



Fishing Safely

Fishing isn't a dangerous sport, but you should prepare to keep safe and comfortable in the outdoors. It is possible to get caught unexpectedly in bad weather, encounter insects, spend too much time in the sun, or get caught on a fish hook.

Wearing the proper clothing helps to protect you from injury. It also keeps you warm in cold weather and cool in hot weather. Rainwear and other gear keep you from getting wet and chilled.

Safety Around Water

Anglers should learn how to swim and use caution around water at all times. You should always use the "buddy system" and have a friend or an adult with you in case something goes wrong.

Personal Flotation Devices

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) which are also called life jackets and life vests, are not just for wearing in boats. Anytime you are on or around deep or fast moving water, it is always best to be wearing your PFD. U.S. Coast Guard and/or state laws require you to have an approved PFD when you are in a boat. The rules say a boat must have one PFD for each person on board. Certain types of boats must also have a cushion or ring that can be thrown to a person in the water.

Wading

There are several rules you should follow for safe wading.

1. Always wade with another person.
2. Always wear your PFD.
3. Find out how deep the water is.
4. Find out how strong the current is.
5. Find out what the bottom is like.
6. Use a stick or staff. Shuffle your feet along the bottom to avoid holes.

While wading you can protect your ankles by wearing high-top shoes or wading boots. Long, lightweight pants can protect you from jellyfish and sea nettles in saltwater and from snags and rocks in freshwater.

Reach-Throw-Row-Go

Reach-throw-row-go is a method of rescuing a person who falls overboard or an angler or swimmer in trouble.

The first safety step is to **REACH** out with an oar, tree limb, or other long object if the person is close to you. If you can't reach the person, then **THROW** them a life-saving device. This can be a boat cushion or ring that floats. If possible, it should be tied to the end of a line so you can pull the person to you. If a cushion or ring isn't handy, anything that floats can be thrown. Plastic coolers, ski belts, or even beach balls can be used in an emergency.



If there is nothing to throw, **ROW** a boat to the person in trouble. There should be someone else in the boat to help pull the person in trouble into the boat. The person should be pulled in over the stern, or back, of the boat. If the boat has a motor, it must be shut off before you get to the person in the water. Don't let the person try to climb in over the side of a small boat. This can tip the boat over. If the boat is small, have the victim hang on the gunwales, and tow him to shore.

Swim out to save the person in trouble **ONLY** as a last resort and **ONLY** if you are an experienced lifeguard or have had life-saving training. Going into the water after the person in trouble is very dangerous. People who are drowning often panic and injure or even drown someone trying to rescue them. Going quickly for help is often the best choice.

Swimming

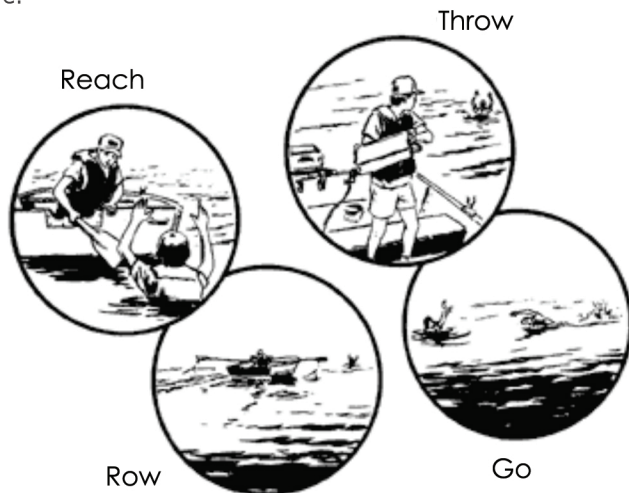
If you fish, you should know how to swim for your own safety. Many young anglers like to go for a swim during a fishing trip just for fun or to cool off. Don't swim if there is any doubt about your ability. Never dive into the water of an unknown area and don't swim after a heavy meal or in cold water. Swim only when an experienced swimming partner is with you.

Safety With Fishing Equipment

Handle your fishing equipment responsibly. Look behind you before you cast to make sure your hook will not be caught on a power line, a tree, or a person. If you leave your tackle lying on the ground, another person can trip on it and fall, step on a hook, or break your tackle.

Take caution and use long-nose pliers to help remove hooks from a fish. If a hook is deep inside the fish, either cut off the line and leave the hook in the fish, or use a hook disgorger. Hooks left in fish will work themselves free or rust out.

When transporting your equipment, remove the hook or lure from your line and store it in your tackle box.



Look Before Casting

Content courtesy of the Future Fisherman Foundation

For more tips like these, visit TakeMeFishing.org