

Fishing 101

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I was five years old the first time my dad took me fishing, and it was an instant love affair. I began reading *Field & Stream* and other popular fishing magazines to learn about far away places with great fishing. I yearned for that day when I became old enough to fish the great spots. Little did I know that Long Island offers excellent offshore, inshore, and surf fishing from the ports and beaches. There is a diverse fish assemblage awaits every angler. It is no surprise that Long Island ranks high as a fishing destination for people throughout the world.

Start Simple

I've seen too many people dive into the 'deep end', by fishing too quickly. It doesn't make sense for someone to give full commitment to a sport until they decide how enjoyable it really is, and one should consider how much time one intends to devote to fishing, because there are different levels of involvement.

Anglers can fish with family members a few weekends each year, or immerse themselves in the sport on a competitive basis. Each end of the spectrum, and those in between, requires a different level of commitment, tackle, and equipment.

Beginners should start simply and use inexpensive equipment. After deciding which fish to catch, you are ready to explore the tackle options. For example, tackle that is being used to catch snappers (baby bluefish)



Photo by Tom Schlichter

Rod Length (ft)	~7	~8	~9	~10
Reel Size No. (e.g., Shimano®)	2000	4000	6000	8000
Reel Size No. (e.g., Mitchell®)	100	200	250	300
Line Strength (lbs test)	10	12	15	20

differs from the type used to surfcast for stripers. Many people enjoy doing their own research on the internet, but this source can be overwhelming for beginners. Make a trip to the neighborhood bait and tackle store to seek advice, instead. Tell your bait and tackle dealer which fish you intend to catch, and explain that you want to use 'starter' equipment to help you to decide if fishing is the right outdoor sport for you.

You can use a few simple guidelines to gauge your questions and the dealer's advice.



Spinning vs. Conventional Reels

Spinning reels are easier for beginners. They are positioned below the rod and the line comes off in loops. Conventional or revolving spool reels are positioned above the rod, and the line feeds like the thread from a spool on a sewing machine. They require more skill. Rods are constructed with light, medium, medium-heavy, and heavy action in mind. These terms refer to flexibility and rigidity in the pole when pressure is applied. Many beginners work best with medium action rods for spinning, and medium-heavy rods for revolving spool reels. A reel is matched to the rod's length. The table is provided for guidance to match spinning rods and reels. These options are meant as guidance, because rods differ in design and manufacturers use several

numerical systems to categorize their products and it is sometimes necessary to mix and match the rod and reel.

Lines

There is much written material about braided lines; however, braids have several glitches that may prove to be major stumbling blocks for beginners. Beginners can use monofilament lines until they acquire more experience, and the table provided can assist beginners to make these selections.

Clothing

Clothing is an important part of one's gear and yet it is often overlooked. Anglers fish around water where the temperature is cooler than inland. Bring a sweatshirt from home, even in warm weather. Savvy anglers invest in a good pair of boots — calf-height boots are useful in spring and fall, and chest waders are comfortable for beach fishing. Wearing thick socks ensures those boots offer maximum comfort, and extra layers of clothing helps to deal with the chill, inevitable sprays, and unexpected rain showers. Bring a few bottles of drinking water to avoid dehydration, even in winter. A good hat and sun block lotion prevents sunburn and offers protection against skin cancer. Being a professor, I could make this article into a 'fishing 101' semester course. The more an angler becomes involved in fishing, the more there is to learn about fishing.

By the way, there's another thing to bring when you go out to fish — an open mind and a thirst for knowledge. Learning new things and the challenges of angling have kept me coming back for more than fifty years. See you on the beach!

William Muller is a member of the Outdoor Writers Association of America.

Editor's Note: The author does not endorse the trademark brands mentioned.