

Trout Fishing

Quick Guide



TAKEMEFISHING™.org

Tailored Tackle®
Fishing Kits & Combos

License & Registration

One of the most important items any angler needs before they go fishing is their fishing license. Each state has their own regulations and offers daily, short-term, or annual licenses. [TakeMeFishing.org](https://www.TakeMeFishing.org) has a great tool to find out where to buy a fishing license, the types of fishing licenses available, age requirements, fishing regulations and online purchasing.

1 Click the button below

GET YOUR FISHING LICENSE

2 Select your state

3 Review the best license options to fit your fishing needs

LICENSE INFORMATION BY STATE

Alabama	Illinois	Montana	Rhode Island
Alaska	Indiana	Nebraska	South Carolina
Arizona	Iowa	Nevada	South Dakota
Arkansas	Kansas	New Hampshire	Tennessee
California	Kentucky	New Jersey	Texas
Colorado	Louisiana	New Mexico	Utah
Connecticut	Maine	New York	Vermont
Delaware	Maryland	North Carolina	Virginia
District Of Columbia	Massachusetts	North Dakota	Washington
Florida	Michigan	Ohio	West Virginia
Georgia	Minnesota	Oklahoma	Wisconsin
Hawaii	Mississippi	Oregon	Wyoming
Idaho	Missouri	Pennsylvania	

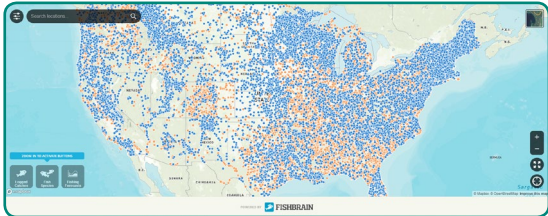
North Carolina
North Dakota
Ohio
Oklahoma
Oregon
Pennsylvania

Virginia
Washington
West Virginia
Wisconsin
Wyoming



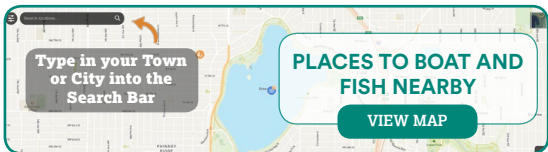
Your state's profile has links to resources where you can review the state **fishing regulations** and browse different types of **fishing licenses** available in your area. Many states allow you to purchase your license online and print out a temporary license to go fishing the same day. Remember to review the **age requirements** as children, seniors and veterans often receive discounts and unique opportunities for open fishing.












Places to Boat & Fish



Ready to get out on the water but not sure where to start?

Click the **VIEW MAP** below to find [Places to Fish and Boat](#) across the United States.



-  Body of Water to fish and boat on
-  Best Place to Fish and Boat with family-friendly amenities
-  Boat Ramp to launch your boat
-  Marinas, moorings and supplies
-  Bait Shop to buy fishing bait & lures
-  Fishing License Vendors
-  Charter & Boat rentals
-  Fishing Gear & equipment vendors
-  Fly Fishing shops.
-  Fish Refuge or Hatchery Facility
-  Multiple Places of Interest

Use this list of Key Symbols on the map to find places to fish, bait shops, and hot fishing bites!

Click on a blue Body of Water icon on a fishing spot near you to:

- Review Logged Catches
- View Photos of Fish Caught
- Filter Fish Species in the Area
- Read Fishing Forecasts
- Get Directions to that Location



Trout Lure

Feather Spinner

Feather Tail 1/4 Oz
Gold/Fire Perch

Lakes



Cast and retrieve at a steady pace. The lure should spin, riding 2-3 ft from the surface. Best when Trout are topping in Spring and Fall.



Streams

Cast diagonally upstream, so you retrieve the bait with the current and cover the most distance. Thump along the bottom and swim the top.

Casting Spoon

3/16 Oz
Chrome Silver

Lakes



Great for long distance casts, troll or retrieve through the middle of the water column to mimic a baitfish. Try various paces at different depths.



Streams

Let the spoon fall to the bottom then pick up and retrieve at a less than fast pace through the middle of the water column. Knock the bottom a bit.

Quick Sheet

Suspending Crank

2.5" - 1/8 Oz
Black / Silver

Lakes



Cast and let sink counting 1 ft per second until crank is halfway down the water column. Drive the lure downward and let it float back up in 2-3 ft increments on the retrieve.



Streams

Crank and twitch this lure through the deepest sections of the stream. Make sure to pause in-between. Pausing suspends the lure and often entices a strike.

Jig and Grub

Plain Jig Head 1/16 Oz
2.25" White Curl Tail Grub

Lakes



Swim this bait along rocky shoals. It performs best in high water clarity. Bounce around the rocks a bit, but focus on swimming at a constant pace.



Streams

Pitch lure to the head of the run, hopping it over cover. Try to reach the full water column, rising and falling on the retrieve and pausing on bottom.

Trout Lure

Floating Rig

Egg Sinker 1/4 Oz | #7 Swivel
#12 Treble Hook | Floating Bait



Lakes

Longer 3-5 ft leader, getting as close to the middle of the water column as possible. Target drop offs along the shoreline. Keep line taut and monitor rod tip for tap-tap-taps.

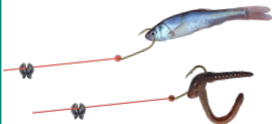


Streams

Shorten leader to 1 ft, target deeper pools of 3-5 ft. Cast from afar, the splash will spook Trout initially so fish each pool for at least 10 min.

Split Shot Rig

#8 Baitholder Hook
#7 Split Shot | Live Bait



Streams

A simple split shot pinched 1-3 ft above your live bait is versatile and a great option when trout are docile.



Cast out and let sit for a minute. Work along the bottom for a few reels and pause again. Patiently cover a lot of water, working the bottom.

Quick Sheet

Marabou Jig+Slip

Slip Float 5/8"
White Jig 1/16 Oz



Work along the surface, setting your depth 3-5 ft down. Best used when Trout are feeding up top during a hatch. Reel in 3-5x and pause to mimic insects.

Lakes

Streams

Dead drift in current with a float spacing the difference to hang the jig close to the bottom. Current works the jig, monitor float activity.



Live Bait Float

Slip Float 5/8" - # 3/0 Split Shot
#8 Baitholder Hook | Live Bait



Slip floats let you target any depth.

Start with the middle water column working upwards. Most hits will happen in the top half. Let the bobber submerge, then set the hook.

Lakes

Streams

Set the depth to a few inches off the bottom, let rig float with the current to cover a long drift. Keep casting, let the float drift and ride the current.



Trout Lure

Micro Crankbaits

Grasshopper 1.5"
Crayfish 1.5"



Crayfish

Use in rocky areas holding crustaceans. Dig the lure down into the rocks, pause and let it float up. Repeat and expect hits on the up-float.

Grasshopper

Work along the edges of the stream banks, slowly retrieve so the lure waggles in a tantalizing motion. Best during insect spawn.

Metal Spinner

Brass Rattle Spinner 1/8 Oz
Vibrating Spinner 1/8 Oz



Lakes

The best spinner option when searching for trout in open water. Retrieve at a constant pace in shallow water or troll to cover deeper water.

Streams

Similar to feather spinners, run through all parts of the stream at a constant pace. Use these louder spinners to call in aggressive trout.

Quick Sheet

Trout Worm

3" Trout Worm - #7 Split Shot
#8 Baitholder Hook

Lakes



Best worked off the bottom of flats on hot summer days. Silty, muddy bottoms host aquatic worms. Mimic them by digging along the bottom.



Streams

Great for murkier streams with muddy bottoms. Drag along the bottom then hold in place for 30 seconds, letting the current work the bait.



Check out the Tailored Tackle [Trout Kit](#) for all the trout lures and rigs from this Quick Guide.

Top 5 Trout Tips

Stealth Mode

Trout can see you from 15 yds away in clear water. They can also feel the vibration of abrupt noises like shouts or motors starting up. Be quiet, walk carefully, and maintain distance between yourself and the area you target. If fishing from shore, cast 20 yds away or more. Turn off motors or stop paddling 30 yds from your target spot. Troll your lures 50 yds back.

Cast Upstream

When current is low, present and retrieve your bait with the current. Wounded bait fish or insects cannot swim against the current, so your lure needs to flow with it for natural action. Cast upstream or against a current. If conditions are too rough, add sinkers and slowly retrieve against the current instead.

Cold Water

Water temps in the 40-60 degree range are preferred by trout. The colder the better. Trout hold to the coolest area of a water body with steady oxygenation. Inflowing water such as a creek joining a river, or an inlet to a reservoir, are ideal locations to target trout. New, faster moving water is often colder and richer in oxygen and nutrients. Inflows offer ideal feeding conditions for Trout.

Top 5 Trout Tips

High to Low

Trout favor conditions over structural features or cover. Instead of relating to the bottom or holding to a shady shelter, trout roam the open water at whatever depth they prefer based on needs. They hug the bottom, stratify the middle, or breach the surface. Most importantly, trout sight feed upwards. Prioritize the top half of the water column until you see a pattern.

Wet Hands

Unless you are keeping fillets for dinner, do your best to handle trout with bare hands that have been dipped in water. Trout skin is more sensitive than most freshwater species, so delicate handling is critical for release. Do not handle them with gloves or towels, and attempt to corral your catch in a net to remove the hook while submerged in water.



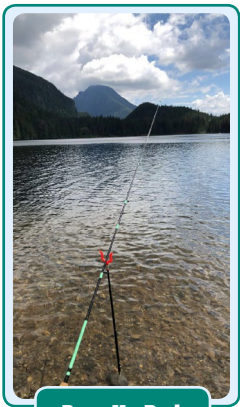
Trout in Lakes & Ponds

Location

Trout are typically caught from 3 ft off the bottom to the top of the water column. 15-40 ft depths are a typical target range for shore anglers. However, Trout can reach the 120-160 ft range. Early morning and evening are primary feeding hours and trout should be surfacing at these times. At midday Trout will be lower in the column, where the temps are cooler. Insect and bait fish cycles often supersede these common feeding habits.

Lures

Cast lures at dawn and dusk when Trout are aggressively feeding up top. If you see them breaking the surface, cast and retrieve **spinners** at a steady pace so they swim 1-3 ft down. With no action on the surface, Trout are likely feeding on bait fish. Cast the **Suspending Crank**, letting it drop a few feet, then twitch it back in by snapping and pausing.



Prop Up Rod

Bait Rigs

Bait Rigs are generally the most effective method for catching trout in lakes & ponds. Let the trout come to you.

Bottom Rig: Floating dough bait on a bottom rig is the most popular way to catch trout in still water. Cast out 20-30 yds and let your sinker hit bottom. Reel in any slack and hold your rod still or prop it up on a stick. Monitor your rod tip for “tap-tap-taps”. Wait until you feel a slight tug or repetitive taps before setting the hook. Best used at midday when trout are holding low.

Slip Float Rig: Use this rig with live bait like a worm, minnow or leech to pinpoint trout anywhere in the water column. Start by setting your depth halfway down. Let the wind carry your float to cover water. Experiment with depth until you find a pattern. Let the bobber fully submerge before you set the hook.



Trout in Streams & Rivers

Location

Trout often hold to the deeper, cooler pockets of rivers and streams. Pools are your primary target. Deeper pockets of water with slow current, pools are formed by large boulders or drop offs typically near the middle. Eddys are your secondary target; deeper holes near the bank caused by an obstruction that diverts current. Both are spotted by darker shades of water.



Lures

Best used in rivers and wider streams, lures let you cover more water faster. Stay mobile, working long expanses of the stream when trout are aggressive. When water levels change, trout feed actively. During the Spring inflows, baitfish are on the move. Cast **crankbaits** to cover higher water and mimic the forage. Pools are the likely ambush point. In the Fall, as insect hatches rise upwards, trout start breaking the surface. Cast **spinners** through the top of the water column. Retrieve at a constant pace to stay 1-3 ft below the surface. Cast all lures diagonally upstream so you cover the most water and flow with the current.

Bait Rigs

A simple split shot with a hooked minnow or worm will always work, especially when bites are slow. This classic approach is light on hardware, serving up a meal to finicky trout. Cast into deeper pools & ddds, letting your bait sit for a minute before reeling in a few feet and waiting again. Each cast should last about 5 minutes, change your bait every 5 casts. Stay quiet and leave your line completely still. Wait for a sequence of taps before setting the hook.

Soft Plastics

Ideal for aggressive Trout in small streams, plastics give a lively action with finesse. Jig the grub off the bottom, bounce twice & swim it a few feet to mimic a wounded bait fish. Slowly lift and drop the trout worm along the bottom, pausing for ~10 seconds to mimic an emerging insect wiggling in the current.



Use the Tailored Tackle [Multispecies Combo](#) to fish for trout in lakes, rivers & streams.



Trolling for Trout

Easy Trolling

Trolling automates a lot of the fishing and can be done by boat or non-motorized vessels. Find a speed that is similar to a brisk walk on top of the water and let your line out 50 yds with a crankbait or spinner. Hold your rod steady, the tip should bend over by $\frac{1}{3}$, and monitor the bend for big pulls followed by rapid taps. Set the hook, then gradually reduce your speed to a stop so the line stays taut.

Adv. Trolling

Add an egg sinker, or a series of split shot weights to drive your lure deeper in the water column. Using lead-core line, which is weighted by distance, is a cost effective upgrade to your trolling outfit. For more advanced setups, a down-rigger system is used to set your presentation at an exact depth all the way down to 150 ft. Electronic Sonars greatly improve the effectiveness of your trolling.



Downrigging

Handling Trout

Proper Release

Please be respectful and handle your fish with care. If it is likely that your catch will not resuscitate on release, please harvest your fish.

Only use a knot-less net to corral your Trout in the water. Keeping it submerged, you can remove the hook. To remove the trout from water, wet your hands. Cup your left hand under the belly, and gently

wrap your right hand around the base of the tail. Release the Trout in under 30 seconds.

Do not wear gloves or use a towel. Do your utmost to prevent the trout from touching dry land.

To release, gradually submerge the Trout

and release your hand from the tail. If the trout does not kick off on its own, continue to cradle the belly in one hand and work the tail back and forth with your opposite hand. Repeat for 5 minutes, until the trout kicks off. If you cannot resuscitate your trout please harvest based on regulations or contact your DNR agency.



Gentle Release

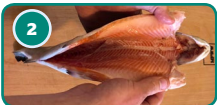
How to Clean a Trout

How to Gut a Trout



1) Cut the gill away from the jaw.

2) Pierce through the belly near the anus, cut up towards the head of the trout in a straight line. Grab the base of the gills and pull down, removing all the organs. Rub your thumb against the spine to remove blood.



(Optional) To cook trout with the skin on, remove the scales by grinding the back of the blade against the scales until the skin becomes smooth and semi transparent.



To harvest a fillet, proceed to the next section. Otherwise, you can cook the trout whole, eating off the bone.

How to Fillet a Trout

3) Start with the trout's head facing your dominant hand. Break the neck by snapping it backwards.

4) To remove the bones from the fillet, slip the blade right beneath the rib bones, working the knife up along the rib cage to separate.

5) Flesh out any left over bones with the edge of your knife, working upwards from the spine to the belly. Flip over and repeat.



6) Pierce blade through the back, right above the neck. Cut from head to tail, as close to the spine as possible. Flip over & repeat.



7) Remove the head by cutting across one fin to the other, severing the spine. Remove dorsal fins.

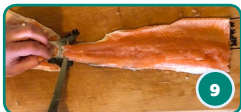


8) Cut at the base of the tail to remove the spine, leaving the tail on.



For a skinless fillet move onto the next section. Otherwise, sever each fillet from the tail and wash.

How to Skin a Trout



9) Press 2 fingers firmly down at the tail. Slant your knife to a 45° angle near the base of the tail. Slowly draw your knife back and forth until you are underneath the meat, pressing against the skin.

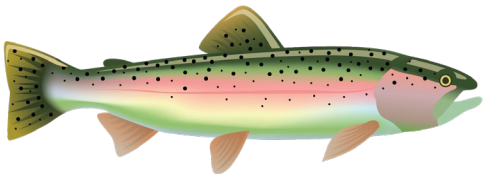


10) Lay your knife flat. Work your knife back and forth against the grain of the skin, separating the fillet from the skin. Repeat on opposite side.

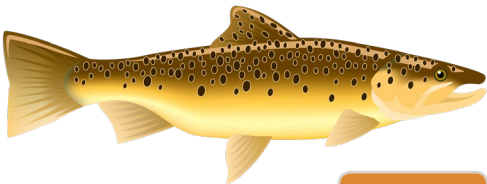


11) Trim any fins or fat that were missed from steps 1-10. Run under cool water, feeling for any bones you missed. Dry off and prep your meal!

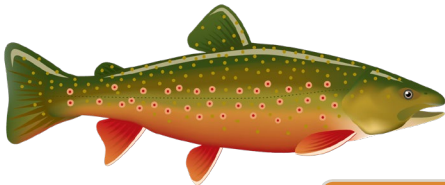
Common Trout Species



Rainbow Trout



Brown Trout

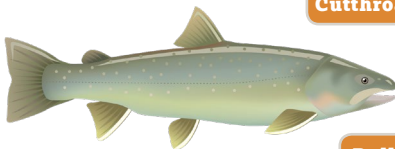


Brook Trout

Unique Trout Species



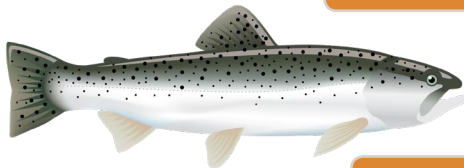
Cutthroat Trout



Bull Trout



Golden Trout



Steelhead