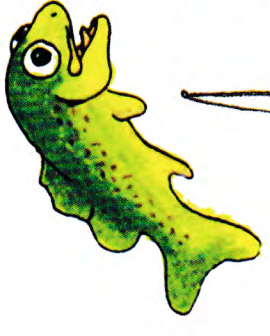
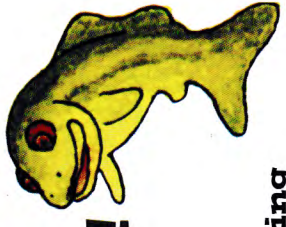


Print all these pages, assemble by page numbers, fold in half, then finally staple in the middle. It's your fun field guide to catching fish.

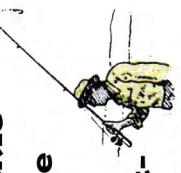

# These are fish.

## They bite... ...sometimes!



## A handbook featuring

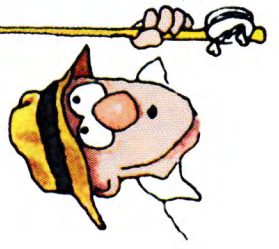
**facts**  **and fictions about fishes,** 

**illustrations of tackle and the secrets of knot-tying for new anglers**  **PLUS** 

**a refresher course in tale-telling for experienced arm-chair casters who (in moments of weakness) find themselves telling the truth.**



Compliments of the Wisconsin DNR



## Angling events

There are some special fishing and fish-spectating events you'll want to mark on your angling calendar:

### Summer

**Free Fishing Weekend:** For the first full weekend in June, you can wet a line without paying a dime! You won't need a license to fish that weekend, but bag limits and all other regulations apply. Many parks, clubs and organizations offer free clinics this weekend. Call (608) 266-2272 or check out our website for times and locations, <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/fishing/anglereducation/FreeFishingWeekend.html>.

### Fishing Instructor Workshops & Resources:

Volunteers train adults to introduce the joys of fishing to kids in schools, clubs, and parks. For a list of workshops, go to <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/fishing/anglereducation/>. A whole boatload of educational resources and loaner gear is available, too. Search for "Teaching Materials—Fish" and "Tackle Loaner" on our website.

**Fishing frenzy:** Hungry sunfish and bluegills approach the shores of thousands of small lakes across Wisconsin in mid-June. Use a small piece of worm for bait with a tiny hook and bobber and catch 'em like crazy!

### Fall

**Fall steelhead run:** Chambers Creek rainbow trout return to spawn in Great Lakes tributaries and streams where they were stocked (see Spring steelhead run).

**Walleye feed:** Hungry walleye readily take the bait just before lakes ice over. Dress warm!

### Winter

**Ice fishing:** Don't let winter put a chill on your angling activity! Get a copy of "Ice Fishing," a 20-page booklet prepared by the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute to introduce new anglers to the sport and start jigging! Download it from their website or order it from them for about a buck, <http://aqua.wisc.edu/publications/>. Also, know that **Free Fishing Weekend** isn't confined to June. Check our website for clinic dates in January and other how-to opportunities.



### Spring

**Smelt run:** Each year around the middle of April, millions of smelt cascade into Great Lakes tributaries and streams to spawn. The shores of lakes Superior and Michigan are popular places to net the tiny fish, which are a favorite food of salmon and people.

**Spring steelhead run:** Silvery Ganaraska River rainbow trout adapted to live in salt water return in the spring to spawn in the Great Lakes tributaries and streams where they were stocked. Willy and tough to catch, steelhead present a supreme challenge for dedicated anglers.

**Walleye/White bass run:** In central Wisconsin, spawning walleye begin to move from lakes Winnebago, Butte de Morts, Winneconne and Poygan into the Fox and Wolf rivers when both rivers are still icebound. Night fishing produces the best catches during the first week of April on the Wolf. Walleye also feed heavily after they spawn as the water warms up later in April and early May. A large white bass run follows the walleye activity, with the best fishing occurring May 5-25.

**Sturgeon Watch:** Lake sturgeon spawn in the Lake Winnebago system in late April. The dam over the Wolf River in Shawano is a great place to see these huge, long-lived fish close up. You can look, but don't hook—the fish are very vulnerable at this time. Wardens and volunteers are on the lookout for poachers.

