportunities such as a trout stream, a remote location, a bass lake, or saltwater flats. An ideal bait-cast trip would include an adult bass fisherman who has a bass boat. However, any boat at a nice bass lake would do.






FISHING

Meeting Plan: Introduction to Fishing



Week 1 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	Display an album of great fishing pictures from the internet or other sources.		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 5 minutes	Discuss plans for the next four weeks and details of the main event.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 45 minutes   	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss the basics of fishing.• Outline the benefits and opportunities.• Demonstrate the spin-cast outfit, how it works, and how it is fished.• Challenge Scouts to complete the Fishing merit badge.		7:15 p.m.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have Scouts use an open-faced spinning outfit.• Demonstrate and instruct on how to best use spinning outfits effectively.• Challenge Scouts to complete the Fishing merit badge.		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce the opportunity for earning the Fly-Fishing merit badge during this month.• Teach fly-fishing basics.		
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin planning for participation in the main event.• Encourage the Scouts to involve their parents in helping with the main event; ask how they may be able to share expertise or fishing gear.		8 p.m.
Game 10 minutes	Play Fish Identification Challenge (described earlier).		8:15 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.






FISHING

Meeting Plan: Casting Technique



Week 2 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	Have several rods available for Scouts to review and cast to determine their skill levels. Include spincast, spinning, and fly rods. (Use a hookless lure or casting plug.)		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 5 minutes	Introduce the three types of fishing rods, and point out the one each skill level group should use. Discuss quickly the differences and why Scouts should use each.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 45 minutes	 Demonstrate and instruct Scouts to spincast outfits. Let them practice on a lawn with ample spacing using plugs or hookless lures. Remember, no hooks.		7:15 p.m.
	 Demonstrate casting with spinning outfits and instruct Scouts how to cast. Let them practice on a lawn with ample spacing using plugs or hookless lures. Remember, no hooks.		
	 Demonstrate roll cast and overhead cast fly-rod outfits and instruct Scouts in their use. Let them practice on a lawn with ample spacing using hookless flies or tufts of yarn. Remember, no hooks. Allow ample room both in front of and behind each Scout for casting.		
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate how each Scout did with casting, and offer more help if needed. Review how parents can help to support the fishing preparation and the main event. Determine who plans to go on the main event. Sign off Fishing or Fly-Fishing merit badge requirements as appropriate. 		8 p.m.
Game 10 minutes	Play Casting Accuracy Challenge (described earlier).		8:15 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.






FISHING

Meeting Plan: Knots



Week 3 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	Display a fishing knot board featuring five basic fishing knots: Palomar knot, improved clinch knot, double surgeon's knot, loop to loop, and blood knot. See who can identify each knot and its use.		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 10 minutes	Introduce the basic fishing knots and riggings. Explain how important it is to learn them in order to succeed.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 40 minutes	 Demonstrate the five basic knots, and instruct Scouts in tying them. Let them practice with small-diameter rope and then with monofilament line.		7:20 p.m.
	 Demonstrate the five basic knots, and instruct Scouts in tying them. Let them practice with small-diameter rope and then with monofilament line. If Scouts already know the knots, have them use the EDGE method to teach them to the other Scouts.		
	 Demonstrate the five basic knots plus a nail knot for fly-fishing, and instruct Scouts in tying them. Let them practice with small-diameter rope and then with monofilament line. If Scouts already know the knots, have them use the EDGE method to teach other Scouts.		
Breakout Groups 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue group planning for the main event.• Complete advancement requirements as needed.• Sign off on Fishing or Fly-Fishing merit badge requirements as appropriate.		8 p.m.
Game 10 minutes	Play Fishing-Knot-Tying Relay (described earlier).		8:15 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.



