



Youth Fishing Program Guidelines



Knowledge – Safety – Education

Introduction

THE AMERICA CUP encourages all member nations and federations to reach out to youth and provide them with access to angling disciplines in their area. Coaching guidelines and interactions to engage youth are paramount to the continued success of watershed conservation, resource education, and angler comradery. While many areas have outstanding youth angling programs, many do not. This information is provided to give nations a starting point to grow youth angling involvement.

Children (6-18 yrs) and their parents or caretakers can come together with community volunteers for a fun day of fishing they may not otherwise experience. These programs provide a refreshing break from their daily challenges. Spreading a positive message that kids can accomplish anything, including all children, despite their limitations. This is all made possible through national and local clubs and dedicated coaches who want to make a big difference in the lives of kids with special needs, circumstances, or challenges.

Every child's circumstances may be different. It may be the fact that they don't have anyone to take them fishing, or maybe they come from a broken home and just need a someone to go fishing with. Some inner-city children may not have a place to fish or the means to go fishing. Some come from orphanages, where they have a disadvantage because they have no one to take them fishing. Others may have special needs; their needs could be as basic as a slight learning disability to having intellectual and physical disabilities. Introducing these kids to fishing can be a wonderful experience for them. No matter what the circumstances are – It is a great feeling when you see a smile on a child's face, knowing that you participated in giving them a memory and skill that they will cherish forever.

Goals of Youth Angling Programs

- Expose children, who may not otherwise get the opportunity, to the sport of fishing and the enjoyment of the outdoors.
- Encourage continued participation in fishing by developing skills in the children along with their parents.
- Spread a positive message that all kids are capable despite disabilities. We include all children and give them the opportunity to feel like any other kid.
- Provide education and understanding to children about fish as a natural resource.
- Strengthen local communities through a positive relational experience between local groups, parents and kids.





Basic Successful Steps

1. SCOUT FOR LOCATIONS

Fishing means catching fish. Whether you plan to fish from a boat, shore or a dock, scout out locations where fish are plentiful. The local tackle shop is a great place to get some help. If possible, bring the kids along when you visit the store. Have them observe while you ask for pointers on where to go, productive baits for the area, and information on fishing regulations and fishing licenses.

2. GET READY

Organizing gear in advance minimizes stress. Check as you pack: fishing gear, snacks, drinks, water, sunscreen, bug repellent, rain jackets, hats, first-aid kit, sunglasses.

3. FISH SAFE

Safety must come first. Life jackets, while sometimes uncomfortable, are a must for kids around water. Hooks have barbs so should only be handled by adults. If you prefer, barbs can be pinched down. Ensure that the bank is safe and that the water flow is safe.

4. TALK TACTICS

Boys and girls alike are naturally curious, so explain how a float works and moves when a fish bites. If casting jigs, tug on the line while the child holds the rod to simulate a hit. Demonstrate setting the hook, emphasizing that like any skill, it takes time to learn.

5. GET A GRIP

Teach kids how to grip the handle of the rod keeping it in front of them in a 9 to 11 o'clock position. Explain how the reel handle turns and how to react to a bite.

6. CAST AWAY

A sidearm cast, not an overhead, is better and safer for kids. Here's an overview: Shoulder-check no one's in harm's way - Bring the rod back keeping it above the waist - Swing the rod forward while flicking the wrist and releasing the line prior to the rod pointing at the target - End with rod pointing at target - Offer lots of encouragement for young casters.

7. GEAR FOR SUCCESS

Success can result from the simplicity of a bait and float on a lightweight rod. Buy several whips 3 to 4 meters long or a quality spinning or spin-cast combo between 2 to 3 meters and spool the reel with .21 / .23 mm monofilament line.

8. USE NATURAL BAITS

To ensure that your clinics are successful use baits that will catch the most fish available at the venue. Maggots and worms prove to catch almost every type of fish and are readily available in most areas.

9. PLAY AND LAND

Learning to fish takes patience. Coach kids how to slowly and steadily play fish, stopping when the fish is at the water's surface. Encourage kids to independently land a fish quickly or to ask for help. Once the catch is out of the water and admired with photos secured, demonstrate proper release methods. If it's fish for dinner, explain selective harvesting.

10. HAVE FUN

Fishing should be always be fun. Keep this objective in mind and regardless of the number of fish caught, each outing will be a success.





Coaching Certification

Coaches are the persons that will setup fishing activities, review the venue, ensure safety, and provide the experience to grow interest in continued angling activities.

Coaching Process

- Obtain authorization to engage with youth.
- Back ground check for youth coaches to confirm no criminal, violent, or domestic history.
- Take a Safe Guard course for youth engagement or applicable course offered in country.
- Get authorized to teach chosen angling discipline.
- Coach to have basic first aid and CPR certificate.
- Have a first aid kit in possession.
- Have accident log in possession.

Venue Process

- Identify venue and safety requirements of water area.
- Identify venue property lines and access limits.
- Verify license type needed for fishing in water area.
- Acquire required use permits for water area.
- Acquire liability insure for use of water area as required by country.
- Post use notifications to local anglers of program dates.



Program Process

- Engage local schools or clubs to gain youth attendance and volunteers.
- Prepare introductions and personalize the opening moment.
- Discuss water area as resource to respect and maintain.
- Discuss fish welfare and catch & release principles.
- Review equipment for the day's activity – rod, reel, line, hooks, baits, lures, floats, weight, net, basic knots, etc.
- Dressing for fishing and appropriate dress for water area.
- Rigging of rods and equipment.
- Transportation of equipment. Best practice to carry rods and gear.
- Casting practice with no hooks, based on type of fishing discipline.
- Youth practice re-assembly of rods and transportation practices.
- Peer Coaching – have trained youth help other youth in all processes.

On Water Process

- Transportation of equipment. Trees, Fences, power lines, identify all possible safety issues.
- Venue review of water, bank, property lines, relief area for boys and girls, and safety issues.
- Weather plan for group if inclement weather or lightening issues.
- Reading water and likely places to catch a fish.
- Casting demonstration and use of net.
- Baiting hooks and rigging with coach and peer coach supervising.
- Spacing of anglers along water area to ensure level of safety.
- Start fishing. Have coach, peer coaches, and volunteers providing oversight and support.
- Allow peer coach to fish by example.

Catching Process

- Casting.
- Hook set.
- Landing a fish and proper net use.





- Hook removal and tool use if needed.
- Handling a fish. Photo of fish.
- Releasing a fish.
- Provide encouragement for successfully caught fish and instruction and encouragement for lost fish.

Environmental Process

- Pick up trash and litter.
- Do not damage path or bank.
- Weather plan.
- Dress accordingly for fishing.
- Access to water. Educate group on proper places to fish, private property, and areas to note.
- Report issues with area or local agencies.
- Respect plants and wildlife.
- Be good stewards to the land and fish.

How To Go Fishing Again

- Clubs.
- Agencies / towns
- Multiday coaching clinics / events
- Create a coach data base for country and make accessible to youth anglers.



Motivation

- Verbal praise.
- Prizes.
- Certifications.
- Youth volunteer opportunities at future clinics or events.

Gear Acquisition

- Manufactures.
- Local fishing clubs.
- Local fishing shops.



Coaching Assistance

- All assistants would require background and youth safety certification or process.
- Club members.
- Peer coaches.

The youth anglers of today are our conservationists of tomorrow!

Thank you and good fishing!