**Coho run:** Coho salmon head for southern Lake Michigan late in the spring. Racine and Kenosha are the places to catch a coho, either by trolling from a boat or casting from shore with spoons.

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PUB-FH-741 2015  
ISSN-0736-2277





## In the beginning...

Fishing is humanity's second oldest form of recreation. (The first, as everyone knows, is bowling.) As you embark on a lifetime of angling, remember that every cast carries the weight of history and that you are sworn to uphold a venerable tradition of outdoor leisure. Even Caesar, when crossing the Rubicon, stopped mid-stream to wet a line. Let such devotion to the sport be your guide.

In short, you have an obligation to enjoy fishing and teach others how to do the same! This little handbook will get you started.

northern pike



## Don't spare the rod!

To fish, you'll need a few items: a pole or rod and reel, some line, hooks, bobbers, sinkers, lures, bait...and fish. (Fish make fishing much more pleasant. You'll learn how to find them later.)

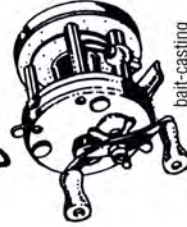
A **cane pole** is inexpensive and easy to use, but the **rod and reel** allow you to cast a greater distance from the shore or boat. Sporting goods stores carry a selection of rods made with fiber glass, bamboo, graphite and other materials, as well as closed (spincasting), open (spinning) and free-spool (casting) reels (which are used mostly for bass and big deep-sea fish). Check the rod for sensitivity by holding the handle and placing the tip gently on the voice box of a friend or willing salesclerk. Ask the person to softly recite the Gettysburg Address; if you can feel the vibrations from their voice in your hand, the rod will give you a good feel

for fish! Rods are classed as ultralight, light, medium, and heavy action.

**Monofilament fishing line**—so called because it is made of one continuous fiber—is ranked by the amount of weight the line will bear without breaking, though the line can withstand more than the set pound limit. Unless you plan on hooking Moby Dick, you'll want to have four-



spinning



bait-casting



spin-casting



## The greatest story ever told!

A good fish story has three dimensions—length, width and depth—and contains, like any good piece of fictional drama, a smattering of truth. (Just a smattering, though.)

Remember, your audience expects entertainment. Be lavish with description as you build toward the thrilling climax. **The Tale:** Ah, yes—I remember that fateful morning well. I rose at 4:30 a.m. to a warm breakfast of eggs Benedict and caviar served on a silver platter and arrived at my secret, secluded fishing spot via chauffeured limousine at exactly 5:19. **The Truth:** Your alarm went off at 4:30, you got up at 7, ate a bowl of cold oatmeal and a piece of last Saturday's pizza, and arrived at the boat landing via a muddy '65 Chevy chauffeured by Bub (your fishing pal with an aversion to soap) about noon.

Good storytelling is simply a matter of magnifying small details. **The Tale:** The water was still and smooth, a perfect reflection of the clear blue sky. I cast gracefully, out, oh...maybe 40, 50 feet with a little rooster tail—

just out for a few sunfish, you know—and no sooner did the lure sink that I had a strike. A real strike. I felt the boat roll a good four feet on the swell that monster—what else would you call an 80-pound musky?—made when it took the lure and ran...**The Truth:** The water was choppy and the sky cloudy and grey. You made a clumsy cast, out, oh...maybe 10 feet from the boat with a worm that went flying right into Bub's yap and no sooner did the bobber hit the water that Bub belched and the boat rolled a good four feet...

You get the idea. Just remember to:

1. Digress often—the best stories go on for several hours, with breaks for meals, before the fish is caught or gets away (usually the latter).
2. Add lots of extraneous detail.
3. Invent any elements necessary to advance the story.
4. Base the story in truth. Say you went fishing—truthful enough, right?—and the rest will follow.



## Play it safe

Compared to parachuting, rock climbing and hang gliding, fishing is a relatively safe outdoor sport. But weather and water create hazards smart anglers do their best to avoid.

Watch your step on riverbanks: Tufts of grass may give way or conceal deep holes. If you're wading in-stream, step carefully; rocks covered with algae are slippery. Don't underestimate a river current. Carry a walking stick and cross where the current is slowest, angling toward the opposite bank as you walk upstream. If you fall in, float with the current—don't try to fight it! Keep your feet forward and up and try to work your way to the nearest bank.

