



Module 4: Day Camp Fishing

Module 4 is directed to Cub Scout day camp and program directors and their staffs, and addresses the development of a day camp fishing program within the district or council. It should be noted that the National Camping School does not provide training at this time on how to establish a fishing program at local camps when certifying day camp and program directors. This module is intended to lend guidance in this area and provide suggestions on establishing a fishing program.

1. **Getting Started.** Fishing is one of the greatest outdoor activities that a Scout can participate in. For the program to be successful, several factors must be addressed.
 - a. Is there a large body of water such as a pond or lake nearby or on camp property that can sustain a large amount of small fish for several months in the summer?
 - b. Is the water circulation adequate, and are there sufficient fish nutrients to keep fish active and alive?
 - c. Is the shoreline free of hazards? Can it accommodate a den of Cub Scouts so they can fish safely together in one session?
 - d. Do you have adequate staff to assure the health and safety of each fisherman?
 - e. Is there adequate population of pan fish (blue gills, perch, catfish, and others) that will allow the majority of the boys a fun-filled fishing memory—and success?
 - f. Does the state or municipality require a fishing license?
 - g. Is there a catch-and-release policy?
 - h. How much and what training will you provide your staff?

- i. Is the budget big enough to purchase poles, rods, bobbers, sinkers, hooks, and other equipment to get the fishing program started?
- j. Do you plan to award prizes to boys who catch the biggest fish, tiniest fish, etc.?

2. The Fishing Location.

- a. Establish a fishing site that allows your staff to see and monitor the boys at all times.
- b. Use Safe Swim Defense to determine the depth of the water and the drop-off point depth near the shoreline. Indicate the areas of greatest concern on your shoreline map. If swimming is also allowed, mark off the fishing area so that it is some distance from the swimming area.
- c. The location should have the following:
 - i. Signage with fishing rules properly displayed.
 - ii. Safety rings with long ropes attached to them and long poles for rescue, if needed.
 - iii. Shaded area with plenty of drinking water available.
 - iv. Small first-aid kit. Each fishing staff member should know what to do if a Scout gets hooked with the fishing hook.
 - v. Quick access to an emergency shelter in case of a hazardous weather alert.
 - vi. A secure place to store fishing equipment at the end of each day.
 - vii. Storage area for the Scouter's day pack and personal items.
 - viii. Waiting or holding area nearby to keep the incoming group from mixing in with the group in session.
 - ix. Trash can.
 - x. Restroom facilities nearby.
 - xi. Area where parents can photograph their Scouts.

3. Fishing Set-Up and Equipment. Once the location has been established, the next step is to properly set up the site so that the flow of youth and fishing activity runs smoothly. Following is a suggested method for conducting this activity:

- a. Before the Scouts arrive:
 - i. Have an area or place near the shoreline to line up your rods in an upright position. Use a rod stand to keep poles organized and to keep them from tangling with each other.

Be sure there are an adequate number of rods so each fisherman gets one. Some camps use plain bamboo poles with line, bobber, sinker, and a small hook. The line should be long enough to secure the hook to the base of the pole. Others use a close-face reel and rod system with bobber, sinker, and small hook. It is recommended that if you decide on a rod and reel, select a close-face reel. The line on an open-face reel has a tendency to tangle more often, and it is more difficult for boys to use.

- ii. Keep bait —worms, wax worms, corn, or hot dogs— in closed containers on a small nearby table. Use bait that works best for your program and that is within your budget.
- iii. Have a fishing tackle box with extra line, hooks, bobbers, and sinkers. Include needle-nose pliers, nail clippers and a multitool.
- iv. Establish an area to welcome arriving Scouts and their leaders and parents and to talk about safety rules and the proper use of fishing equipment. Also talk about what to do if a Scout gets hooked while fishing. It is vital to talk about their conduct on the fishing line or shoreline. (More will be said later in this module on this safety topic.)
- v. Place water and trash containers in a shaded area not far from the fishing shoreline but far away enough so that they are not in the way of the casting zone.
- vi. Assign each staff member a specific responsibility. If you are short-handed, plan to seek assistance from the leaders and parents at each session.
- vii. Provide each staff member a nail clippers and needle-nose pliers. Keep a long-handled fishing net close by.

4. Welcome to the Fishing Hole!

- a. Have each Scout place his day pack and other personal items in the designated area.
- b. Take a physical count of the number of boys and adults at the beginning and end of each session to ensure that you have the same number of each at the end of the session.
- c. Gather boys and adults to do the following:
 - i. Talk about rules of the lake and local regulations and why it is important and have boys commit to them. Also use this

time to provide information and requirements for the fishing belt loop or pin.

- ii. Describe and demonstrate the use of the equipment, and have the boys describe the parts of the fishing tackle, such as reel, rod, fishing line, bobber, sinker, and hook.
- iii. Demonstrate the proper casting technique, proper casting safety, and fishing etiquette.
- iv. Describe the type of bait being used, and demonstrate how to attach the bait to the hook.
- v. Demonstrate how to properly carry the rod and hook.
- vi. Describe and demonstrate what to do if someone gets hooked with the fish hook:
 1. **STOP and DO NOT MOVE.** Do not jerk or move the line. Ask the Scouts, "What would happen if you jerk the line?" Correct answer: "You will drive the hook deeper into the skin." If the hook is deep in the skin, cut the line and take the boy directly to the camp medical officer to sterilize and remove the hook, or take the boy to the hospital. Most of the time, the hook will not go deep into the skin if the rules are followed, and it can be easily removed.
- vii. Demonstrate what to do when your line gets tangled with another fishing line:
 1. **STOP** and do not move your rod. Separate the tips of the rods where one goes right and the other goes left, leaving the line taut. By doing so, you can easily untangle the line. If it is too tangled, do not waste time and give the boys another fishing tackle.
 2. If the line is stuck on an object in the water, do not try to clear the line by using the rod or pole. Grasp the line at the end of the pole and wrap it around your hand with several turns. Slowly pull the line gently towards you, and it will either free itself or break the line. Using this method will not damage the rod or pole.

The talk should not take more than 10 to 15 minutes.

- d. Assign each boy a fishing rod and bait. Have him bait his own hook, and have him attempt to catch a fish.

- e. If the youth should catch a fish, both staff and youth should yell out “FISH ON!” This will announce to the shoreline that someone has caught a fish, and assistance should be rendered. Always give the boys the opportunity to remove the fish on their own. This is a great picture-taking opportunity, especially if this is the first time the youth has caught a fish.
- f. Practice catch and release at every opportunity unless by state regulation it is acceptable to clean, cook, and eat the fish.
- g. Several minutes before the end of the session, call Scouts in, have them secure their fishing rods and hooks, and have them place the rod back in the rod stand.
- h. Have Scouts conduct a Leave No Trace sweep of the site to assure a clean shoreline for the next group of Scouts.
- i. Thank them for coming to the fishing hole, and let them know you hope they had a great time.

5. Time to Clean Up and Go Home!

- a. At the end of each day, check each rod, repair or adjust parts that require fixing, and safely secure and store all fishing equipment to have it ready for the next day.
- b. Check the tackle box to determine if additional sinkers, bobbers, hooks, and line must be purchased.
- c. Have a short reflection meeting with staff to identify concerns, problem areas, or seek recommendations to improve the program.

Fishing is ultimately one of the greatest challenges a boy can have at camp. Catching a fish—or just trying to catch a fish—is paramount to a successful program. FISH ON!