

# Fascinating FISH FACTS and FOLKLORE

FROM *The Old Farmer's Almanac*

## Best Fishing Times

The best water temperatures for different fish species vary widely and are chiefly important if you are going to have your own fishpond. The best time for fishing for brook trout is when the temperature is 45° to 65°F (7° to 18°C). Brown trout and rainbow trout are more tolerant of warmer

temperatures. Smallmouth bass do best in cool water. Horned pout (bullheads) take what they find. Other best times:

■ **When the ocean tides are restless one hour before their turn and in the first hour of ebbing. All fish in all waters, salt and fresh, feed most heavily then. (Check *The Old Farmer's Almanac* for your area times.)**



### LARGEMOUTH BASS

*Micropterus salmoides*  
Average size:  
14-18 inches (36-46 cm)  
2-4 pounds (1-2 kg)



### SMALLMOUTH BASS

*Micropterus dolomieu*  
Average size:  
12-18 inches (31-46 cm)  
1½-4 pounds (1-2 kg)



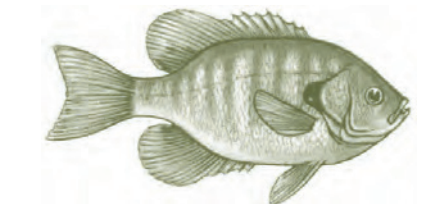
### RAINBOW TROUT

*Oncorhynchus mykiss*  
Average size:  
8-18 inches (20-46 cm)  
1-4 pounds (0.5-2 kg)



### BROWN TROUT

*Salmo trutta*  
Average size:  
10-18 inches (25-46 cm)  
1-8 pounds (0.5-4 kg)



### BLUEGILL

*Lepomis macrochirus*  
Average size:  
7-10 inches (18-25 cm)  
½-1 pound (0.2-0.5 kg)



## What to Do When You Catch a Fish

1. Keep your line tight and your rod tip up. Slowly reel in the fish.
2. Hold the fish firmly with wet hands. Remove the hook by pushing it down and turning it so that it comes out the way it went in.
3. Carefully release the fish back into the water if it is not large enough to keep for food.
4. Keep caught fish alive by threading a stringer under the chin and through the lower lip. Let the fish swim in the water. Tie the other end of the stringer tightly to the boat or bank.

■ **When lake water is still or rippled, rather than during a wind.**

■ **When the breeze is from a westerly quarter, rather than from the north or east.**

■ **During the “morning rise” (after sunup for a spell) and the “evening rise” (just before sundown and the hour or so after).**

■ **When the barometer is steady or on the rise.**

■ **When there is a hatch of flies—caddis flies or mayflies, commonly.**

■ **The day the Moon is new and continuing through the day it is full.**

*To capture the fish is not all of the fishing.*

—Zane Grey, American author (1872-1939)

## How Do Fish ...

**SWIM?** Fish swim by flexing their body and tail (caudal fin) back and forth. They do this by expanding the muscles on one side of the body while relaxing the muscles on the other side, which propels them forward through the water.

**BREATHE?** Fish breathe by opening and closing their gill covers to pump water past the gills. They need a constant supply of oxygen, which they get from the water.

**SEE?** Fish see best at close range, with eyes that are similar to those of humans.

**SMELL?** Fish smell through two openings on their head. The sense of smell helps fish find food and warns of danger.

**TASTE?** Fish use taste buds, just as humans do. Some are on their tongue and others are on the outside of their body. The taste buds are able to distinguish between sweet, sour, salty, and bitter.

**HEAR?** Fish hear by picking up pressure changes and vibrations in the water through a lateral line (a system of thousands of tiny hair cells that run the length of the fish's body and work as a sensory organ) along each side of their body. The lateral line helps a fish find and capture food and avoid enemies.

**REPRODUCE?** Fish reproduce differently according to species but generally follow one of three methods. In most cases, a female drops eggs into the water, where they are immediately fertilized by sperm from a male. In the second method, the eggs are fertilized within the female's body before she drops them into the water. In the third method, the female retains the eggs within her body, and the young are born alive (some sharks and guppies give birth this way).