Wear a personal flotation device (life jacket) if you're in a boat or canoe. Know your boat's limitations and keep it in good repair. On the water, watch for dams, logs and rocks. If you must move around in the boat, stay

low and in the center. Don't stand up! If the boat capsizes, climb onto the boat and make noise to attract attention. Stay with your boat—don't attempt to swim in if the shore is some distance away.

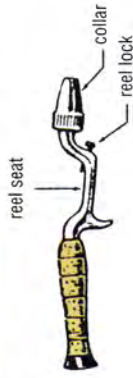
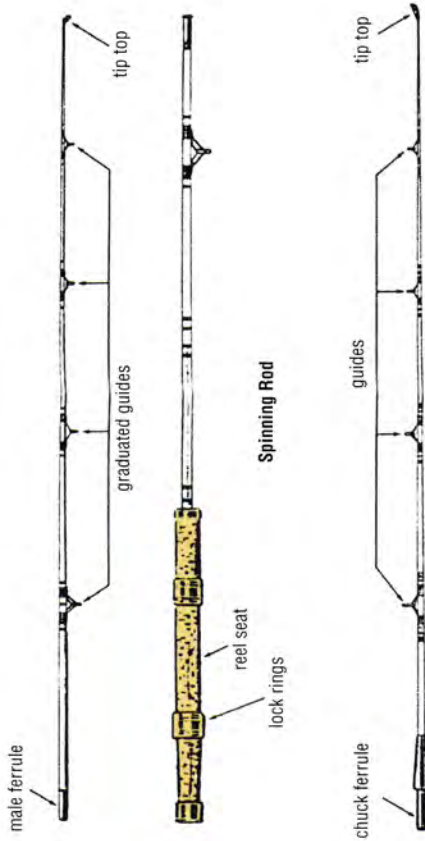
Proper dress makes any outdoor sport safer. Wear layers that you can take off of put on at will, and carry rain gear. A wide-brimmed hat offers protection from the sun and a place to hang a lucky lure.

It's best to fish with a buddy and carry a small first aid/survival kit for emergencies. When the weather's cold and damp, watch each other for signs of hypothermia and head for shore before a chill sets in. If it's a hot day, wear a hat and drink lots of water to prevent heatstroke.

There's one more outdoor hazard anglers should be aware of: other anglers. Be cautious when you cast or you may land that lure or hook in your partner's earlobe (or even your own). If only the point of the hook

punctures the skin, the hook can easily be removed. If the barb of the hook is poking out through the skin, clip off the barb and you can slide the rest of the hook out. If the hook is deeply embedded, it's best to have a doctor or nurse remove it. Avoid any complications by getting a tetanus shot as soon as possible after you've been hooked if you have not had one in the past ten years, five if the wound is particularly deep and dirty.

Stay safe and dry on a fishing expedition with a life jacket and rain gear.



Bail- or spin-casting Rod

to 10-pound test wound on the reel's spool. On a cane pole, the line should be as long as the pole plus your arm's length; tie the line to the guide at the end of the pole. With a rod and reel, wind the line to within one-eighth inch of the spool rim, then thread the line straight through each guide on the rod.

"Mono" isn't the only kind of line. Dacron and other woven lines, for instance, are used for catching muskellunge and other large fish. "Leaders" made out of wire or heavy line are tied to the end of the line before the hook or lure is attached to foil fish with raspy mouths (like northern pike and muskellunge).



Sinkers

**Sinkers** are weights used to cast light lures and to drop the bait quickly to the bottom. Used in combination

with bobbers, they hold the line at a given point. Sinking lures and jigs don't need sinkers. There are many different kinds of sinkers—split shot, pencil and bullet are just a few of the types you can use. Look for non-lead alternatives.



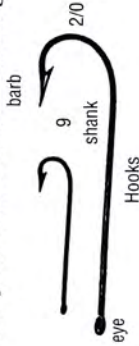
Bobbers

**Bobbers** let you know when you've got a nibble. Button, pencil and slip bobbers are a few of the types available. When you clamp the bobber on the line, remember that the distance from the sinker to the bobber should not be more than the depth of the water.

**Hooks** are numbered according to size—generally, the smaller the number, the larger the hook—and come in a variety of styles. Hooks hold the bait until a fish takes the bait, and then, if you're lucky, the hook holds the fish.



