

PIER NOTES


A take-along guide for fishing with kids



Casting, Finding,
Landing, and
Fish Senses

Casting a Spin-Cast Rig



Step 1: Push the casting button and hold it in. Watch for people and obstacles. 



Step 2: Slowly bring the rod tip overhead and behind you. This is the “back cast.”



Step 3: Quickly bring the rod tip overhead and forward. Release the button when the tip is overhead.

Troubleshooting: Avoid these common mistakes



The Lob—If the tackle goes high in the air, you are releasing the button too soon.



The Grounder—If the tackle goes straight down, you are releasing the button just a bit too late.



The Winder—If the tackle tangles around the pole, it probably happened on your back cast. Go slowly and smoothly on the back cast.

SAFETY, SAFETY, SAFETY!



When it comes to casting, the safety message can't be repeated enough. Be sure you know where your hook is at all times. When fishing from shore, stay a pole's length away from your neighbor. When fishing off a pier, don't bother casting—just drop your line straight down.

Did you know?

You can practice casting in your own backyard using a casting plug (or “casting dummy”). You can buy one or make your own with a piece of wood and an eye screw.



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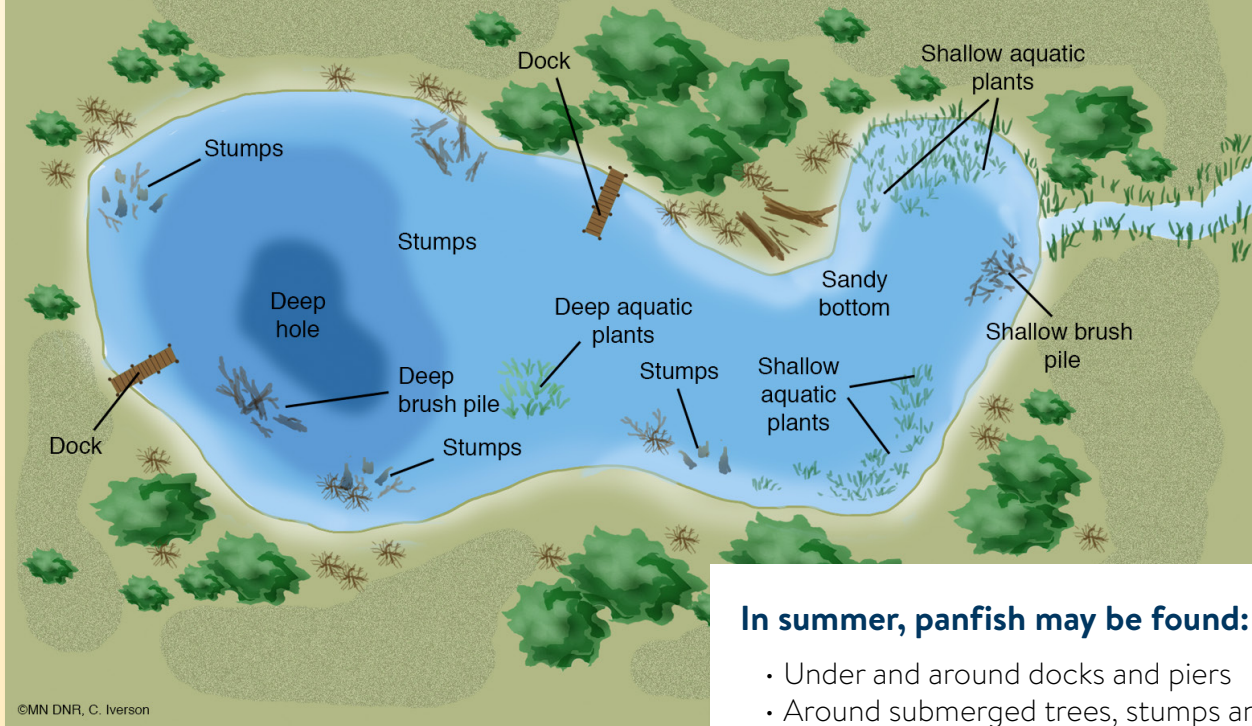


For more information about casting, see Chapter 5: Lesson 2 in the MinnAqua Leader's Guide, *Fishing: Get in the Habitat!* mndnr.gov/minnaqua/leadersguide

Where and When to Find Panfish

If you were a panfish, where would you be?

Would you hang out in open water where there's not much food or protection? No. Sunfish like to be near hiding spots, also called "cover" or "structure."



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In summer, panfish may be found:

- Under and around docks and piers
- Around submerged trees, stumps and brush piles
- Among the aquatic plants
- Under the shade of overhanging trees

When to fish

You can fish almost anytime, but there are times that may be better than others. Test out these old fishing "rules of thumb" for yourself:

- Morning and evening better than midday.
- Changing weather conditions better than steady weather.
- Calm conditions better than windy conditions.
- Overcast (cloudy) days better than bright, sunny days.

Never fish
when lightning
is near!

Did you know?

Many anglers believe that the phase of the moon has a lot to do with when fish bite. Some say that fish bite better around the time of a full moon or new moon.



NSSDC Photo Gallery, NASA



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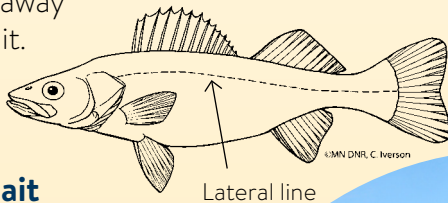
For more information about finding where the fish are, see Chapter 1: Lesson 5 in the MinnAqua Leader's Guide, *Fishing: Get in the Habitat!* mndnr.gov/minnaqua/leadersguide

Hooking and Landing the Fish

Here are some tips for getting that fish out of the water.

