

SURF & PIER FISHING

THE GEAR, TIPS, AND TECHNIQUES
TO GET STARTED



Dave Bosanko

Adventure Skills Guides

CATCH SALTWATER FISH LIKE A PRO

Adventure Skills Guides

The inshore waters along our coast are some of the most productive waters in the U.S. and are great fun to fish. Many offshore fish cruise these waters in search of prey, making the chance of a trophy catch possible, even close to shore. Much of this coastal water is accessible from shore and is easy and economical to fish, even for beginners. If you have a basic understanding of fishing but don't often fish, or you have only fished freshwater, this guide will help you start successfully fishing in saltwater, whether it's from a pier, a jetty, or from a beach.

This guide assumes you have at least a basic understanding of fishing and fishing tackle. If you are new to fishing, pick up *Freshwater Fishing*; it will quickly get you started. With both guides in hand, you will soon be catching fish along the coast like a pro.

DAVE BOSANKO

Dave Bosanko is an avid fisherman and naturalist with degrees in Biology and Chemistry from the University of Kansas. He spent a long career at the University of Minnesota's field stations before retiring. In addition to fishing, he enjoys hiking, sailing, and building small wooden boats. Much of his time is now spent writing or visiting natural areas in the U.S. and beyond.

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

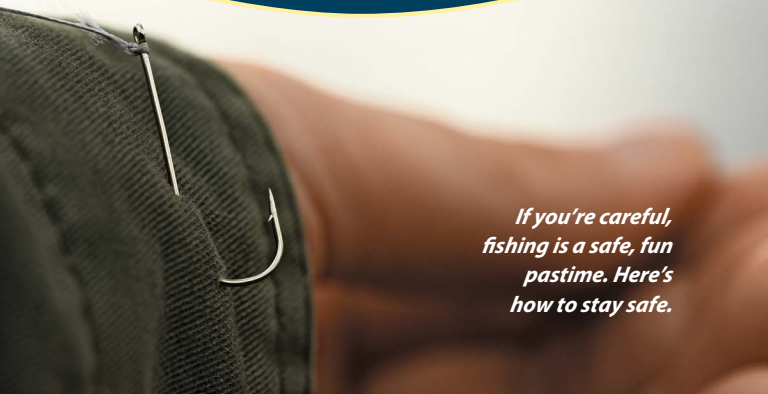
You don't need tons of fancy gear to get started fishing; you might have what you need already!



This guide will help you select the right equipment, rig your lines, choose the best bait, find a good spot to fish, and stay safe. It also includes a special section, “Dave’s tips,” with tried-and-true advice to help you catch more fish.

It is organized so you can quickly find the information you need to get started fishing. We will first cover some safety tips, then subjects common to most saltwater shore fishing, and at the back specific information for pier, jetty, and surf fishing. In the common section, topics that are more applicable to just one kind of fishing will be highlighted; **blue for pier**, **green for jetty**, and **orange for surf fishing**.






If you're careful, fishing is a safe, fun pastime. Here's how to stay safe.

Being mindful of your surroundings and what you're doing will not only keep you safe, it will also help you catch fish, and enjoy your trip to the coast. Here are some safety tips to keep in mind.

Don't Get Burned—Sunburns can be painful and can spoil a trip, but long-term sun exposure can be deadly. Put on sunscreen and cover up. If you wear long pants on a sunny beach for protection don't forget your bare ankles. Reflection off the sand can burn them.

 **DAVE'S TIP:** Keep sunscreen off your bait, it doesn't taste good to people and probably doesn't to fish either.



Don't Get Hooked—Hooks are sharp, and saltwater hooks are often large. Circle hooks are great for hooking and holding fish, but they do just as well on people.

Don't Fall In—Piers are often crowded, and pier fishing is relatively safe, but some piers are in locations where the ocean can be violent. Most piers, but not all, have guardrails, and many are high above the water. Keep your feet firmly on the deck. Don't climb over the rail to fish the pilings or to land a fish. If you do fall in it may be hard to get back to shore and out of the water.

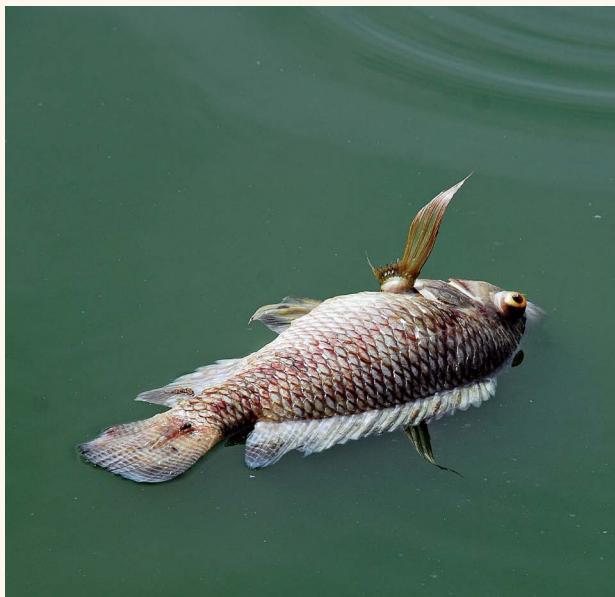
Jetties are made for water control, not for walking. Most are made of large rocks, so mist and splashing waves make them slippery and very hard to walk on or climb onto if you fall off. Wear good shoes.

