

Backyard Bass Background

Introduction

Fishing is an exciting time for families and friends to enjoy a day outdoors.

Where you fish, what type of water you fish in, and what fish species you are targeting will dictate how you fish. For example, if you are fishing on a boat for summer flounder, you will most likely be dropping your hook and sinker to the bottom of the bay or ocean. When you fish, it is important to know about the type of fishing pole and reel you are using. For each type of fishing that you do, there are types of reels and fishing tackle that are appropriate to use. For this activity, we focus primarily on what's best when fishing with beginners.

Types of Fishing Reels

There are four types of fishing reels: spincasting, spinning, baitcasting, and conventional. (A fifth type of reel known as a fly fishing reel is not addressed in this lesson). Baitcasting and conventional are sophisticated reels, and are not often used with beginners. For this lesson, we will focus on spincasting and spinning reels.

Spincasting

In spincasting, the reel faces you and is enclosed. Because this type of reel reduces the number of line tangles, it is best suited for beginners fishing in freshwater. The reel sits on the top of the rod facing you with the guides facing up at you as well. To release the line, you press the push button located on the bottom of the reel. To wind the line back in, you turn the handle away from you.

Spinning Reels

Spinning reels are open-faced and used in both fresh and saltwater. The spinning reel should face the ground as should the guides. The line is released by flipping up the bail (thin silver piece) on the front of the reel. You must pinch the line with your finger before flipping up the bail. Line is wound-up by turning the reel handle, again away from you. Right handed anglers will reel in using the handle on the left side. Spinning reels are the most common and used by all skill levels, from strong beginners to advanced anglers.ⁱ

Tackle

When fishing with beginners, fishing with bait is ideal. Bobbers, sinkers, and hooks are the main pieces of fishing tackle needed.

Bobbers and Floats

Bobbers, or floats, are designed to keep the bait suspended above the bottom, or away from weeds and other obstructions. You can change the length of fishing line in the water by moving the bobber up or down along the line. Bobbers indicate when a fish is striking. If the bobber is moving up and down (bobbing) in the water, it means that you have a bite.

Sinkers

The main purpose of sinkers is to add weight to the line. Sinkers can be used to bottom fish or to simply get your bait further down into the water column. The sinker will drop your fishing line and hook to the bottom of the water.ⁱⁱ

Hooks

Hooks are extremely important when fishing. Circle hooks are shaped like C's with tips turned perpendicularly back towards the shank. They are designed to only hook on exposed surfaces such as a fish's mouth. If a fish swallows your circle hook, as you reel in, the hook will pull out (versus a regular hook which could get caught in the fish's gut). Tamping down the barb (pinching it with pliers) will also help safely and quickly release a fish.ⁱⁱⁱ

Casting

It is important to be aware of your surroundings when casting. Before casting, survey the area to see if there are any plants, trees or shrubs that could be hooked. It is also important to be aware of people nearby; respect their space.

Casting Using a Spincasting Reel

To cast using a spincasting reel: Push and hold the button all the way down. Look behind you. When casting, think of yourself in the center of a clock. Bring the pole back over your shoulder to around 11 o'clock. As the pole is being brought forward, release the button when you can see the reel, around 1 o'clock. Be sure to not bring the tip of the fishing pole in contact with the ground. After the bobber and hook are in the water, rotate the handle one full circle to lock the line.

Casting Using a Spinning Reel

To cast using a spinning reel: Pinch the line with 1 or 2 finger(s) and open the bail. Look behind you. Bring the pole back over your shoulder to around 11 o'clock. As you bring the pole forward, release your finger(s) at the point at which you can see the reel, again (around 1 o'clock). Be sure to not bring the tip of the fishing pole in contact with the ground. After the bobber and hook are in the water, rotate the handle one full circle to lock the line; this should automatically close the bail and complete the circle. (Tip: If bail does not close automatically, close or flip it manually.)

Casting Tip

After casting either type, it is not necessary to reel in and cast numerous times, as the fish need to be able to see and smell the bait. Be sure to reel in the slack, i.e. get rid of the curly q's. Remember fishing is about patience, so sit back, relax, and enjoy!^{iv}

ⁱ I FISH NY Newsletter, Spring 2008; Ask Katie

ⁱⁱ Getting Started: A Beginner's Guide to Freshwater Fishing. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

ⁱⁱⁱ I FISH NY Newsletter, Fall 2007; Ask Katie

^{iv} Getting Started: A Beginner's Guide to Freshwater Fishing. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation