



MERIT BADGE WORKSHEET

Fishing

Scouts BSA · Outdoors

Name

Started

Completed

Fishing is about patience, skill, and respect for the outdoors. You'll learn your gear, tie knots, follow the rules, and catch a fish of your own. Then you'll get to clean and cook it, which is a great reward.

Requirements

Every official requirement, in plain language. Check the official wording when you sign off (scouting.org/merit-badges/fishing/). Tips and examples are ideas, not extra requirements.

1 Safety and first aid

Tips for this section: Learn how to handle hooks safely and what to do if one sticks someone. Always fish with a buddy and an adult near the water.

Example for this section: Explain how to handle a hook stuck in skin: if it's shallow and not near the eye, an adult with first-aid training can remove it, then clean and bandage it; deep hooks or any hook near the eye mean going to a doctor. Also cover sunburn, heat, and falls.

- ☐ **1a** Tell your counselor the hazards you're most likely to face while fishing and how to anticipate, help prevent, reduce, and respond to them

- ☐ **1b** Discuss how to prevent and treat these health problems that can happen while fishing: sunburn, heat exhaustion, heatstroke, dehydration, hypothermia, insect bites, puncture wounds, and cuts and scratches

- ☐ **1c** Explain how to take out a barbed hook stuck in someone's arm

- ☐ **1d** Name and explain five safety rules to always follow when fishing

- ☐ **2** Discuss how two types of fishing outfits differ. Point out the parts of several kinds of rods and reels and explain how and when to use each. Go over equipment care with your counselor

Tip: Visit a sporting goods store and compare different rods and reels. Ask an employee to point out each part.

Example: Compare a spincast outfit (easy push-button, great for beginners), a spinning outfit (more control, the most common), and a baitcasting outfit (accurate with heavier line, harder to learn). Name the reel seat, guides, drag, and bail.

- ☐ **3** Show how to properly use two different types of fishing gear

Tip: Practice casting in your backyard with a weight instead of a hook before you head to the water.

- ☐ **4** Tie these knots and explain how and when to use each: arbor knot, Palomar knot, improved clinch knot, uni knot, and uni to uni knot

Tip: Use a piece of fishing line and practice each knot until you can tie it quickly and neatly.

Example: Five knots and uses: arbor knot (tie line to the reel spool), improved clinch (tie line to a hook or lure), Palomar (a strong knot for braided line), uni knot (an all-purpose knot for hooks and lures), and uni to uni (join two lines together).

- ☐ **5** Name five basic natural baits and five basic artificial lures, identify each one, and explain how to fish with it. Explain why baitfish must not be released

Tip: Look through a tackle box with an experienced angler and talk about when to use each lure or bait.

6 Outdoor ethics and catch and release

Tips for this section: Pack out everything you bring, including old line, and learn to handle fish gently if you plan to let them go.

Example for this section: Show catch and release: wet your hands before touching the fish, keep it in the water as much as possible, back the hook out gently with pliers, and hold it facing upstream until it swims off. Pack out all old line, since it tangles birds.

- ☐ **6a** Explain why it matters to practice the Outdoor Code and Leave No Trace, and discuss how both benefit fishing resources

- ☐ **6b** Discuss what catch and release means and why it matters. Describe how to return a fish to the water safely

- ☐ **7** Get and read the game fishing regulations where you live. Explain why they were made and what following them achieves

Tip: Find your state's fishing regulations online or at a bait shop. Check whether you need a license.

- ☐ **8** Explain good outdoor sportsmanship and how it applies to anglers. Tell how Leave No Trace and the Outdoor Code apply to someone who fishes, including litter, trespassing, courtesy, and following fishing rules

Tip: Talk about how to be a good neighbor on the water, like giving others space and following the rules.

Example: Good sportsmanship: give other anglers plenty of room, don't cast across their lines, keep only what you'll eat and what's legal, help a beginner untangle a line, and report anyone breaking fishing laws to the wildlife agency.

☐ **9** Catch a fish and identify it

Tip: Ask an experienced angler where fish are biting nearby. Use a field guide or app to identify your catch.

☐ **10** If regulations and health concerns allow, clean and cook a fish you caught. If you can't catch one to eat, get a fish another way, then clean and cook it. You don't have to eat it

Tip: Have an adult help you clean the fish safely, then try a simple recipe like pan-frying.

Example: With an adult, scale and gut a panfish like a bluegill or clean a trout, rinse it in cold water, and keep it on ice. Then pan-fry it with a little oil, salt, and lemon until the flesh flakes easily.