Shhh! Be quiet:

Fish have a vibration-sensing lateral line. Loud talking and loud footsteps can easily distract or frighten fish away from your bait.



Move the bait

Reeling in a few inches or gently jiggling the bait up and down can help the fish notice your bait. Curious bluegills can sometimes be attracted by lifting the bobber and gently splashing it on the water's surface.



What a drag:

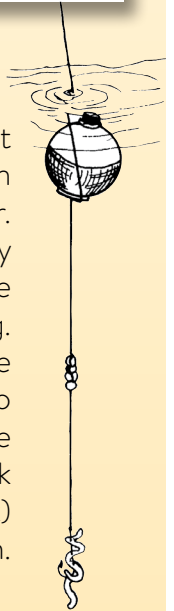
If your line won't reel in or your reel makes a buzzing noise, you may need to adjust the drag on the reel.

Drag adjustment



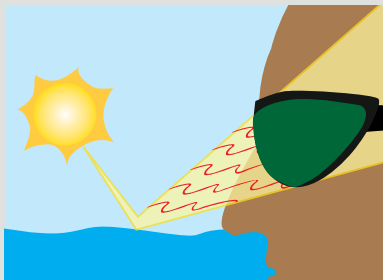
Wait for it...

Don't reel in at the first twitch of your bobber. The fish may just be nibbling. Wait for the bobber to go under, give the line a gentle jerk (set the hook) then reel in.



Did you know?

Polarized sunglasses can help you see fish under the water. Glare from a lake consists of light waves that are horizontally polarized (like a rope wiggled side-to-side). Polarized sunglasses filter and block these light waves allowing you to better see what's under the water.



Other useful tips:

- Fish can sometimes take your bait without you noticing. Reel in and check on your bait occasionally.
- After reeling in, clean any algae or plants off your hook and line so fish aren't distracted by them.
- When watching your bobber, don't let waves fool you. Learn to distinguish between a bobber bobbing with the waves and a bobber being pulled by a fish.

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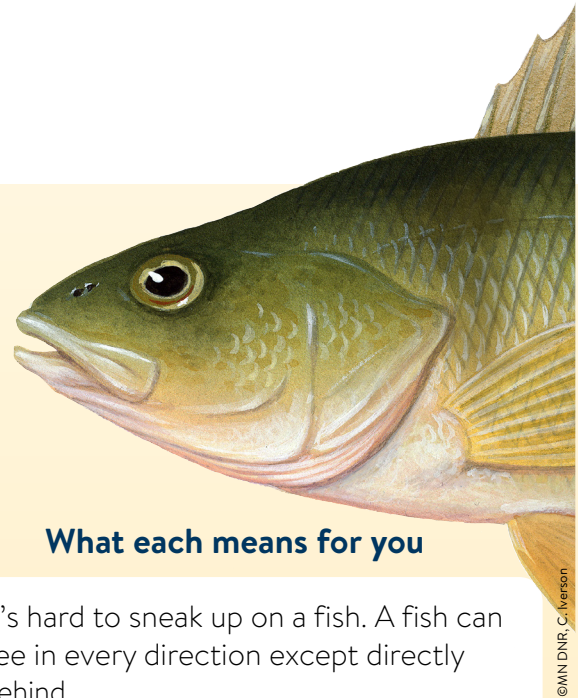
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For more information about hooking and landing fish, see Chapter 6: Lesson 1 in the MinnAqua Leader's Guide, *Fishing: Get in the Habitat!* mndnr.gov/minnaqua/leadersguide

Fish Senses

How many senses do you have? Did you know that fish have the same senses as you, plus one more that you don't have? By understanding fish senses, you can increase your chances of angling success.



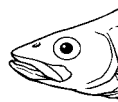
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The SIX fish senses

What each means for you

- Fish eyes have wide-angle lenses and can be moved independently.
- Without eyelids or irises, a fish cannot control the amount of light entering the eye.
- Fish cannot see as clearly as humans, but can see brightness and color.

Fish eyes



- It's hard to sneak up on a fish. A fish can see in every direction except directly behind.
- They regulate the light entering their eye by staying in shadows or going deeper in the water.
- The color of the lure may be important.

- Fish have two nostrils on each side of the snout, devoted only to an excellent sense of smell.

Nosy fish



- Fish can easily smell hand lotion or insect repellent on your bait. Wash your hands!

- Although they don't have ear openings—highly sensitive ears are located in the skull.

Hidden ears



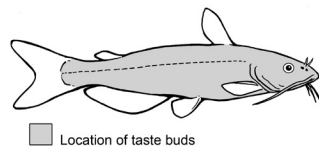
- Banging your feet on the dock or boat can easily scare fish away.

- Even with hard scales, fish have very sensitive touch receptors in the skin all over their body.

Touchy, touchy

- All fish have tongues with very sensitive taste buds. Some fish have taste buds on lips, whiskers, or the entire body.

Good Taste

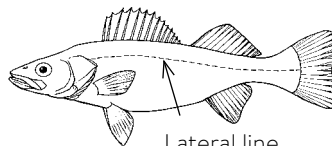


Location of taste buds

- Finicky fish may taste the bait or touch it to their lips for a second before biting. You may need to jerk the line to set the hook.

- The lateral line is a row of tiny, ultra-sensitive nerve endings that run the length of the fish's body and detect the slightest vibrations.

Vibration detectors



Lateral line

- Some fish may be attracted by light splashing, or by lures that wobble, spin, or splash.

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For more information about fish senses, see Chapter 2: Lesson 1 in the MinnAqua Leader's Guide, *Fishing: Get in the Habitat!* mndnr.gov/minnaqua/leadersguide

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