



Introduction to Angling Skills

Fishing is a fun-positive activity that offers tremendous benefits to youth. Through fishing, leaders and parents can assist youth to develop life skills that will help youth live productive lives. In addition, by introducing youth to fishing, you provide them:

- A lifetime activity
- An activity they can do and feel a sense of accomplishment regardless of age, sex, or physical or mental abilities
- A time and place to think things out
- An activity they can do with friends and family
- An activity they can do alone without feeling lonely
- A challenge and prestige among peers
- A sense of responsibility and respect for themselves, the community and the environment

(provided with permission from the Future Fisherman Foundation)

Fishing is a simple activity, but a leader can introduce numerous dimensions into fishing activities. Through the Angling Skills discipline, you will learn specific angling skills — safety, fishing equipment knowledge, casting skills, knot tying, selection of bait, and cleaning and cooking fish. However, to be successful on a regular basis, anglers also need to know how to identify fish, and understand fish behavior. They need to understand how to make ethical decisions and have an understanding of fish management. Providing youth the ability to make their own equipment and supplies can add additional pleasure and youth development possibilities. Therefore, you can see how important it is to work as a team to make sure other leaders within your state are provided all elements of the program so that each youth can become a “complete angler.”

Involvement of parents and other individuals within the community are highly encouraged in 4-H Sportfishing programs. Involving parents in the program promotes communication between parent and child. Leaders should encourage families to fish together outside the structure of 4-H. Involving other individuals within your community provides youth with additional role models and helps youth to feel accepted and a part of their community, in addition to understanding how to access the tremendous knowledge base available to them.

Your first angling skills lessons with 4-H participants may be simple casting lessons followed by fishing for a plentiful fish such as sunfish. It seems simple, so how do you develop a multi-year learning program? As we discussed above there are many dimensions to fishing and no matter if you have been fishing your entire life, there is always more to learn. Believe us, if you met every week of the year for 10 years straight, you’d never run out of something “fishy” to do. Of course there is always fishing trips and you can expose youth to different ways and places to fish. Your participants will learn that as the weather and seasons change so does the pattern and behavior of fish. When fish change behavior, an angler has to use his/her critical thinking skills to decide what changes he/she needs to make in his/her fishing techniques. While you’re on the water, you can learn about the ecology of the water system. The weeks you can’t be on

the water, leaves you opportunities to improve casting skills, cook the catch, tie flies, make lures or fishing rods, explore fish folkways, have guest speakers, interview anglers, view videos and develop plans (for the next fishing trip). A certain percentage of sessions should be opportunities for the participants to teach what they've learned to others.

Have your 4-H members help plan and organize activities from week to week. It takes pressure off the leaders and provides youth with organizational, decision-making, problem solving and other life skills. Plus, it is their club. They will stay involved longer if they are the ones building the club.

Notes to Angling Skills Instructors – introducing the program to other instructors.

Your role is to teach other adult instructors and mentors. Therefore, it is just as important for you to go through many of the same steps as we do at this workshop to help your instructors understand their role. To help you facilitate this, we are providing you the following notes.

Immediate Hands On Instruction — People teach what they experience. The 4-H way is to learn by doing and this is an exercise that provides immediate hands on instruction, provides an opportunity for everyone to be successful and is an excellent way to get everyone participating in an activity right away. It is also an excellent way to demonstrate the importance of learning each step. Participants will learn through this exercise that they are here to learn how to teach.

- **Set up:** Have can-casting targets (can be cardboard targets large enough to make them easy to hit) set at an easy distance so everyone is successful (see can-casting lesson).
- **Procedure:** Have everyone line up into three or four groups. Teach the first person in line how to cast without the others in the group overhearing your instructions. Ask that he/she teach the next person in line after he/she finishes casting 5 or 6 times.
- **Review:** Review how the instruction was successfully passed on and what happened when it wasn't. Discuss the fact that many of your participants (adults who are going to be instructors) are already proficient in many of the activities you're going to be teaching. What they are here to learn is "how to teach." If they are there to show off what they know, or don't participate because they say they already know how to do that activity, they will miss the most important elements — the various steps to teach a beginner.
- **More than teaching skills:** We are also here to teach more than just skills, we are here to help you learn how to teach in the 4-H way incorporating youth development skills while teaching fishing skills.

Review purpose, objectives and your state workshop agenda: The agenda for your program will be different than that of the national, but you can adapt the National 4-H Angling Skills purpose and objectives to fit your situation. It is important that everyone have a clear understanding of why they are there.

Purpose: Teach participants how to teach angling skills in the 4-H way and how to incorporate angling skills into state plan.

Objective: Provide a *foundation* of experiences, teaching techniques, and lessons on angling skills that will enable participants to utilize a multitude of resources to expand their ability to teach and develop a program that covers:

- Angling Skills
- Life skills (youth development skills)
- A respect and responsibility for self, the community and the resource

throughout the expanse of the growing years of the 4-H participants.