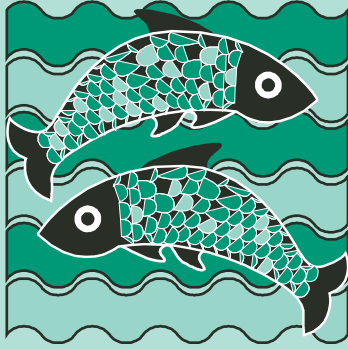


# PRACTICING CATCH AND RELEASE



## WHY RELEASE FISH

1. Stressed fish populations need your help to recover.
2. A personal commitment to conservation adds fun to fishing.
3. Size, season, and bag regulations make release mandatory.
4. A fish is too valuable a resource to be caught only once.
5. The future of sportfishing is in your hands. Pass it on!

## HOW TO BEGIN

1. Use hooks that are barbless and made from metals that rust quickly. May use pliers to flatten barbs on hooks.
2. Set the hook immediately. Try to prevent a fish from swallowing the bait.
3. Land your quarry quickly; don't play it to exhaustion.
4. Decide to release a fish as soon as it is hooked.
5. Work a fish out of deep water slowly, so it can adjust to the pressure change.
6. Always keep release tools handy.

## HANDLING YOUR CATCH

1. Leave the fish in the water (if possible) and don't handle it. Use a tool to remove the hook or cut the leader.
2. Keep the fish from thrashing.
3. Net your catch only if you cannot control it any other way.
4. When you must handle a fish:
  - Use a wet glove or rag to hold it.
  - Turn a fish on its back or cover its eyes with a wet towel to calm it.
  - Don't put your fingers in the eyes or gills of your catch. (Larger fish can be kept in the water by holding the leader with a glove or by slipping a release gaff through the lower jaw).
  - Avoid removing mucous or scales.
  - Get the fish back in the water as quickly as possible.
5. Protect against personal injury by handling each species carefully and correctly.

## REMOVING THE HOOK

1. Cut the leader close to the mouth if a fish has been hooked deeply or if the hook can't be removed quickly.
2. Back the hook out the opposite way it went in.
3. Use needle-nose pliers, hemostats, or a hookout to work the hook and protect your hands.
4. For a larger fish in the water, slip a gaff around the leader and slide it down to the hook. Lift the gaff upward as the angler pulls downward on the leader.
5. Do not jerk or pop a leader to break it. This damages vital organs and kills the fish.

## THE FINAL MOMENTS

1. Place the fish in the water gently, supporting its mid-section and tail until it swims away.
2. Resuscitate an exhausted fish by moving it back and forth or tow it alongside the boat to force water through its gills.
3. Use an ice pick, needle, or hook point to puncture the expanded air bladder on a fish taken from deep water.
4. Watch your quarry to make sure it swims away. If it doesn't, recover the fish and try again.
5. Remember, a released fish has an excellent chance of survival when handled carefully and correctly.