



TAKE ME FISHING™

How to Land a Fish!

1. Set the Hook

"Setting the hook" refers to the method of forcing a hook into a fish's mouth. In most cases, one sharp snap of the rod is all that is needed, provided the hook is sharp. Some situations, however, require more force than others.

For example, a single hard strike is needed when using a soft-plastic worm rigged Texas style (the hook is concealed inside the worm) because the strike must drive the hook through the worm first and then into the fish's mouth. Striking too hard or repeatedly with a soft-mouthed fish such as a crappie, shad, or sea trout can pull the hook through the mouth.



2. Fight the Fish

When a fish feels the hook, it struggles to get free. This might involve jumping, making a long run, swimming back into snags, or swimming around obstacles. Each species of fish fights differently. Some experienced anglers can often tell what species of fish is on the end of the line just by the way it fights. Carp, bonefish, and Chinook salmon are strong, powerful fish that tend to make long runs. Largemouth bass and steelhead trout both run and jump. Tuna dive for the bottom. Trout and tarpon fight wildly when first hooked. Northern pike and cobia (ling) often come to the boat easily, but fight strongly near the boat. Sunfish zigzag toward cover to take full advantage of their body shape.

Fish hooked and played in shallow water are more likely to jump and behave more frantically than those hooked in deep water. When hooked, deep-water fish often seek the bottom. Large bass are less likely to jump than smaller bass.

It's possible to land many small fish just by reeling them in. They'll fight, but this can be easily overcome by the strength of the line and the fishing rod. Much of the enjoyment of fishing, though, is gained by using lighter tackle that allows the fish to fight. However, if you plan to release the fish, do not fight it so long that it becomes exhausted and later dies.

Fighting larger fish requires a technique called "**pumping the rod.**"

To do this, retrieve line quickly as you lower the rod until it is horizontal and pointed at the fish. Then stop retrieving line and slowly raise the rod up. When the rod is at about the 11 o'clock position, repeat the process until the fish is near and ready to be landed. Never let the line go slack in the process.



3. Land the Fish!

Fish can be landed by hand or with landing tools such as a net. When you fish from the shore, beaching fish is a popular way to land them. This method, however, should only be used if you plan to keep and eat the fish because it will harm the coating on its body.

To beach a fish, lead it into increasingly shallower water, gradually sliding the fish on its side onto dry land. In saltwater, time your retrieve with an incoming wave. As the wave recedes, quickly grab your beached fish and pull it ashore.

Landing nets are commonly used for landing fish. Long-handled nets are used for boat or shore fishing and fishing from docks and jetties. Short-handled nets are used for stream fishing. The size of the net depends on the size of the fish you plan to catch. Some people use a circular net with a long rope instead of a handle; this is used for pier and bridge fishing.

To net a fish, you must first have the fish under control as much as possible. Next, lead the fish to the net. Place the net in the water and lead the fish into the net head first. Then if the fish should try to escape, it will swim into the net. Once the fish is completely in the net, raise the net by the handle. If you have a heavy fish, also grasp the net's rim to prevent the handle from bending or breaking.

A popular way to land bass is by hand. Carefully avoiding hooks, many bass anglers use the thumb and index finger to grip a bass by its lower jaw. This holds the jaw wide open and temporarily paralyzes the fish. This makes hook removal easier.

To handle a fish with sharp teeth such as walleye or northern pike, carefully hold it around the body. Never hold a fish by the eyes or gills if **you plan to free it**. Other fish like Chinook or Atlantic salmon have a strong tail and you can grasp them in front of the tail fin.

