

Basic Angler Education Clinic Lesson Plan

Instructor Notes

Instructors will guide participants in learning the basics of fishing. Participants will learn about the basic fishing gear needed to get started, from fishing rods and reels to tackle and bait. There will also be a basic introduction on fish anatomy and the fish species that may be caught during the class. Prior to fishing with a hook and bobber, the students will be able to practice casting with a 'push button' rod and reel set up with a casting plug. Encourage student participation and questions throughout, this is a great time for students to familiarize themselves with the basics of fishing. Bring ample amounts of bait. Maintain equipment in between clinics, and make sure all gear is in working order often. See '**ADDENDUM**' at end of document regarding fishing licenses for this event.

Teaching Methods Used in This Lesson

- Discussion/Instruction
- Student Hands-on Learning

Time Suggested

2 hours (minimum)

Materials Required

- 2-3 Instructors
- Push button rod and reel combos (enough for all registered participants and 10 extra).
- Two push button rods set up with casting plugs for casting practice.
- The 4 types of other rod and reels to show participants (push button, baitcasting, spinning, and fly).
- Tackle box with surplus terminal tackle (hooks, sinkers, bobbers, casting plugs, scissors, pliers).
- First aid kit (small).
- Wet wipes/hand sanitizer.
- Bait (meal worms or worms/crawlers).
- Pop up shelter frame to lean all rod and reel gear against.
- Pop up table (any size) to hold literature and other equipment.
- Masswildlife Hunting and fishing guides (abstracts), fish ID pamphlets, outdoor recreation maps (for participants to take when leaving).
- Taxidermy fish (optional for demonstrating fish anatomy).

Classroom Setup

30-60 minutes prior to session

1. Preselect clinic locations based on the availability of shoreline fishing access in conjunction with nearby urban areas, which will cater to a larger crowd of participants.
2. Also preselect locations with ample amounts of public parking.
3. Upon arrival, set up the pop-up shelter frame and set out the rod and reel combos for participants.
4. Set up a pop-up table that will hold all the literature to be handed out as well as tools for class instruction and demonstration.

Lesson Plan

Part A:

Focus Activity (1 minute)

The purpose of the focus activity is to get everyone focused on the lesson. Ask: "Has anyone here fished before? How many of you are just fishing for the first time today?" Inform participants who are 15 years of age or older that they will need to be licensed to legally participate. See 'ADDENDUM' at end of document regarding fishing licenses for this event.

Part B:

Objectives (1 minute)

State the learning objective to the students. "At the end of this exercise, you will be able to:"

- Demonstrate proper and safe casting techniques using a push-button rod and reel.
- Demonstrate how to safely bait a hook.

Part C:

Demonstration & Instruction/Casting Practice (30 minutes)

1. Instructor should start by showing and introducing the four types of rod and reel types that most anglers utilize.
2. Emphasize the use of 'push-button' and 'spinning' for new and inexperienced anglers.
3. Emphasize that the 'baitcasting' and 'fly' rod and reels are for more advanced angling and are more for targeting specific types of fish.
4. Baitcasting for bass fishing, fly rod for trout (generally).
5. Instructor will then focus on the 'push button' for the class, as it is the easiest and most effective way for new anglers to get into fishing.

