

## CITY FISHER INSERT #2

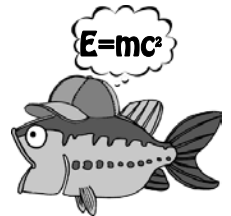
### FAMILY FISHING: INTRODUCING OTHERS TO THE SPORT

While some anglers get their start down this pleasant path on their own (often via magazine articles or books), the statistics show that most lifelong anglers are first introduced to fishing by a mentor—usually a family member. Below are a number of pointers (gleaned from personal experience, advice from others, and dozens of fishing clinics) that should help make the beginner's transition to the sport a smooth and memorable one. While all these principles apply to youngsters making their first cast, most will also apply to neophytes of any age—wives (and husbands!) and grandfathers, too. It's never too late to start!



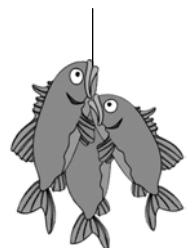
**BE PATIENT . . . BE VERY PATIENT!** Of all these suggestions, this one may be the most important. The goal of fishing (superceding even the actual catching of fish) is to have an enjoyable time. Unfortunately, anyone fishing for the first time can expect tangles, snags, and lost fish. Realize that these events are likely to occur and take them in stride. Avoid negative criticism, don't raise your voice, and concentrate on covering a few basics while having a good time (and hopefully even landing some fish).

**KEEP IT SIMPLE!** This principle runs a close second in importance (and as an experienced angler, is the one that I am most guilty of forgetting). Even if your student's line is a bit too slack or their rod tip held a bit too low, avoid turning their first trip into a two-hour list of "DOS" and "DON'Ts." Once you have already covered the basics, a good rule of thumb is this: unless it's something that will really prevent them from being able to catch a fish that day, don't mention it. Some concepts can even be learned before the actual first trip. All you need to learn knot tying and casting techniques, for example, are a table and a backyard; once on the water, the new angler can concentrate on learning other lessons. The simplicity concept also applies to equipment and methods. Someone who has never wet a line before will do much better with a spincast or spinning rod and reel than with a baitcaster (which even some experienced anglers avoid due to potential tangles). Similarly, live bait makes for an easier start than does learning to work a complex lure such as a rubber worm or Zara Spook! Begin with bait and use a bobber to simplify strike detection. If you wish to move on to lures on a later trip, then start with a simple cast-and-reel lure such as a crankbait or beetle spin. Following this comes the time for more advanced lure techniques. Remember—if that first trip is enjoyable, there will be plenty of future opportunities for instruction in the finer points!



**MAKE 'EM COMFY!** While any outdoor sport often involves some minor hardships, do as much as you can to make your sidekick comfortable on that first trip. Remember the raincoats in case it sprinkles, and bring a mid-morning snack or a picnic lunch. A comfortable lawn chair and a jug of iced tea could very well be the difference between a lifelong fishin' buddy and someone who never touches a rod again for the rest of their life!

**CATCH FISH!** While there is a great deal more to the pure enjoyment of angling than simply ending up with a fish on the line, most people associate fishing with catching fish! You may hope that your protégé becomes the next Roland Martin or Bill Dance, but instead of going after the glamorous but sometimes-elusive bass on the first outing, it might be better to seek the commoner and easier-to-catch sunfish. A beginner is also more likely to land a fish using live bait than with any other method. The king of live baits is the lowly worm, and it will catch not only the easier-to-find sunfish and catfish, but will attract any bass that happen to be nearby as well. That first fishing trip, however, is not too early to begin making your student aware of the other (and more important) pleasures to be had from this sport: the fresh

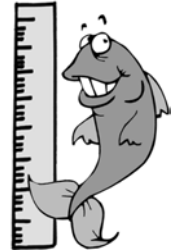




air, the great outdoors, interesting wildlife, and good company.

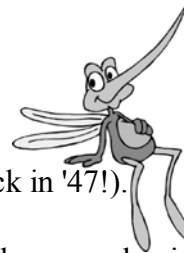
**AVOID THE ICK!** There is no getting around the fact that fish (and certain baits) might be unpleasant to touch when one is not used to it. While any competent angler will eventually need to learn how to bait hooks and handle fish, my opinion is that these experiences can wait until later outings. If a newcomer is willing to do their own baiting and unhooking (after a proper demonstration or two), by all means allow him—or her—to do so. If not, show the correct procedures at least several times during the first trip. While live worms are hard to beat, cut hot dogs will work well on panfish and catfish and may be a better starting bait for some individuals. Similarly, using barbless hooks makes unhooking fish much easier when the time comes, and wetting the hands prior to handling a fish will not only protect the fish but will keep the beginner's hands from getting slimy as well.

**INTRODUCE ANGLER ETHICS!** Younger beginners in particular are very impressionable, and fishing provides an ideal opportunity to teach responsibility and to reinforce the importance of good choices. Don't introduce too many rules at once, but do take time to properly identify and measure fish and to address size and bag limits (and discuss the reasons behind them). The first fishing trip is also the time to begin instilling a respect for fellow creatures—whether released or kept for the frying pan—and the environment we share with them. Fishing is a sport in which very often no one else is watching, and behaviors learned here can have incredibly far-reaching implications for other aspects of life.



**FINALLY, STOP FISHING BEFORE:**

- The mosquitoes stop biting . . . because they're full.
- It gets too hot.
- It gets too cold (old-timers tell me this happened here once back in '47!).
- The sprinkle turns into a downpour.
- The fish have stopped biting and boredom sets in. (Leaving when your beginner is sure there's more fish to be caught will also whet the appetite for outing number two!)



This is a long list of suggestions and may make the process appear complicated, but remember—a little extra effort on your part will make a very big difference to your companion!

## A FAIRER SPORT: WOMEN AND FISHING

All of the tips above apply to male and female alike. The fact is that women's interest in outdoor sports, including fishing, has seen a dramatic increase in recent years. There are now a number of women's fishing and outdoor organizations. Listed below are two FWC programs that are active in south Florida:



**BECOMING AN OUTDOORSWOMAN**—This program covers fresh water angling as well as a host of other outdoor skills (and yes, men have been known to take the course too!). Topics include panfishing, bass fishing, fly fishing, boating, camping, shooting, large and small game hunting, archery, outdoor photography, and birding. For dates and locations, contact the FWC's Hunter Education Section at (561) 625-5126 or write to 8535 Northlake Boulevard; West Palm Beach, FL 33412. You can also get more information online at <http://www.state.fl.us/fwc/join-us/bow.html>.

**LADIES, LET'S GO FISHING!**—This program deals specifically with fishing and boating. Geared toward saltwater angling, the classes cover bottom fishing, pier fishing, deepwater angling, saltwater fly fishing, casting, knot tying, and cleaning and cooking the catch. To

obtain more information, surf on over to **<http://www.ladiesletsgofishing.com>** or call (954) 475-9068. The next seminar will be March 11-12 in Fort Lauderdale.