FISHING

Meeting Plan: How to Fish



Week 4 Date _____

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME*
Preopening 15 minutes before meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have older Scouts dress inappropriately for a fishing trip. Challenge other Scouts to tell them what should be changed, eliminated, or added for the upcoming trip. 		6:45 p.m.
Opening Ceremony 10 minutes	Flag presentation Oath and Law Uniform inspection		7 p.m.
Group Instruction 10 minutes	Explain that the Scouts are about to have a great outing, but only if they have prepared properly, including assembling all the necessary fishing tackle.		7:10 p.m.
Skills Instruction 45 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review all tackle Scouts will use and where or how they can obtain it. Discuss what will be supplied by the troop, and what they will be responsible for bringing. 		7:20 p.m.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review all tackle Scouts will use and where or how they can obtain it. Discuss what will be supplied by the troop, and what they will be responsible for bringing. Inspect the gear being provided by the unit or unit families. 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review all tackle Scouts will use and where or how they can obtain it. Discuss what will be supplied by the troop, and what they will be responsible for bringing. Inspect the gear being provided by the unit or unit families. Make repairs as needed. 		
Breakout Groups 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize plans for participation in the main event, including menus, shopping lists, and duty rosters. Sign off Fishing or Fly-Fishing merit badge requirements as appropriate. 		8:05 p.m.
Game 10 minutes	Play Fishing Tackle Matching Game (described earlier).		8:15 p.m.
Closing 5 minutes	Announcements Leader's minute Closing		8:25 p.m.
Total 90 minutes of meeting			
After the Meeting 15 minutes	Leadership team reviews plans for the next meeting and for the main event.		

*All times are suggested.



FISHING

Main Event: Fishing Fundamentals Outing



Date _____

Logistics

Location: _____

Departure time: _____

Return time: _____

Duration of activity: Day or overnight

Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____

Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____

Transportation: Group _____ Self _____

Essential (Tier I)

Plan a rewarding opportunity to take a fishing excursion. This could be a one-day trip to a local pond or stream or a weekend campout to a productive fishing location. You can find destinations through the Take Me Fishing website at www.takemefishing.org. Just look for the "Places to Boat and Fish" section.

Equipment List

- Fishing tackle (described earlier)
- Camping equipment, as needed
- Fishing licenses, as required
- Items for cleaning and cooking the fish as required for the Fishing merit badge
- Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)

Activity

- Locate a lake or river that offers a good chance for Scouts to be successful.
- Before leaving, double-check all fishing equipment, bait, and lures.
- On arrival, rig the rods and double-check all knots.
- Walk the area to locate good fishing spots and point out any hazards to avoid, such as poison ivy and venomous snakes.
- Have Scouts find buddies, decide meeting times and locations for checking in, and then go fishing.
- If keeping fish to cook, be sure to store them properly (cool and out of the sun), and clean them relatively soon.
- Evaluate the day and make notes of positives and negatives.

Safety

- Follow all rules, always use the buddy system, and be sure to take time for all the precautionary steps such as applying sun protection and insect repellent.
- Have available rain gear, flashlights, and a first-aid kit.
- Watch for inclement weather approaching, and move away from the water and fishing rods if a thunderstorm develops.
- Keep calm if an accident occurs, and deal with it confidently.
- Have a cellphone and numbers available in case of emergencies.
- Two-deep adult leadership is required for all activities.

Notes

Challenge the Scouts with more experience to help the others who may be having problems. Encourage Scouts to release their catch correctly, as it can be a wonderful experience to watch the fish return safely into the water.



FISHING

Main Event: Fish and Hike Overnight



Date _____

Logistics

Location: _____

Departure time: _____

Return time: _____

Duration of activity: Overnight

Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____

Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____

Transportation: Group _____ Self _____

Challenging (Tier II)

Plan a weekend where moderately experienced Scouts can expand their skills by using more advanced gear such as open-faced spinning tackle, mastering fishing knots, trying to catch more species of fish, and experiencing a wider variety of baits and lures. This will ideally be an overnight event that includes evening fishing as well as using pack rods on a hiking trip to a more remote lake or river. Those who have not yet earned the Fishing merit badge should be encouraged to complete all of the requirements.

Equipment List

- Fishing tackle (described earlier)
- Lightweight camping equipment
- Fishing licenses, as required
- Items for cleaning and cooking the fish as required for the Fishing merit badge
- Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)

Activity

- Locate a lake or river that offers a good chance for Scouts to be successful.
- Plan an itinerary that includes hiking to a remote fishing location.
- Before leaving, double-check all fishing equipment, bait, and lures.
- On arrival at the fishing site, rig the rods, and double-check all knots.
- Walk the area to locate good fishing spots as well as point out any hazards to avoid, such as poison ivy and venomous snakes.
- Have Scouts choose their buddies and decide on meeting times and locations for checking in, then go fishing.
- If keeping fish to cook, be sure to store them properly (cool and out of the sun), and clean them relatively soon.
- Evaluate the day, and make notes of positives and negatives.