6. Demonstrate to students how the 'push button' rod and reel functions and show the proper safe casting techniques (great opportunity to use a 'push button' set up with a casting plug that new anglers will use for casting practice later).
7. Remember to mention these specific tips for casting:
 - Use mostly your arm when casting. The less total body movement the better.
 - Avoid casting over your head, instead cast from the side for better control. This allows you to watch your back cast for the safety of others who may be fishing close to you.
 - Keep the rod low if there is brush or trees around, to avoid getting hung up.
8. Next, demonstrate to the students the 'hook and bobber' rig that they will be using to fish.
9. Discuss the different parts of the 'hook and bobber' rig. The bobber is the indicator on whether you're getting a bite.
10. Ask students, "What are we looking to catch on the hook? ***Fish*** What do we never want to catch with the hook?" ***Another angler***
11. Emphasize that the hooks are sharp and the importance of safety. Show the students how to safely grip/hold a hook.
12. Inform students that they will be using 'barbless circle hooks' which help us reduce inadvertent mortality of fish.
13. Speak about how the circle hooks do not need to be 'set' like other hooks. If you see a bite, just gently reel back and that should hook the fish on its own. Setting the hook will likely pull the hook from a fish's mouth.
14. Inform students on how to bait the hook, demonstrating with a meal worm or nightcrawler by threading it onto the hook.
15. Go over the basic anatomy of a fish, highlighting the individual fins on a fish. Inform participants that many of the species they may catch with have sharp spines on their dorsal, anal, pectoral, or pelvic fins and sharp gill plates. Some fish such as pickerel also have teeth to watch out for.
16. Emphasize safe handling, by grabbing the fish on its sides firmly.
17. Talk about how important it is to not damage the gills, which are the most important organ for the fish to survive.
18. We use circle hooks to avoid unnecessary fish mortality from being hooked deep. If one is accidentally hooked deep even with the circle hooks, instruct students to cut the line and ask for another hook. If this happens, it is a great opportunity to show a student how to tie a hook during the student exercise.

19. Next, give some basic information on where you might find fish in a pond or lake. Here are some things you should mention to students.

- Some fish prefer cool oxygenated water. Like trout and salmon.

- Some fish prefer warm water. Like bass and panfish.

- Fish often congregate around structure, which could be docks, undercut banks, aquatic vegetation, submerged wood, rocks, and others.

- Briefly touch on Masswildlife annual stocking of around 500,000 trout for all anglers to enjoy. Can talk about the different species if desired.

20. After all this information has been touched on, inquire with participants. "Who has never cast before and would like some practice?"

21. Separate those who want to practice casting into two separate lines each with a different instructor guiding the students with a push button rod paired with casting plug. Guide them one by one by following the basic safe casting guidelines that were already Discussed.

22. After practice, have participants grab their own rod and reel combo and some bait and encourage them to find a spot on the shoreline to and start fishing.

23. Some participants will already be confident in their ability to cast and fish, and they do not need to practice casting, they can just start fishing.

24. Proceed with the student exercise aka fishing.

Part D:

Student exercise (fishing) (1.5 hours)

1. It is best to have 2- 3 instructors assisting participants while they are fishing.
2. As an instructor, bring bait to the shore and be prepared to spend most of the time helping participants bait their hooks. Demonstrate how to safely bait a hook. Encourage students to try it themselves.
3. You will also assist in removing fish from hooks.
4. Carry pliers to assist in removing fish from hooks.
5. Continue to actively work the shoreline engaging with participants and helping them with any needs they may have.
6. Often you will have to help untangle fishing gear.
7. Stay friendly and convey enthusiasm while helping participants.

Part E:

Student Summary/Wrap up (5-10 minutes)

In the last 15 minutes of the class, notify the participants to take their last few casts, clean up their area and return the gear where they obtained it. Encourage them to take any of the Masswildlife literature that has been provided before leaving. If the group lingers, don't be afraid to ask questions to the participants. "Is everyone feeling more confident in their ability to go out and fish?"

Clean Up (Instructors)

1. Check rod and reel gear as it gets returned into the van or other vehicle. Make note of missing gear or tangled gear to be fixed.
2. Pack away all literature and any folding tables.
3. Collect any unused bait and make sure it makes it into a fridge post class.
4. Sweep through the class area and the shoreline where students were fishing and pick up any of the garbage that may be associated with the event. Leave the location cleaner than it was when you arrived.

ADDENDUM: In order to legally participate in this class, all adults who are 15 + years old must have a Massachusetts freshwater fishing license. Those 15-17 must have a fishing license, but it is free. Anyone 18 or older will need a paid fishing license unless this class were to be held in conjunction with Masswildlife and their angling education program. If held in conjunction with Masswildlife, there is a blanket permit that covers all students, so they do not need a fishing license for the specific class. June 1st & 2nd of 2024 is also 'Free Fishing Weekend' in Massachusetts this year.