

Information pack

# Angling - a beginner's guide



Have you ever fancied fishing?

Read on to discover more about the fascinating sport of Angling.



Angling appeals to all ages.

## What's it all about?

Forget about trawlers and fishing nets! Angling is the sport of catching fish with a baited hook on the end of a rod and line. Angling is one of the most popular sports in Britain today - and anyone can take part!

There are three main types of angling:

**Coarse fishing.** This is the most common type of angling. It takes place in canals, rivers, ponds and reservoirs all over the country. 'Coarse fish' are any freshwater fish that are **not** members of the salmon family.

**Game fishing.** This is the sport of fishing for salmon and trout by using artificial flies and 'lures' to attract the fish. Salmon fishing takes place on large rivers as the salmon swim upstream to 'spawn' (i.e. reproduce). Trout fishing takes place on rivers and reservoirs across the country.

**Sea fishing.** This involves fishing for saltwater fish around our coasts, often from a pier or jetty, or from a boat.



Bream feed in cool water at the bottom of ponds and reservoirs or live in reeds and sedges in the sluggish waters of slow-moving rivers. They are a deep-bellied fish with a dark green or slate grey back and a white or creamy underside.



Carp live in warmer water in shallow lakes and ponds or in slack eddies in shallow rivers. There are many varieties of carp. Common carp have golden sides and an off-white or yellowish underside. The picture shows a Crucian Carp.



Perch are found in slow, still waters. The colouring is variable, but generally they are dark greenish brown with dark vertical bars along the side.



Roach are found at a depth of 2-5m (5-15ft) near weed beds where they find food in the plants and insects. They are streamlined silver-flanked fish.



Tench is a very hardy species. They are able to live in weedy and poorly-oxygenated waters.



Eels have long thin bodies. They live most of their life in rivers but cross the Atlantic Ocean to spawn.

Canals usually contain a variety of freshwater fish and are suitable for 'mixed coarse fishing'. Roach and carp are common species, together with some larger fish such as pike and zander. These larger fish are called 'predators' because they eat smaller fish. Ponds and reservoirs that are stocked with fish for angling often contain just a few species such as carp, bream, perch and tench.





Fishing on the Calder and Hebble Navigation.

To understand what angling is all about you need to know what the 'tackle' is called and what it does. Let's start with the rod and line...

**Rods.** There is a huge choice of fishing rods! The 'action' describes how the rod bends under the strain of a fighting fish. Carbon fibre rods are light and flexible, but very strong. They have chrome, silicon carbon or ceramic rings for the line to run through. The handles are usually made of cork or foam.

Float rods are used when fishing just below the water's surface. The most popular size is a 13ft (4m) rod. A shorter 11ft (3.3m) rod may be better for fishing in canals and for younger anglers. When the fish 'bites' the baited hook, the float top usually goes under the surface to indicate when to 'strike'.

Ledger rods are used for fishing on the bottom without a float. A 'swingtip' or a 'quivertip' is fixed to the end of the rod to detect the fish.

**Reels.** The spool on which the nylon line is wound is usually fixed underneath the rod. Reels are fitted with an 'anti-reverse' mechanism so fish cannot swim away taking the line with them. Most reels also have a 'drag system' so the line doesn't break when a large fish struggles.

**Floats.** Floats are used to detect when a fish bites at the bait. A waggler float 'waggles' as it is only attached to the line at the bottom. A stick float has a heavy base and a domed or pointed top so it sticks up vertically from the water. It is attached to the line at the top and bottom. Balsa and Avon floats are heavier floats used in deeper and faster water.

**Hooks.** The hook and bait are suspended on a line below the float. The hook's body (or 'wire') must be very thin so the hook is extremely light and doesn't sink too quickly.

A ball eye hook has a circular hole (or 'eye') to tie the hook to the line. A straight eye hook has the 'eye' set in line with the shank (like the 'eye' of a needle).

Many hooks have a barbed point. This helps to keep the bait on the end of the hook. Barbless or microbarb hooks are easier to remove if birds or other wildlife become hooked accidentally. Take care with hooks - they're sharp!

**Weights.** Until recently, small pieces of lead were used as weights on the line suspended under the float so that the hook and the bait dangle in front of the fish. Lead weights are now illegal, so safe alternatives are used.

Did you know that lead is poisonous?  
Drinking water used to be supplied along lead pipes. Some older houses still have lead pipes!



**Split shot.** The small round pieces of lead substitute ('shot') used as weights have a split in them. The line is pressed into the slit to hold the weight in place.

Split shot is available in different sizes: e.g.