Safety

- Follow all rules, always use the buddy system, and be sure to take time for all the precautionary steps such as applying sun protection and insect repellent.
- Have available rain gear, flashlights, and a first-aid kit.
- Watch for inclement weather approaching, and move away from the water and fishing rods if a thunderstorm develops.
- Keep calm if an accident occurs, and deal with it confidently.
- Have a cellphone and numbers available in case of emergencies.
- Two-deep adult leadership is required for all activities.

Notes

If your trip includes less-experienced Scouts, help ensure they have a rewarding fishing experience.



FISHING

Main Event: Fly-Fishing and Bait-Casting Weekend



Date _____

Logistics

Location: _____

Departure time: _____

Return time: _____

Duration of activity: Weekend

Budget: Completed _____ Approved _____

Camping: Duty roster _____ Menu _____

Transportation: Group _____ Self _____



Advanced (Tier III)

Take a full-fledged fly-fishing or bait-casting weekend to work on advanced fly-fishing techniques or the Fly-Fishing merit badge. A fly-fishing trip can include a variety of opportunities such as hiking to a remote location and fishing a trout stream, bass lake, or saltwater flats. An ideal bait-cast trip would include an adult bass fisherman who has a bass boat. However, any boat at a nice bass lake would do.

Equipment List

- Fishing tackle (described earlier)
- Lightweight camping equipment
- Fishing licenses, as required
- Items for cleaning and cooking the fish as required for the Fishing and Fly-Fishing merit badges
- Scout Basic Essentials (Review the list and take what you need.)

Activity

- Locate a lake or river that offers a good chance for Scouts to be successful.
- Review Safe Swim Defense and/or Safety Afloat requirements, as appropriate; ensure trained adult supervision.
- Before leaving, double-check all fishing equipment, bait, and lures.
- On arrival at the fishing site, rig the rods and double-check all knots.
- Walk the area to locate good fishing spots and point out any hazards to avoid, like poison ivy and venomous snakes.
- Have Scouts choose their buddies and decide meeting times and locations for checking in, then go fishing.
- If keeping fish to cook, be sure to store them properly (cool and out of the sun), and clean them relatively soon.
- Work toward completing the Fishing, Fly-Fishing, and Fish and Wildlife Management merit badges.

Safety

- Follow all rules, use the buddy system, and be sure to take time for all the precautionary steps such as applying sunscreen and insect repellent.
- When fishing in any watercraft, be sure to know and follow all the proper precautions (see the BSA's Safety Afloat guidelines online at www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/), and always wear a proper life jacket.
- Have rain gear, flashlights, and a first-aid kit within a reasonable distance.
- Watch for inclement weather approaching and move away from the water and fishing rods if a thunderstorm develops.
- Keep calm if an accident occurs and deal with it confidently.
- Two-deep adult leadership is required for all activities.

Notes

If your trip includes less-experienced Scouts, help ensure they have a rewarding fishing experience.



RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Books

Fish and Wildlife Management, Fishing, Fly-Fishing, and Sustainability merit badge pamphlets

Bashline, Sylvia. *The New Cleaning & Cooking Fish*. Creative Publishing International, 1999.

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Website: www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/fishing/

Federation of Fly Fishers

Website: www.fedflyfishers.org

Grog's Fishing Knots

Website: www.animatedknots.com/indexfishing.php

International Game Fish Association

Website: www.igfa.org

Trout Unlimited

Website: www.tu.org

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Website: www.fws.gov

The Federation of Fly Fishers, International Game Fish Association, and Trout Unlimited have each signed a memorandum of mutual support with the Boy Scouts of America that emphasizes an ongoing relationship to promote mutually beneficial programs such as the Fly-Fishing and Fishing merit badges.

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Related Program Features

Camping, Nature and Environment, Outdoor Ethics

Photo and Illustration Credits

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Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Ben Jelsema, Clermont, Florida, who helped develop the Fishing program feature.