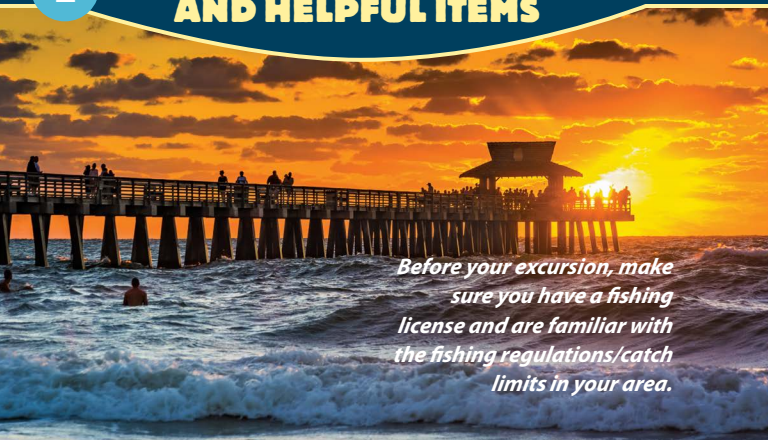


Rough surf can be hard to stand up in. Be sure your footing is sound before you attempt a long cast. If you are wearing waders, be sure they are belted off at the top so they won't fill with water if you fall. Know your beach. A good fishing beach at low tide may be a slippery rock and a wall at high tide. Always check the tide tables before you go.



Don't Get Sick—Most fish are safe to eat, but pollutants in the food chain are a valid concern. In addition, some ocean fish are seasonally toxic due to ciguatera poisoning. Check your state's health department websites for updates.





Before your excursion, make sure you have a fishing license and are familiar with the fishing regulations/catch limits in your area.

Licenses and Catch Limits—Many states require a separate fishing license for salt water, and most saltwater fish are now regulated by both size and season. When you stop by the sporting goods store to get your license, pick up the current regulations and a field guide to help identify your catch if you want to take some fish home.

Smartphone Apps—Most of us will be taking our smartphones when we head out fishing. Rather than checking your email while waiting for a bite, you might as well use it to help you when you're out fishing. There are lots of good fishing apps available, and I am only going to list a few of them. The best apps are the ones you actually use, not the ones you have on your phone because you think they are cool.

Weather Underground: A good weather app that includes wind and barometric pressure forecast, but there are many other options.

Fishing Rules: You will need some way to check on local regulations. This app uses your location to give you the size and catch limit for any fish you catch in any state, just by clicking on the fish. It even has pictures if you don't recognize your catch.

Navionics: You need to check on the tides when you are coastal fishing. This app will give the tide tables or tide schedules when you click on your location and so much more. Designed primarily for navigation, it will also show you the bottom structure at your coastal location as well as in your favorite lake or river back home.

Google Earth: By looking at close-ups of your fishing spot at several different times of day it is often possible to see underwater structures that could hold fish. This can be very helpful if you are fishing at high tide and want to know what your fishing spot looks like at low tide.

A CHECKLIST OF EXTRAS TO CONSIDER

- ☐ **A Good Knife**—Leave it at home if it is not sharp.
- ☐ **Polarized Sunglasses**—Good to see into the water but a necessity for watching your line and trying to detect a bite in bright sun.
- ☐ **Lip Grabbers**—Some fish have teeth, and big fish have big teeth. Lip grabbers are safer for you, and the fish, when removing hooks.
- ☐ **Long-nosed Pliers**—Good for removing hooks, pinching sinkers, fixing swivels, and so on.
- ☐ **Heavy Kitchen Scissors (fishing shears)**—Great for trimming line, cutting up crabs and small fish for bait, and removing gills to bleed a fish.
- ☐ **Small Hand Towel**—Good for holding slippery fish, cleaning hands, and covering your cut bait so the gulls don't steal it.
- ☐ **Gloves (a fillet glove is best)**—Protects your hand when handling spiny fish and pulling on heavy braided line when it's snagged.
- ☐ **A Few Feet of Stout Line**—Good for anchoring rods and keeping things together.



DAVE'S TIPS

Equipment

- Occasionally run your leader through your fingers; if it is rough, change it.
- After a snag, check your hook. Modern hooks are very sharp, but the points are brittle.
- Put plastic beads on each side of sliding weights to protect your knots.

Fishing

- Freshen your cut bait every 15 to 20 minutes to keep maximum scent in the water. The same is good advice for “Gulp” style plastic baits too: Resoak them.
- Use large cut baits and ignore the tap-tap of small fish and wait for the strong tug from larger fish.
- You’ll generally be more successful when targeting a specific species.
- If plagued by bait robbers or catfish, fish a little deeper or move a few yards. Large fish often hang out at the edge or just below schools of small fish.

Your Catch

- Taste is often improved by bleeding large fish soon after they are caught. Stun the fish, and then cut or remove the gills to do this.
- Fillets kept in salt water (not fresh water) will be moister when cooked.
- The key to good-tasting fish is keeping them cool and eating them as soon as possible.

GRILLED FISH RECIPE

Most saltwater fish are great when cooked on a grill. Here are some easy steps to grill your catch.

- Scale the fish (a spoon works great for this)
- Slit the fish from the vent to the chin
- Remove entrails and gills (head if preferred)
- Make several shallow slits across each side
- Rub salt, pepper, and spices of your choice into the slits
- Rub cooking oil on both sides of the fish
- Cook on a hot, well-oiled grill until the fish has an internal temperature of at least 145 degrees Fahrenheit



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Fish Like a Pro and Find Success with This Simple Guide

Get started catching saltwater fish with practical tips and easy-to-follow instructions

Discover the techniques to successful saltwater fishing, and learn how to hook popular types of saltwater fish

- Topics organized by fishing location: piers, jetties, or in the surf
- Introductory information for beginners, including where to fish, what tackle to use, how to rig your line, and more
- Helpful illustrations to help you find fish
- Applicable to coastal waters everywhere, from the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, to the Pacific
- Expert author with a lifetime of experience

Collect all the Adventure Skills Guides



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