### PICKEREL

*Esox reticulatus*

Average size:  
15-26 inches (38-66 cm)  
1-4 pounds (0.5-2 kg)



### ATLANTIC SALMON

*Salmo salar*

Average size:  
18-30 inches (46-76 cm)  
5-15 pounds (2-7 kg)



### MUSKELLUNGE

*Esox masquinongy*

Average size:  
24-48 inches (60-120 cm)  
5-36 pounds (2-16 kg)



### WALLEYE

*Stizostedion vitreum*

Average size:  
15-24 inches (33-50 cm)  
2-5 pounds (1-2 kg)



### BROWN BULLHEAD

*Ictalurus nebulosus*

Average size:  
6-12 inches (15-31 cm)  
1/4-1 pound (0.1-0.5 kg)

## Fish Quotes

*Never a fisherman need there be  
If fishes could hear as well as see.*

-Unknown

*There were lots of people who committed crimes during the year who would not have done so if they had been fishing, and I assure you that the increase in crime is due to a lack of those qualities of mind and character which impregnate the soul of every fisherman except those who get no bites.*

-Herbert Hoover, 31st U.S. president (1874-1964)

*Ever let your hook be hanging;  
where you least believe it, there will  
be fish in the stream.*

-Ovid, Roman poet (43 B.C.-A.D. 18)

*A man may fish with the worm that  
hath eat of a king, and eat of the  
fish that hath fed of that worm.*

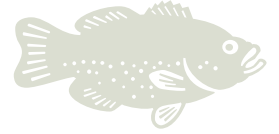
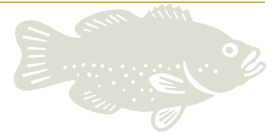
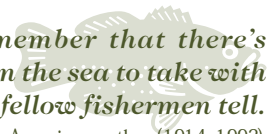
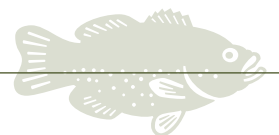
-William Shakespeare, English playwright (1564-1616)

*Lord, suffer me to catch a fish so  
large that even I in talking of it af-  
terward shall have no need to lie.*

-Anonymous

*You must remember that there's  
plenty of salt in the sea to take with  
the tales your fellow fishermen tell.*

-John Hersey, American author (1914-1993)



# Nothing is so clean as fish.

- Welsh proverb

## Fishing Tips

- Use binoculars to check ponds for areas where there are moving fish, especially trout.
- Fish in the early morning and late evening.
- Know the lake setup. Try to get as much information as possible about the terrain below the surface of the water.
- Remember that fish like to congregate on drop-offs and shallow ridges.
- Fish in heavy cover areas. This includes vegetation, rocks, and just about anything that provides shade for the fish.
- Be as quiet as possible when fishing. Excessive noise tends to spook the fish.
- Have ready a second strike rod—a rod with a different lure.
- Release a fish if it isn't large enough to eat.

## Lore for Luck

A fisherman always throws the first fish he catches back into the water for luck.

Always fish against the wind for luck.

Fish bite best at night, and if you play a fiddle or guitar, the fish just can't stay in the water but will come to the top because they love the music.

If you go fishing and see a big fish jump up, you will have bad luck all day.

If you let your shadow fall on the water while you are fishing, you will scare the fish away.

## Ice-Fishing Safety Tips

- Wear creepers. These spiked shoes will keep you from slipping and falling on the ice.
- Carry two picks to help pull your way out of the water if you fall through the ice. Once you spike your way out or are pulled out, don't stand. Roll across the ice in the direction you came from.
- Carry a buoyant seat cushion. It will add to your seating comfort while fishing and give you something that floats to throw to someone who has fallen through the ice.
- Keep your auger covered. The blades are sharp and can easily cut you.
- Spray vegetable oil on your auger and snowshoes. Snow won't stick, and you won't cut yourself when cleaning off the snow.

## Bait Advice

- Fish will not bite if you use a bright-colored cork on your line.
- If a dragonfly lands on your cork, quit fishing, for you will catch nothing.
- If you want to catch a two- or three-pound fish, always use a grasshopper for bait.
- To catch sunfish or perch, use salt pork for bait.
- When you lose your hook, tie bait on the line and continue fishing.
- Fish like shiny worms. Put worms in a can with some moss, sand, and cornmeal to polish them.

## Weather Superstitions and Folklore

*Wind from the south, hook in the mouth*

*Wind from the east, bite the least*

*Wind from the north, further off*

*Wind from the west, bite the best.*

*A cloudy day is a good time for fishing.*

*Catfish bite well when it thunders.*

*Fish on the west side of a bank if the wind is in the west.*

*If a fisherman goes out to fish, he should always pray  
For perpetual sunshine that will not fade away  
And he will have good luck all day.*

*If a rain comes slowly and falls gently, fish will continue to bite.*

*If the wind is in the south and it is cloudy, you can pull out fish as fast as you put your line in the water.*

## Tackle-Box Checklist

- ✓ Swivels, to keep fishing line from twisting
- ✓ Extra fishing line
- ✓ Stringer, to hold all the fish you plan to keep
- ✓ Different sizes of hooks
- ✓ Sinkers, to give your line enough weight for casting
- ✓ Bobbers, to keep your hook close to the surface of the water and to indicate when a fish is biting
- ✓ Pliers, to help remove hooks
- ✓ Sharp knife
- ✓ Ruler/scale
- ✓ Flashlight



A fishing rod is a stick with a hook on one end and a fool on the other.

