STRETCHLEARN · WORKBOOK

# Fishing Fundamentals — Workbook

This workbook accompanies the Fishing Fundamentals course and gives you a structured place to record gear decisions, practice casting checkpoints, build your own rig library, and plan ethical fish-handling habits. Work through each section after completing the corresponding module and return to it before every trip as a pre-water checklist.

## Gear Selection and Setup

Evaluate and document your current or planned rod, reel, and line setup against the species you are targeting.

### Exercise: Species-to-Gear Matching Exercise

Pick two species you intend to target in your area. For each, use the module's power and action tables to write out a recommended rod, reel size, and line choice — then compare what you currently own or plan to buy.

• What is your target species and the typical water body (river, lake, reservoir)?

• Which rod action and power rating does the module recommend for this species and why?

• What reel size and gear ratio makes sense — and what line type would you choose as main line?

• If your current or planned gear differs from the recommendation, what is the practical trade-off you are accepting?

### Worksheet: Gear Inventory Sheet

List every rod, reel, and line you own or are planning to purchase. Fill in all columns — leave the Estimated Cost and Rating columns for you to complete.

Item name or model

Type (rod / reel / line)

Rod action and power (for rods) or reel size and gear ratio (for reels) or line type and lb test (for line)

Species it suits

Condition (new / good / needs replacement)

Estimated cost ($)

Personal rating (1–5)

### Checklist: Pre-Trip Gear Check

[ ] Inspect the first 3 m of line for nicks, rough texture, or UV fade
[ ] Verify the drag releases at the correct tension (approx. 25–30% of line's lb rating)
[ ] Check rod guides for cracked or chipped ceramic inserts (run a cotton swab through each guide)
[ ] Confirm all rod ferrules are seated and locked
[ ] Test the bail spring opens and closes cleanly (spinning reels)
[ ] Verify baitcaster brake settings match the lure weights you plan to use
[ ] Spool is filled to within 3 mm of the lip
[ ] Licence and regulation booklet accessible (physical or app)

## Casting Techniques

Record your casting practice sessions, diagnose errors, and build a progressive training log until you reach consistent accuracy targets.

### Exercise: Casting Accuracy Drill Log

Set a target circle at 10 m. Perform 5 sessions of 20 casts each for both spinning and baitcasting (or spinning only if you have one reel type). Record hits and misses, then identify the error pattern from the diagnostic list in the module.

• How many of 20 casts landed inside the circle in your first session — and what was the most common miss direction?

• Which error from the module diagnostic list best describes your miss pattern, and what adjustment did you make?

• After three sessions, has your hit rate improved? What changed in your mechanics?

• At what distance can you now land 15 of 20 casts consistently?

### Worksheet: Casting Practice Session Log

Record each practice session to track your accuracy trend over time. Fill in every column; leave Score % blank until you calculate it yourself.

Date

Reel type (spinning / baitcasting)

Lure weight (grams)

Target distance (metres)

Hits out of 20 casts

Score % (hits / 20 × 100)

Primary error observed

Adjustment made

Notes

### Checklist: Pre-Cast Mental Checklist

[ ] Identify your target and note an overcast hazard (branches, dock, bank)
[ ] Confirm the bail is open (spinning) or spool is in free-spool (baitcast)
[ ] Check hang length — 12–20 cm of line from tip to lure
[ ] Index finger is in contact with the line (spinning) or thumb on spool (baitcast)
[ ] Feet shoulder-width apart, target directly ahead
[ ] Backcast path is clear of obstructions behind you
[ ] Wind direction noted — adjust brake or release point if casting into headwind

## Terminal Tackle and Knots

Build a personal knot-testing log and a rig library documenting the four core freshwater rigs covered in the module.

### Exercise: Knot Strength Self-Test

Tie each of the five module knots in 8 lb monofilament to a swivel or hook. Attach a luggage scale or fish scale to the swivel and pull steadily until the knot slips or breaks. Record the break load and calculate the percentage of the line's rated 8 lb (3.6 kg) strength.

• Which knot achieved the highest break load in your test, and does it match the module's stated strength percentage?

• Which knot gave the lowest result — was it a tying error or an inherent limitation of that knot on monofilament?

• Did wetting the knot before drawing tight make a measurable difference to break load?

• Which knot will you use as your default hook connection going forward and why?

### Worksheet: Knot Performance Record

Record each knot test attempt. Leave Break Load and Strength % columns blank to fill in yourself after testing.

