

Let's Outfit a Tackle Box

A tackle box is fun to put together and a prize to keep for years of fine fishing.



I'll never forget my first tackle box; my grandparents gave it to me on my 12th birthday. It was small, with one tray. Inside were a few spoons, some bobbers, hooks, and a pack of split shots. It was every kid's dream, and I was the envy of my sister and two brothers.

Of course, when I got home I raided my dad's tackle box for all the things I thought were missing. I wish I had known more about fishing tackle back then. I would have chosen more

carefully, rather than acting like a fish and grabbing the shiniest, most colorful lures on the shelf.

But what should you have in your first tackle box?

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Strong Box

A small, top-opening tackle box with an attached tray is a good starter. Plastic boxes are rugged and waterproof. Select one with a sturdy handle, especially if you'll be carrying it on a bicycle or bus. Make sure it has a strong latch because nothing is worse than walking onto a dock or climbing into a boat and watching the box pop open and your favorite lures drop into the lake.

Hook, Line, and Sinker

Hooks The larger the number size, the smaller the hook. Hook sizes 6, 8, and 10 work well for stream trout and panfish. For bigger fish such as walleye and northern pike, take along 2, 1, and 1/0. Also take circle hooks, because they hook the fish in the mouth so you do not jerk the line to "set the hook."



Line Buy line made for your reel and keep a spare spool in your box. Pick up a knot-tying card at a bait shop to help you remember the improved clinch knot.

Sinkers To sink your fishing line below the water surface, you'll need small weights called split-shot sinkers. A split down the center allows you to pinch the sinker onto the line.



Split shot made of lead can poison loons and other birds and animals that swallow it. Never put a lead sinker in your mouth. Choose nonlead sinkers made of steel, tin, or other nontoxic materials.



And Bobbers

Usually plastic or foam, a bobber keeps your lure or bait at a certain depth and bobs to show you when a fish nibbles or takes the bait. A fixed bobber is easy to put on and take off. A slip bobber is easy to cast. Choose different sizes to match the weight of the bait.

Awesome Lures

Choose lures in sizes made to catch the fish you pursue. It makes sense to buy a monster muskie lure only if you plan to fish for muskies.

Jigs look like insects, small fish, or other natural fish food. A jig has a hook and weighted head, so you don't need to add split shot. Many have a tail made of feathers, hair, or soft plastic. A jig can work for almost any fish species.



Plastic worms

sometimes contain scents to attract fish. Try them in many shapes and sizes for bass, sunfish, and walleye.



Spinners have one or more blades that spin around a metal shaft. Most have tails of soft plastic or animal hair. Trout, bass, and northern pike see the flash of spinning blades and feel vibrations.

Diving lures or crankbaits imitate minnows. The “lips” cause them to dive and wiggle, luring big predators such as bass, walleye, northerns, and muskies.



Surface lures or poppers float like insects or frogs. Try various sizes for all species.

Spoons have a large blade that wobbles like a minnow. Cast one to attract trout, northern pike, walleye, bass, and salmon.



Fresh Bait

Add a live minnow, leech, or worm to your artificial lure to entice fish to bite. Bread and whole-kernel canned corn also work great for many fish species.

Must Haves

Minnesota Fishing Regulations booklet

outlines laws every angler must follow. Find it at bait shops or online at www.dnr.state.mn.us/regulations/fishing. Also look for signs posted at docks and boat ramps for regulations on specific lakes.



Fishing licenses are required for anglers 16 years of age or older.

Rulers measure your fish so you can follow any special regulations that allow you to keep only fish of a certain length.

PFD (life vest) should be worn in a boat or if wading.



Handy Gadgets

Leaders, 6- to 12-inch pieces of line often with a metal core, keep big fish from biting off line and swimming away with your lure.

Snap swivels keep line from twisting.

Fingernail clippers are handy when trimming a knot, adding line, or cutting a fish free after it swallowed a hook.



Needle-nose pliers help you gently and safely remove a hook.

Practice plug for casting helps sharpen your skills.

Stringers help keep your catch fresh in the water.

Lake or stream maps help you find the best fishing spots. Go to www.dnr.state.mn.us and look under Lake Finder.



Safety Gear

Whistles can be heard five times farther than a human yelling “HELP!” International distress signal: three whistle blasts, wait, and repeat.

First-aid kit has supplies to treat bug bites, scratches, or wounds.

Sun protection includes sunscreen, sunglasses, and a hat with a brim.

Drinking water keeps you from getting dehydrated while stalking fish.

So there you have it—your lists for starting a top-notch tackle box. Whatever tackle you put inside, remember that part of the fun is keeping it organized. With a neat, well-stocked tackle box, you’re ready for fine fishing adventures! To learn more fishing skills and good stewardship of Minnesota’s waters and fish, visit www.dnr.state.mn.us/minnaqua. ●

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