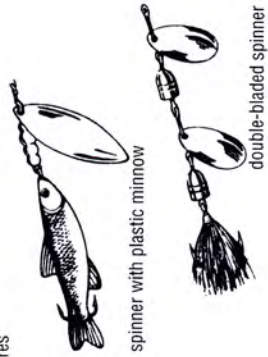
Barbless hooks are useful for "catch and release" fishing. A snelled hook is a hook with a leader already attached. Get an assortment of hooks and you'll be ready for whatever comes along



underwater!

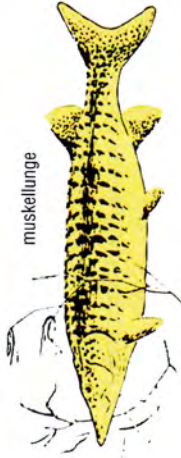
**Artificial lures** are designed to look and move like something a fish would eat, namely worms, minnows, grasshoppers, flies and other tasty morsels. No doubt you'll be dazzled by the variety—there even are holographic lures that flash a 3-D view of scales or a small school of bait fish—but don't let your wallet be led astray. Practice restraint or soon you'll need a tackle box bigger than your boat! Start with a few carefully chosen lures to entice your favorite fish species

Lures



and learn to use them as well.

Then there's a broad category of **other stuff**: a net, a stringer to hold the catch, line clipper, filleting knife, first-aid kit, bait bucket, sunglasses, a hat, lunch. And cookies. (Don't forget those!) Anglers unable to resist the "lure" of technology may want to add electronic depth and fish finders, lure color selectors and Loran units to pinpoint precise lake locations to their fishing gear. These devices come with warranties, but no guarantees that you'll catch fish!



muskellunge

High-tech gadgetry may locate fish, but that doesn't mean they'll bite!



Ray Minnow

Perch, crappie, bass and walleye should have their scales removed if they are not filleted or skinned. Hold the fish by its head and scrape from tail to head with a fish scaler, dull knife or tablespoon until all scales are off.

Catfish and bullheads need to be skinned if they are not filleted. Cut around the head with a very sharp knife, then pull the skin back with pliers.

It's best to eat your fish fresh, but you can freeze cleaned fish or fillets for up to six months. Place the fish in a sealable plastic bag or cleaned-out milk carton and fill with water. Seal and put in the freezer. The frozen "fish cube" prevents freezer burn of the delicate flesh. To defrost, place the fish cube in a pan, cover, and let sit in the refrigerator until thawed. You can also place the block under a slowly running cold water tap if you're in a hurry.

## — The famous "Triple-Dip" Fish Fry —

Courtesy of the "Fishin' Magician," courtesy of the "Fishin' Magician," Dr. Thomas Benedict Sheffy, and his studious apprentice, D.L. Sperling\*

- 1 cup flour
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper
- ¼ teaspoon paprika
- ¼ teaspoon salt (optional)
- 1 egg
- ½ cup water
- 1½ cups bread crumbs, cracker crumbs, potato flakes or crushed cereal.
- about 1 pound of fish filets

Pat fish dry with paper towels and set aside. You will need three shallow dishes to prepare the coating. In dish one, combine flour, pepper, paprika, salt and any other spices or herbs to taste. In dish two, beat together the egg and water to make an egg wash. (Some folks substitute buttermilk for the egg wash.) In dish three, place the crushed crumbs of your choice.

Pick up a fillet and dredge it in the flour, patting the mix into the fillet. Shake off excess flour but make sure a thin coating of flour clings to all surfaces of the fillet.

Next, dip the floured fillet into the egg wash and turn the fillet over with a fork. Carefully lift the fillet from the wash, letting the excess liquid drain back into the dish. If you've done this correctly, the flour on the fillet should be slightly gummy or tacky.

Transfer the fillet to the third dish with a fork, gently patting the crumbs over the entire surface until the fillet is evenly coated with crumbs. Remove the fillet from the crumbs and place on a plate. Separate layers of coated filets with waxed paper or aluminum foil until you are ready to fry or bake.

**Pan frying:** Heat about ¼ inch of cooking oil in a heavy skillet. When a pinch of flour sizzles in the pan, it's hot enough to fry your fish. Cook a few filets at a time (don't crowd the pan) and fry until brown and crispy.

**Oven frying:** Coat a jelly roll pan with cooking oil and place it in the oven. Heat oven to 450°F. Place filets on heated pan and cook about six to seven minutes on a side until crispy.

