

POCKET GUIDE FOR ANGLERS



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1. OVERVIEW

This "Pocket guide for anglers" is created by the Angling Trust's Building Bridges Project and funded by income from rod fishing licence sales. It has been written to help anglers understand freshwater fishing rules in England. All information used in this guide is consistent with Environment Agency rules at the time of publication.

IMPORTANT:

This booklet is for guidance only. You can find more detailed information at:

<https://www.gov.uk/freshwater-rod-fishing-rules>



2. GENERAL RULES

Depending on where you fish in the UK the rules may be different. In England, to fish in freshwater you need a valid Environment Agency rod fishing licence. Recreational sea angling does not require a licence. You need to follow national and local byelaws regarding close seasons, fish size, catch limits, bait and tackle you can use - these may vary in different Environment Agency areas. Before you go fishing, make sure you have your valid rod fishing licence and some proof of identity with you.

You can find the rules and local byelaws here:

<https://www.gov.uk/freshwater-rod-fishing-rules>

IMPORTANT:

Individual fisheries owners may make additional rules for their own waters. It is your responsibility to know those rules and regulations.

3. FISHING LICENCE

If you are aged 13 or over, you must have a rod fishing licence when fishing anywhere in England for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt and eels. This applies to all waters including commercial, privately owned or club fisheries. Fishing without a rod fishing licence is illegal and you can be fined up to £2,500. Licences for children aged between 13 and 16 are free but you still need to get one from www.GOV.UK/fishing-licences or by calling **0344 800 5386**.

As well as a rod fishing licence, you must also have permission from the fishery owner. On some waters, a rod fishing licence is enough to start fishing but on private or club waters an additional day ticket or club membership is required.

WHERE TO BUY A FISHING LICENCE

Rod fishing licences are available to buy online at: <https://www.gov.uk/fishing-licences> at the Post Office, or by calling **0344 800 5386**.

You will receive your annual rod fishing licence by post. You will be given a licence reference number when buying a short term or junior licence, which you may be asked to produce.

TYPES OF ROD FISHING LICENCE

There are two main types of Environment Agency rod fishing licence. The most commonly purchased is for non-migratory trout, coarse fish and eels. The other type of licence is for those anglers also fishing for salmon and sea trout.

The number of rods you can fish with varies from place to place but 4 rods is the maximum number you can use anywhere under byelaws. There is a 3-rod licence available, anglers wishing to use 4 rods (where rules allow) will need 2 rod fishing licences. Check the fishery rules and byelaws.

It is illegal to leave a rod and line in the water unattended or over which you don't have control.

Environment Agency Officers and Police Constables may request to see your licence. Some fisheries may ask for it as a pre-requisite to fishing.

CLOSE SEASON

The close season is the time when you are not allowed to fish in certain water bodies, targeting certain fish species. Close seasons for salmon and trout vary around the country. You can't fish for coarse fish on any rivers or streams and some canals and stillwaters in England from 15 March to 15 June inclusive. The list of the canals and stillwaters where you are not allowed to fish during coarse fish close season can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-fishing-byelaws>

You can fish for salmon, trout and other game fish during the coarse fish close season, but you must use certain types of lures and baits in some areas. You can check for specific restrictions here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-fishing-byelaws>

If you see anglers fishing for coarse fish in the close season on a river, or committing another fisheries offence, please phone the Environment Agency and report immediately on **0800 80 70 60**.

ILLEGAL FISHING AND FISH THEFT

Breaking any fishing rules or regulations may result in prosecution and a heavy fine. It's always your responsibility to ensure that you know the rules where you fish.

Illegal fishing incidents should be reported to the Environment Agency on **0800 80 70 60** or to the Police on **101** or **999** for a crime in progress. Always make a note of the reference number you get during the call – you can find out later what happened.

Make sure you're safe when reporting and don't touch any evidence such as illegal tackle or fishing nets.

Environment Agency officers check rod fishing licences and monthly prosecution lists can be found at:

<https://anglingtrust.net/enforcement/>

In England, freshwater fishing is a sport and most anglers practice catch and release where fish are returned alive to the water and in the best possible condition.

At most fisheries taking fish for food is prohibited. There are however some exceptions (such as stocked 'put and take' trout fisheries), but in all circumstances you would need written permission from the fishery owner to remove any fish.

4. FISHING FROM A BOAT INLAND

Before you go afloat to fish, you must check all relevant local byelaws, rules and regulations, as well as having permission to fish.

Register or licence your boat with the navigation authority responsible for the waterway you want to use.

Apart from waterways there are some large lakes, reservoirs and private waters where you can fish from a boat, but you always need to check with the owners or authorities first before you start using your boat.

There is no legal requirement to wear a life jacket, but for your personal safety it is highly recommended in all situations. It may be a condition of fishing to use some form of personal floatation device.

You may also need insurance, but it depends what type of boat you have and where you want to use it.

5. CRAYFISH TRAPS

Crayfish trapping is allowed in some waters where the owner of the fishing rights has given permission and the traps are authorised by the Environment Agency. Before using anything to try to catch or trap any crayfish anywhere please look at this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/permission-to-trap-crayfish-eels-elvers-salmon-and-sea-trout>

There are many non-native crayfish and fish species in England. For the full list please visit:

<http://www.nonnativespecies.org/index.cfm?sectionid=47>



6. SEA FISHING

For information on sea fishing rules contact your local Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority.

You don't need a rod fishing licence to fish for sea fish with a rod and line. However, you will always need a rod fishing licence when targeting salmon or sea trout, even in the sea.

Minimum landing sizes and conservation reference sizes are used all over the world to manage fish stocks.

7. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS & USEFUL LINKS

Q: How can I find waters I can fish, local tackle shops, river levels?

A: Visit: <https://anglingtrust.net/map/>

Q: Do I need to use a landing net and an unhooking mat?

A: It is recommended to use a landing net and unhooking mat for good fish welfare, especially if targeting specimen fish. Please check with your local fishery.

Q: Can I use a BBQ or light an open fire on the bank?

A: Check first. Most councils, local authorities, fishery owners and clubs object to the use of fires and BBQ's.

Q: I found a fishing spot but there are some trees and branches which makes access difficult. Can I cut them?

A: No, but you can always join a club's work party if you want to help to manage overhanging branches and remove obstructions to improve fishing.

Q: I have some rubbish left after a day's fishing. What should I do with it?

A: Take all litter home or dispose of responsibly in a bin. Please visit: <https://www.anglingtrust.net/Take5>

Q: Why am I required to check, clean and dry my landing net, tackle and footwear after fishing?

A: As a water user, you may unknowingly be helping to spread invasive non-native species and diseases from one water to another on equipment, shoes and clothing.

For more details please visit:

<http://www.nonnativespecies.org/checkcleandry/>

Q: How can I get involved in angling activities?

A: There are many ways to choose from. You can start with talking to your local angling club, attend regional fisheries forums, take part in the coaching events or local fishing competition.

For more information on Building Bridges please visit:

<https://www.anglingtrust.net/BuildingBridges>

Building Bridges is funded by Environment Agency rod fishing licence sales. For more information on the Environment Agency's fisheries work please see their annual report at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fisheries-annual-report-2018-to-2019>

*If you see fish in distress or a pollution incident please call the Environment Agency's 24 hour hotline **0800 80 70 60** immediately.*



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