Knot name

Line material (mono / fluoro / braid)

Line lb test

Hook or swivel size

Wetted before tightening (yes / no)

Break load (kg)

Strength % of rated breaking strength

Notes (slip vs snap, tag end length used)

### Checklist: Rig Assembly Checklist (Texas Rig)

[ ] Bullet weight threaded point-forward onto main line before tying the hook
[ ] Hook tied with Palomar knot — loop passed cleanly through eye, not twisted
[ ] Hook point entered 1 cm into the nose of the soft plastic
[ ] Hook rotated 180 degrees and point re-entered into the body — completely buried, weedless
[ ] Bullet weight pegged with a toothpick if fishing dense cover (prevents sliding away from the bait)
[ ] Knot lubricated and tested with a firm pull before first cast
[ ] Bait aligned straight on the hook shank — a bent bait spins and twists the line

## Reading Water, Bait Strategy, and Catch-and-Release

Document your water-reading observations on a trip-by-trip basis and build a bait-to-conditions decision framework you can consult before each session.

### Exercise: Water-Reading Field Observation

On your next fishing trip, spend 10 minutes observing the water before rigging up. Identify and sketch or describe at least three fish-holding features using the module's vocabulary (seam, eddy, depth transition, cut bank, thermocline, weed edge, etc.).

• What are the three most likely fish-holding zones you identified, and what feature makes each one productive (current break, cover, depth change)?

• Did you find evidence of active feeding — surface rings, baitfish flickering, bird diving activity — and how did it influence where you fished first?

• If fishing a lake, where do you estimate the thermocline depth to be based on water temperature at the surface and any visible plankton concentration layer?

• After fishing, which zone produced the most strikes or fish — did it match your pre-fish prediction?

### Worksheet: Trip Fishing Log

Record every fishing trip. Leave the Catch Count and Catch Rate columns blank to calculate yourself.

Date

Water body name and type (river / lake / reservoir)

Water temperature (C)

Weather and sky condition

Water clarity (clear / lightly stained / murky)

Primary structure fished (seam / eddy / weed edge / point / hump / etc.)

Presentation used (lure type and colour or bait type)

Retrieval technique

Catch count (fish landed)

Catch rate (fish per hour)

Keeper or release decision

Key observation for next visit

### Checklist: Catch-and-Release Handling Checklist

[ ] Hands wetted before touching the fish
[ ] Fish kept horizontal and belly supported for fish over 30 cm
[ ] Hook removed with needle-nose pliers — not fingers
[ ] Air exposure under 30 seconds total
[ ] Camera ready before lifting the fish
[ ] Fish held facing upstream in the current before release
[ ] Fish swims away under its own power — not pushed or shaken
[ ] Water temperature checked — above 24 C (bass) or 18 C (trout) triggers a keep-or-vent decision
[ ] All monofilament scraps collected and packed out
[ ] Boat hull and bilge drained before leaving the water body

### Exercise: Licensing and Regulation Self-Audit

Download or obtain a printed copy of the current freshwater fishing regulations for your province or state. Answer the following questions specifically for the water body you plan to fish most often.

• What licence category do you need, what does it cost, and when does it expire?

• List the slot limit or size limit and daily bag limit for the species you most intend to target.

• Are there any bait restrictions, gear restrictions, or closed seasons on your target water body?

• Identify one regulation you were not aware of before this audit — what would the consequence of violating it be?

## Your Action Plan

1. Buy or confirm your rod, reel, and line setup matches the power and action recommendations for your primary target species before your first trip
2. Spool your reel correctly using the lay-flat test from Module 1 and set the drag to 25–30% of your line's lb rating
3. Practice the overhead spinning cast until you achieve 15 hits out of 20 at 10 m on a target circle before fishing a real body of water
4. Tie all five module knots at least five times each until you can complete each one from memory — test each with a firm pull on a scale
5. Assemble and fish the Texas rig and the drop-shot rig at least once each before committing to a single rig preference
6. Before your first trip, spend 10 minutes on the bank reading the water and naming at least three fish-holding features before you make a single cast
7. Download the regulations for your province or state, confirm your licence class, and identify the slot limit for your target species
8. On your first three trips, fish only catch-and-release using the full 6-step protocol from Module 4 to build the handling habit before you think about keeping fish
9. Start a trip log using the worksheet in this workbook and complete an entry within 2 hours of every trip while observations are fresh

10. Review your casting log after five sessions and identify the one persistent error — address it with a single focused adjustment at the next practice session