\*The "Fishin' Magician" was a long-term water and air monitoring expert; his "studious apprentice" was the editor of Wisconsin Natural Resources magazine, from 1987 to 2011.



## The catch!

You've hooked a handsome specimen just the right size for the frying pan. Now what?

Put your fish on ice in a cooler as soon as possible to preserve texture and freshness. If you don't have a cooler handy, you can keep the fish alive in a wire fish basket dangling in the water. Or, thread a stringer through the fish's gill and out the mouth and secure the other end of the stringer to the boat or shore. Let the fish swim in the water. To prevent the spread of disease, do not transport fish from one body of water to another.

Now you must decide how you want to eat the rascal. Perhaps whole, baked with the head on? Or maybe as meaty fillets to deep-fry in a tasty batter?

Smelt are eaten whole and trout or salmon are usually eaten whole or cut into steaks, so they must be gutted before cooking. To gut a fish, kill it first with a sharp rap over the head. Hold gently but firmly with one hand and insert the tip of a sharp, narrow-bladed knife or kitchen shears at the vent (anal opening). Make a shallow cut in the belly from vent to head.

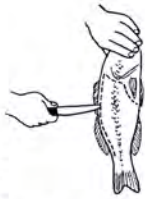
Spread open the belly cavity and remove the internal organs. With a spoon or knife, scrape away the dark red kidney line attached to the backbone. Pinch out the gills with your fingers if the head is to be left on, then rinse the



fish in clean water. You're ready to cook!

Most panfish and game fish are filleted and don't need to be gutted. Here's how to fillet a fish:

1. Lay the fish on its side and kill it with a sharp blow to the head. "Pithing" is quicker, but requires precision and knowledge of fish anatomy. To pith, insert an ice pick or similar tool in the fish's head and wiggle it around to destroy the brain.



Using a sharp filleting knife, make a diagonal cut from the side fins to the top of the head, then cut down to the backbone behind the head. Turn the blade flat and cut along the side of the fish with a sawing motion all the way down to the tail. Remove the fillet and use the point of the knife to lift out any rib bones. That's one fillet.

2. Turn the fish over and repeat. That's two!



3. To skin a fillet, place it flat on a cutting board, skin facing down. Hold the tail end down with your thumb. With a firm stroke of the knife, start at the tail and cut down at an angle until you reach the skin, then turn the blade flat and run it parallel to the board, cutting the skin from the meat with a sawing motion.

## Fit to be tied



There are as many knots as there are anglers! It's good to know how to tie several kinds, if only to impress your fishing friends. Here are a few knotting tips:

1. Clip off six to eight inches of line from the end every time you tie a knot and dispose of it properly—don't throw it on shore or in the water.
2. Check the hook or lure eye for any rough spots that could rub away the line.
3. Allow plenty of line for tying.
4. Wet the line, then tie the knot. The moisture allows you to cinch up the knot smoothly, without kinking the line.
5. Tighten the knot with a slow, steady, even motion.

6. Don't trim the tail end too close—leave about one-eighth of an inch.
7. The knot is the weakest point in your line, so be sure the one you tie is strong and reliable. Here are two good types:

### Improved clinch knot



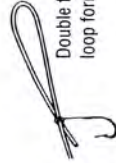
Pass line through hook eye and make five turns around standing line. Insert line end between eye and first loop formed. Bring end through second loop formed.

Tighten knot slowly while holding free line and between thumb and forefinger so knot is partly closed before it's secured against the eye. Clip line end.



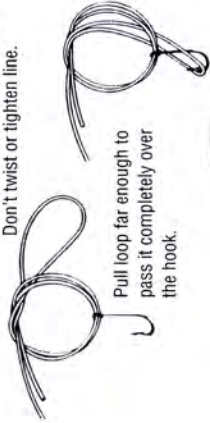
largemouth bass

### Palomar knot



Double four inches of line and pass loop formed through hook eye

Let hook hang loose. Tie overhand knot in doubled line. Don't twist or tighten line.



