



Fly Fishing

Scouts BSA · Outdoors

Name

Started

Completed

Fly Fishing is about the art of casting a light fly with a special rod and line. You'll learn to set up your gear, tie knots, choose flies, and watch what fish are eating. Catching a fish on a fly you cast yourself is a great feeling.

Requirements

Every official requirement, in plain language. Check the official wording when you sign off (scouting.org/merit-badges/fly-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. Wear glasses or sunglasses when casting and fish with an adult nearby.

Example for this section: Walk through a scenario: your buddy snags a hook in his sleeve on a back cast. Explain why everyone casting wears glasses, how you'd stop and get an adult, and when a hook in skin means a trip to a doctor instead of a do-it-yourself removal.

- ☐ **1a** Tell your counselor the hazards you're most likely to face while fly-fishing and how to anticipate, help prevent, reduce, and respond to them. Name and explain five safety rules to always follow when fly-fishing

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

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

- ☐ **2** Show how to pair a fly rod, line, and leader so the setup is balanced. Discuss several kinds of fly lines and how and when to use each. Go over equipment care with your counselor

Tip: Ask a fly shop employee or an experienced fly angler to help you match a rod, line, and leader so they work well together.

Example: Lay out a rod, reel, line, and leader on a table. Show how the line weight number on the reel matches the rod, then explain the difference between a floating line and a sinking line and when you'd use each.

3 Knots for rigging a fly rod

Tips for this section: Practice the knots at home with a spare line until you can tie them without looking at instructions.

- ☐ **3a** Tie backing to the arbor of the reel spool with an arbor knot

- ☐ **3b** Tie backing to the fly line with a nail (tube) knot

- ☐ **3c** Connect a leader to the fly line using either a loop-to-loop connection or a nail (tube) knot

- ☐ **3d** Add tippet to the leader using either a loop-to-loop connection or a surgeon's knot

- ☐ **3e** Tie a fly to the end of the leader with an improved clinch knot

- ☐ **4** Explain how and when to use each fly type and what it imitates: nymphs, wet flies, dry flies, streamers, poppers, bass bugs, and saltwater flies. Tie at least two of these types

Tip: Look at dry flies, nymphs, and streamers side by side and talk with an experienced angler about when each works best.

Example: Make a small chart: dry flies float and imitate adult insects on the surface; nymphs sink and look like young insects on the bottom; streamers look like small fish. Add one situation where you'd pick each.

- ☐ **5** Using both the roll cast and the overhead cast, show you can cast a fly 30 feet accurately and consistently

Tip: Practice casting on a lawn with a piece of yarn instead of a hook. Short, regular practice sessions work best.

- ☐ **6** At a good fishing spot, observe what fish may be eating above and below the surface. Explain why matching the hatch matters

Tip: Turn over a few rocks in a stream or watch the water surface to see what insects are around.

Example: Turn over three rocks in a riffle with an adult and look at what's clinging underneath. Sketch what you find, then pick a fly from a box that's closest in size and color. That's matching the hatch.

7 Outdoor ethics and catch and release

Tips for this section: Pack out all gear and line, and practice wetting your hands and keeping fish in the water when releasing them.

- ☐ **7a** Explain why it matters to practice the Outdoor Code and Leave No Trace, and discuss how both benefit fly-fishing resources

- ☐ **7b** Discuss what catch and release means and why it matters. Describe how to return a fish to the water safely

- ☐ **8** Get and read the game fishing regulations where you live or plan to fish. Explain why they were made and what following them achieves

Tip: Check your state's fishing regulations and whether a license is needed before your trip.

- ☐ **9** 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 sharing water with other anglers, giving space, and respecting private property.

Example: Sportsmanship looks like this: you reach a pool where someone is already fishing, so you walk around behind them, move well upstream, and leave the gate the way you found it.

☐ **10** Catch a fish on a fly and identify it

Tip: Go with an experienced fly angler who can help you read the water and spot where fish are.

Example: Keep a fishing log for the outing: the water, the time of day, the fly you used, and the fish you caught. Then use a field guide or your state's fish identification page to name the species.

☐ **11** 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.