

Ice Fishing 101 Lesson Plan

Instructor Notes

Instructors will guide participants in learning the basics of ice fishing. Participants will learn about the basic ice fishing gear needed to get started, from jigging rods and reels and tip-ups to tackle and bait. Prior to fishing, instructors will demonstrate how to 'cut-in' to the ice with a hand auger and chisel, and power auger if one is available. Encourage student participation and questions throughout; this is a great time for students to familiarize themselves with the basics of ice fishing.

Teaching Methods Used in This Lesson

- Discussion/Instruction
- Student Hands-on Learning

Time Suggested

2 hours (minimum)

Requirements

- 2-3 Instructors
- Hand auger, chisel, or power auger
- Ice scoop
- 20-30 ice fishing traps (tip ups)
- Minimum 10 jigging rod and reel combos
- Tackle box with surplus terminal tackle and tools (hooks, swivels, steel split shot, sounders, various ice fishing lures, leader material, scissors, pliers).
- First aid kit (small).
- Wet wipes/hand sanitizer.
- Bait (meal worms, mousies, spikes) as well as a bucket of shiners or minnows (3-4 dozen).

Optional Materials

- Popup table (any size) to hold literature and other equipment.
- MassWildlife Fishing and Hunting guides and fish ID pamphlets
 - *Contact MassWildlife's Angler Education coordinator Jim Lagacy at jim.lagacy@mass.gov for these printed materials.*

Fishing License Requirements:

To legally participate in this class, all participants and instructors 15 + years old must have a Massachusetts freshwater fishing license. If the event is 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. Contact MassWildlife's angler education coordinator, Jim Lagacy, to learn more about partnering with MassWildlife on ice fishing events.

Classroom Setup

30—60 minutes prior to session

1. Preselect clinic locations based on the amount of available public parking for participants.
2. Upon arrival, check to make sure the ice is at minimum 6 inches thick for the clinic.
3. Find an area to pre-drill 30 or so holes for fishing/setting up traps that is within reasonable walking distance to the main parking area.
4. Set up a popup table that will hold 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 ice fished before? How many of you are just ice 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.

Part B:

Objectives (1 minute)

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

- Utilize a Drill or chisel to cut holes in the ice.
- Set traps (tip ups) for ice fishing.
- Demonstrate how to safely bait a hook.
- Use a jigging rod to ice fish.

Part C:

Demonstration & Instruction/Setting Trap/Jigging Practice (30 minutes)

1. The instructors will have already drilled enough holes for the class to fish, but it is important to show the students the concepts surrounding an auger or chisel.
2. Describe the differences between a hand auger, a chisel, and a power auger.
3. Students are not required to drill holes, but if they would like to try with a hand auger or chisel, let them do so.
4. Emphasize the importance of using an ice scoop to remove the floating ice chips and slush in the drilled holes, which if not removed, will be a hindrance to your fishing equipment.
5. Instructor should now demonstrate the basic mechanics and process to set a trap.
6. Explain the parts of the trap and their function.
 - a. Spool and Trip
 - b. Flag
 - c. Legs/Brace
 - d. Line
 - e. Button, swivel, leader, and hook
7. Explain how to hook a live minnow/shiner to the trap through the back, below dorsal fin.
8. Describe the process of using a 'sounder' to check for the depth and using the sounder to set the depth of your bait on the trap. Generally, 12-24" off the bottom.
9. Show students how the use of a button fixed to the ice fishing line can act as a depth setter, for each time you need to reset a trap without having to re-sound the depth.
10. Set the flag and demonstrate to the students how the flag will go up or 'tip up' when a fish takes the bait.
11. This is a great time to inform students how to effectively tend a trap when the flag has gone up.
12. Tell them, approach the trap with a flag up and observe if the spool of line is spinning under the water (which indicates a fish is taking the bait). In this case, they should pull the trap from the water gently, take hold of the line, pull back and bring the fish in.
13. If the student arrives and the line is not moving. Advise that they can wait to see the fish continue with the bait, or gently remove the trap and check to see if the fish is on the line. If so, pull back and bring the fish in.
14. Next, show students a jigging rod and explain how to use it.
15. Describe the parts of the jigging rod
 - a. Reel (usually spinning but doesn't have to be)
 - b. Line
 - c. The pole (very short for using in an ice hole)
 - d. Lure/jig (which can be in many forms)
 - e. Bait to tip the jig (spikes, mousies, mealworms)
16. Give a quick demonstration in baiting the hook of the jig with any of the baits.

17. Inform students that they open the bail on the reel and allow the jig to fall to the bottom. Close the bail, reel up one or two full revolutions, and begin jigging.
18. Emphasize that you can aggressively jig your lure, or also leave it almost motionless, and advocate that students must figure out the fish in each individual body of water they may be ice fishing on.
19. Inform the students, “if you feel a bite while jigging, pull up lightly to hook the fish and reel them up!”
20. 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.
21. Emphasize safe handling, by grabbing the fish on its sides firmly.
22. Talk about how important it is to not damage the gills, which are the most important organ for the fish to survive.
23. 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 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. Do we want this in the version being posted for other states to use?

24. Proceed with the student exercise.

Part D:

Student exercise (fishing) (1.5 hours)

1. It is best to have 2- 3 instructors assisting participants while they are fishing.
2. Set the first trap now and proceed hole to hole allowing a new participant to set a trap at each one.
3. Ask the students, “when will we know when a fish has taken our bait?” ***The flag will be up.***
4. Once all the traps are set, students can then try their hand at jigging in any holes that are still open while they wait for a fish to bite.
5. As an instructor, bring a bait bucket with minnows around with you and be prepared to help participants bait jigs and any traps where the flag has gone up and bait needs

replacement. Demonstrate how to safely bait a hook. Encourage students to try it themselves.

6. You will also assist in removing fish from hooks.
7. Carry pliers to assist in removing fish from hooks.
8. 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 that fishing is wrapping up and it is time to pack up and leave. As instructors, you will be responsible for picking up and neatly putting away the ice fishing gear. Ask questions to the participants, such as:

- Is everyone feeling more confident in their ability to go out and ice fish?
- What was your favorite part of ice fishing today?

Clean Up (Instructors)

1. Check the traps and jigging rods and make sure they are neatly put away. Make note of missing gear or tangled gear to be fixed.
2. Pack away any literature and folding tables.
3. Collect any unused bait and make sure it gets used again or let participants take it home. NEVER release your live minnows alive into the body of water in which you are fishing.
4. Sweep through the class area 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.