SSG ('Swan shot')	- about 2g	No.1	- about 0.25g
AAA	- about 1g	No.4	- about 0.12g
BB	- about 0.5g	No.6	- about 0.06g

**Bait.** Different fish (and different anglers) prefer different baits.

'Hookbait' (bait on the end of the hook) may consist of maggots, casters (the chrysalis or pupa of flies), redworm (a small earthworm), sweetcorn (a particular favourite with carp), luncheon meat, tinned cat food (especially those containing fish) and cooked hemp seed.

'Groundbait' (or 'loosefeed') is thrown loosely into the water (or 'swim') to attract the fish. Groundbait can be samples of the hookbait, or you can use breadcrumbs, pellets or crushed hemp seed.

'Spinners' are artificial bait used to attract predators such as pike and zander who think the spinner resembles a struggling fish. 'Lures' (artificial fish) are also used, as is 'deadbaiting' - the use of small dead fish to attract predators.

There are lots of different recipes for cooking hemp seed to use as bait. You can devise your own recipe for a tasty bait!





Learning angling skills at British Waterways Blythe Waters fishery.

Never fish under power lines - electricity can 'jump' to your rod!



The best way to learn how to fish is to get help from an adult or join the junior section of an angling club. But this should get you started...

**Float fishing - Casting.** Before casting the line into the water, you need to set up the float and bait the hook. Make sure there are no overhead power lines, then cast from directly overhead. The 'rig' (comprising the float, baited hook and line) should land on the water's surface in a straight line.

**Playing and landing.** When a fish 'bites', the float moves to indicate a 'catch'. The fish then 'runs' as it tries to swim away. You can 'reel in' the fish by 'pumping'. Turn the reel handle to wind the line onto the reel and, at the same time, lower the rod to shorten the distance from the tip of the rod to the water's surface. Then increase your finger pressure on the spool rim and pull the fish towards you as you bring the rod up to its former position. Repeat this until the fish is 'played out' (i.e. exhausted), then place the landing net in the water. Bring the rod tip down to waist level, and with the other hand holding the net, draw the rod back over your shoulder. Hold the net about 30cm (12in) below the surface and draw the fish towards you. Don't raise the net until the fish is exactly above it - then quickly 'land' the fish inside the landing net.

**Ledgering** - fishing on the bottom for bream, barbel or tench. Ledgering is done with either a ledger rod or a feeder rod, with or without a float.

**'Plumbing up'** - If you are using a float, you need to use a 'plummet' (a heavy weight) to find out how deep the water is. The plummet is attached to the hook and cast into the water. If the float sinks, you need more line between the hook and the float; if the float rests on top of the water, there is too much line between the float and the hook. Alter the length of line below the float until the float sits just out of the water. The bait will then be on the bottom.

When the depth is set, remove the plummet, bait the hook and re-cast. The line should then be tightened and the rod placed in two 'rod rests' with about 10cm (4in) of the rod tip submerged.

## Unhooking and returning your catch to the water

Handling fish carefully and unhooking them are important skills. Always wet your hands before holding fish and use an unhooking mat if possible. Never try to **pull** the hook out! Always **push** the hook in the opposite direction from which it entered the fish's lip. If the hook is embedded deep down in the fish's mouth, use a 'disgorger' - a simple tool designed for removing hooks quickly and easily.

Remember that ponds and canals have deep water. Never go fishing without an adult.



Because canal and pond water is untreated, there is a very slight risk of contracting Weil's Disease to anyone who touches untreated water. Always wash your hands after handling fish!

## Do I need a rod licence?

Young anglers under 12 years old do not need a licence. All anglers aged 12 or over require a valid fishing rod licence issued by the Environment Agency. Licences can be purchased from post offices, on the Internet or by telephone. A junior licence (ages 12 - 16) costs £5.00 for a year (1 April to 31 March). Contact via [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/fish](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/fish). Tel. 0870 1662 662.

## Where can I get more help?

The Professional Anglers Association (PAA) has experienced anglers specially trained to pass on their skills. The PAA will tell you the best places to fish in your area and will provide details of a local coach. Contact via [www.paauk.com](http://www.paauk.com).

## Where can I go fishing?

Always make sure you have permission from the landowner or fishery owner. Many angling clubs issue 'day tickets' allowing you to fish in a river or canal. Fisheries usually make a small charge to use a 'peg' (a stretch of bank indicated by a peg).

## Where can I fish with British Waterways?

You can fish along many stretches of our canals or in our specially stocked lakes and reservoirs. For details, get an adult to phone Liz Gibbs on 01827 252066.

Angling is cool.  
Join a club and  
have a great time!