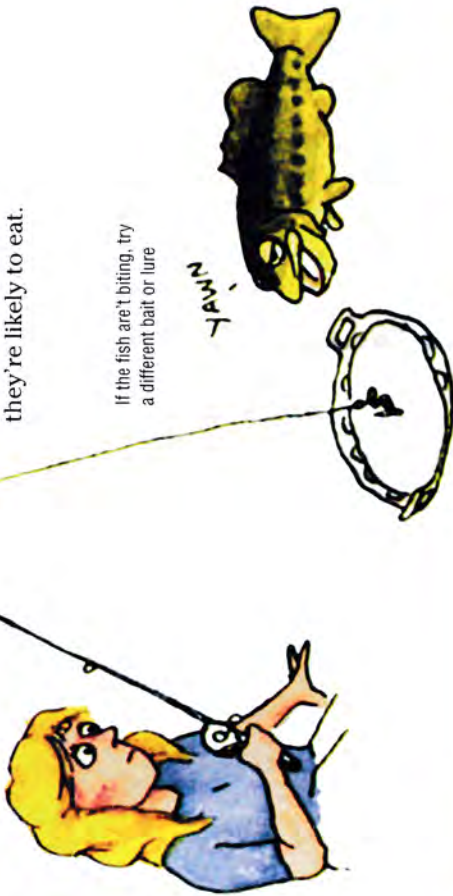
Pull loop far enough to pass it completely over the hook.



Pull both tag end and standing line slowly to tighten. Clip tag end.

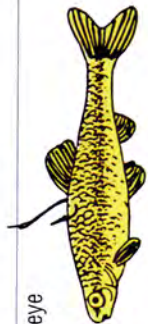


# The great debate

*Fresh or fake:* What's the best kind of hors d'oeuvre to tempt a hungry fish? Both bait and artificial lures work, but fish do have preferences and you would do well to study their habits and find out what they're likely to eat.



Species	Bait	Artificial Lures
Bass (largemouth, smallmouth, rock, white)	minnows, worms, insect larvae	plugs, poppers, spinners, rubber worms
Bluegills	worms	poppers
Bullheads	nightcrawlers, stink baits	
Carp	doughballs	
Catfish	stink baits	
Crappies	small minnows	maribou-covered jigs, plastic minnows
Muskellunge	large minnows, suckers	large plugs, spoons, bucktails
Northern Pike	minnows	wobbling spoons
Perch	minnows, insects, worms	small jigs, rubber worms
Sunfish	worms, grubs	flies, poppers
Trout (brook, brown, rainbow)	worms, minnows, grasshoppers, spawn sacs	dry and wet flies, spinning lures
Walleye	minnows, leeches, nightcrawlers	plugs, jigs, spoons, twister tails



# Fishing etiquette

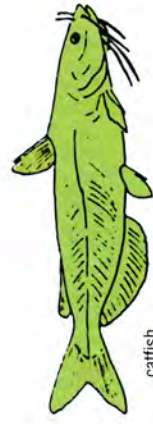
There are some things good anglers do, and some things good anglers don't do.

## Good anglers always:

1. Obtain permission to fish on private land.
2. Pick up and pack out pop cans, empty hook packages, bait containers, used line, sandwich wrappers and other trash.
3. Carry a current license and follow current regulations.
4. Maintain motorboats so oil and gas will not drip into lakes or streams.
5. Wear life jackets in boats.
6. Offer assistance to others in outdoor emergencies.
7. Respect wildlife and refrain from disturbing nests, lodges, and dens.
8. Keep noise down to a minimum, since sound carries far on the water and also scares away fish.
9. Give other anglers room on the water.

## Good anglers never:

1. Dump unused bait into the water.
2. Speed with a motorboat past canoes, other boats, swimmers, and shore anglers.
3. "Hog" a good fishing spot.
4. Cast too close to another angler.
5. Disturb other anglers with loud music and yelling.
6. Leave fish guts on shore or on picnic tables.



catfish



bluegill





Size limits protect fish populations

length but can keep specimens that are smaller or larger—helps fisheries managers balance fish populations. Slot sizing prevents overcrowding and stunted growth, and gives anglers a chance to catch some good-sized fish while ensuring that the most productive fish remain to spawn.