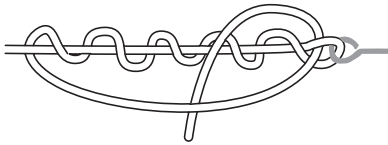
- Proverb

## Know Your Knots

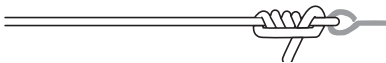
### CLINCH KNOT

The clinch knot is a popular and effective knot. It is also easy to master.

- Pass the line through the eye of the hook or swivel. Double back and make five turns around the line. Pass the end of the line through the first loop closest to the eye, and then through the large loop that you created as your line went through the first loop.



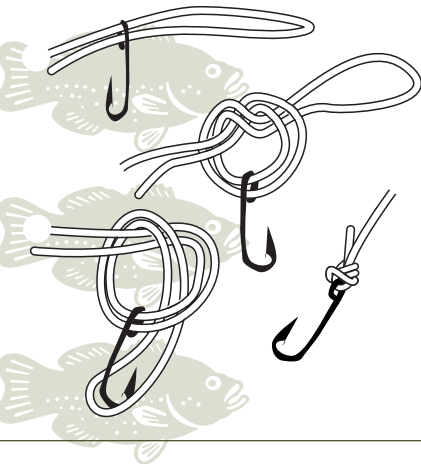
- Draw the knot into shape by sliding the coils tight against the eye.



### PALOMAR KNOT

The palomar knot is a simple but strong knot. Its great virtue is that it can safely be tied in the dark with a minimum of practice.

- Double about six inches of line, and pass it doubled through the eye of the hook.
- Tie a simple overhand knot in the doubled line, letting the hook hang



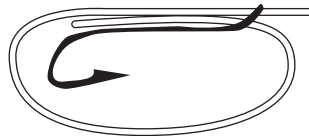
loose within the knot. Avoid twisting the lines.

- Pull the loop end down, and pass it completely over the hook.
- Pull the other doubled end of the line to draw up the knot.

### SNELLING KNOT

Ever wonder how they tie those fancy knots on the prepackaged hooks? Here's how it's done.

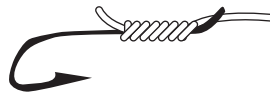
- Pass the end of the line through the eye of the hook twice in the same direction, leaving a loop slightly larger than the hook. Hold both lines along the shank of the hook.



- Use the loop to wind five to ten tight coils around the shank and both lines from the eye toward the hook end. Use your fingers to hold these tight coils in place. Pull the line (extending from the eye) until the whole loop has passed under the tight coils.



- With coils drawn up, use pliers to pull up the end of the line.

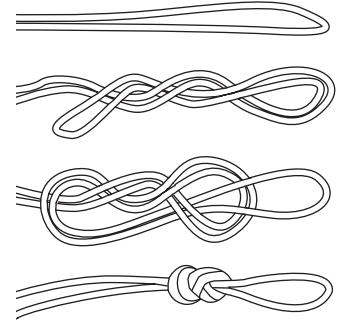


### BLOOD LOOP KNOT

You can tie an end loop quickly and easily using the blood loop knot. The loop can be made in the end of the line or in several places along the line to attach

swivels, hooks, weights, and leaders.

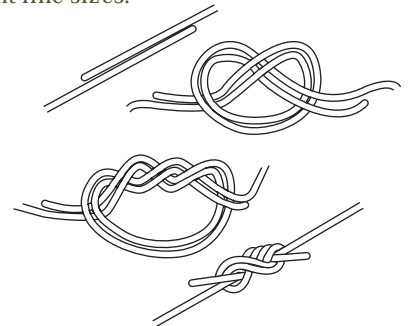
- Double the line back enough to make a loop of the desired size in the location you want to make the knot.



- Double back the loop and make two turns around the doubled line.
- Pass the end of the loop through the first loop formed when you doubled it back.
- Draw the knot up tight, pulling on both ends.

### SURGEON'S KNOT

The surgeon's knot is a good knot to use when you need to join two different line sizes.



- Lay the two lines against each other, overlapping about ten inches.
- Working the two lines as one, tie an overhand knot.
- Pull one line (say the leader) completely through this loop again.
- Pass the other end through the loop and work the formed knot into shape.

*There are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it.*

- English proverb