Bait restrictions are used to stop the accidental spread of aquatic organisms and diseases into waters where they could cause environmental problems or reduce the population of desirable species. **It is illegal to dump any bait, dead or alive, into Wisconsin waters. You are legally required to drain all water from your boat, live well, and/or minnow bucket before leaving any water-body. Dispose of unused bait, well away from the water or at home.**

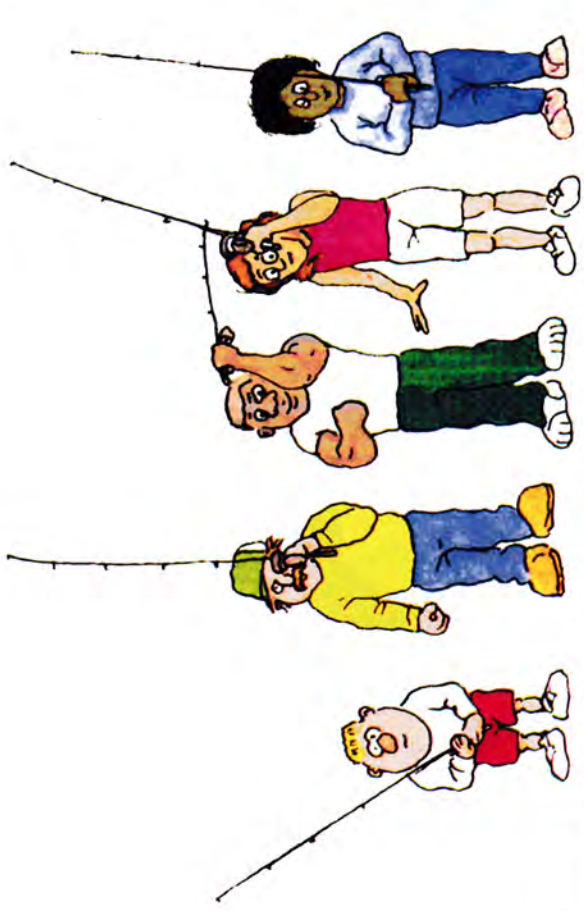
Many anglers are catching on to “catch and release”—catching a fish, then letting it go so it may be caught again another day. Catch and release lets more people enjoy the sport of fishing.

If you plan to catch and release, don't play the fish too long; you may tire it, causing undue stress. Simply reel the fish in next to the side of the



boat, net it or land it carefully, and remove the hook as gently as possible with pliers. If the hook is deeply imbedded, you won't be able to retrieve it without killing the fish, so just clip the line as close as you can to the hook and leave the hook in. Hooks may either disintegrate or be coughed up by the fish. Barbless hooks are easier to remove. If you must hold the fish, use wet hands and lift it gently behind the gills. Remove the hook, then place the fish in a normal swimming position in the water and gently swish it back and forth; the oxygen created by the motion will revive the fish and you can let it swim away.

There's one more item you'll need to catch and release: a camera! Catching your fish on film is a great way to boast of your angling escapades.



## — A cast of thousands! —

That's right. Some days, you'll cast a thousand times without a bite. Other days... ah, those other days, when you can't cast fast enough for the thousands of fish ready to swallow the hook! Here's how to cast:

1. Set the drag on your reel—this provides resistance to tire the fish without stretching your line to the breaking point.
2. Look behind you and to the side for trees, bushes and other anglers. Make sure the hook isn't caught on anything or that the line isn't tangled.
3. Bring the rod back or to the side.
4. With a closed reel, press and hold the reel's release button. With an open reel, flip the bail open and hold the line up with your finger.
5. Bend your casting arm at the elbow and raise your forearm until your hand is almost at eye level. As the rod bends, sweep it forward with your wrist and release the button or let the line slip from your finger. (If the lure landed close in front of you, you released the line or button too late. If the lure went straight up, you released the line or button too soon.)
6. Turn the reel crank forward until the button clicks or the bail flips to keep more line from coming out. Reel in your line until the bobber begins to move or until you've taken up the slack.
7. Watch the bobber. When it moves or goes under, you've got a strike!
8. Jerk the line to move the bobber and “set” the hook in the fish's mouth. (This is the point where angling ceases to be a sport and becomes art. Knowing when to set the hook requires the patience of Michelangelo painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.) Set the hook quickly for small panfish; larger fish need to nibble a bit before you tug.



# Finding fish



Know your fish habitat or you may catch catfish when you're hopping for perch!

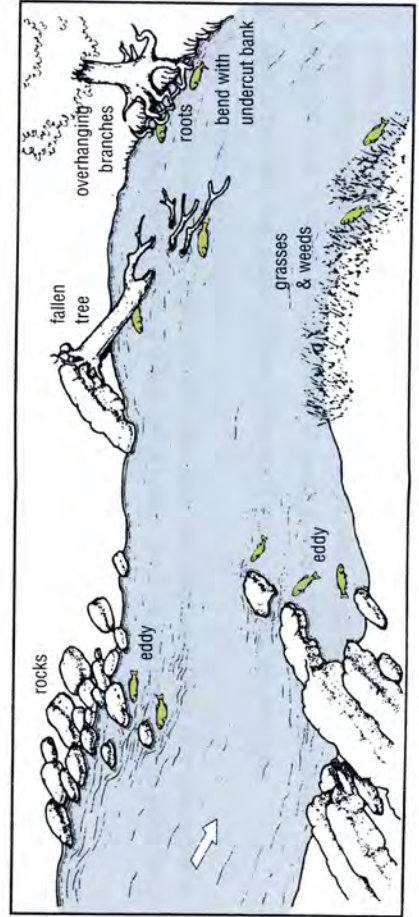
Find water and you'll find fish, right? Sure—if you're casting into the living-room aquarium.

Locating fish within a pond, stream or lake requires that you learn to read the weather and other surface signs, because what you see above the water is a clue to what might be below.

Fish habitat is called "structure." Submerged trees and plants, emergent vegetation, points, reefs, docks, tree stumps, drop-offs, rocks and rip-rap are all places where fish are apt to be. Look for areas called "breaks" where

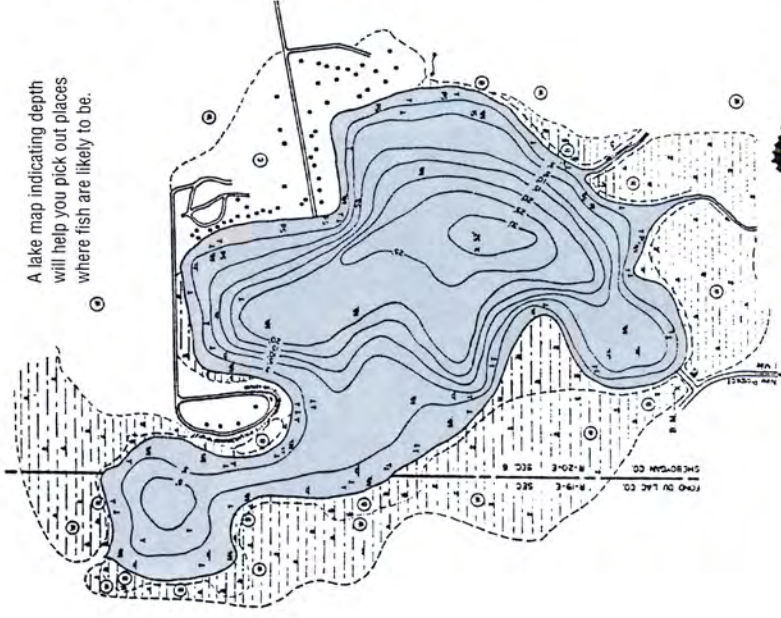
the bottom changes—from weed to sand, sand to gravel, sand to mud. A lake map indicating depth can help you find underwater structure. Because of their light-sensitive eyes, walleye linger in deeper water during the day, and move into shallower water near shoals and weed beds to feed as the sun sets. Northern pike like shallow, cool water with lots of weeds. Read up on the daily and seasonal habits of the species you're after to decide where to fish at different times of the day.

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Look for "structure" and "breaks" when you arrive at your fishing spot.

A lake map indicating depth will help you pick out places where fish are likely to be.



walleye



# The four Rs of fishing

**Rest. Relaxation. Rules. Regulations.** With the large numbers of people fishing today, you'd never be able to have the first two without the last two.

By purchasing fishing licenses and stamps, anglers support fish stocking, habitat restoration, education, and research programs. When you buy a license, be sure to pick up the annual fishing regulations booklet and refer to it often. The seasonal closures, daily catch and possession limits, size restrictions and bait restrictions listed in the booklet are enforced to protect and conserve Wisconsin's fishery.



Limits protect fish populations and provide more chances for more people to catch fish. Closing the season when fish are most vulnerable (during spawning, for instance) or when climatic conditions put them at risk (during a drought) helps keep fish populations stable. Slot sizing—when anglers must return fish of a certain

If you don't get a bite within a few minutes, try another spot. And remember to move your line two to four inches occasionally, because most fish like a moving bait.