



Fishing and Ice Fishing

Council Approval: May be required

Activity Permitted For: D B J C S A

About Fishing and Ice Fishing

Fishing (also referred to as “angling”) is a sport, a leisurely activity, and a major food industry, depending on who you ask. In the United States, freshwater fishing is more popular than saltwater fishing, and varieties include fly fishing, ice fishing, and match fishing. The best times of day to fish depend on a variety of factors, such as amount of sunlight, temperature, depth of water, and wind. In general, however, the best times are early in the morning or in the mid-evening.

Ice fishing, the practice of fishing through a hole cut in the ice of a body of water, is a relaxing wintertime activity—particularly in the northern U.S. states. Ice anglers often sit on stools inside small ice shanties, which provide shelter and warmth in cold temperatures. Shanties are typically made of wood or plastic and are rented from sport-fishing outlets or made at home. Overall, lakes and ponds tend to be best. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions. Consult state ice angler associations for information about ice fishing events and resources.

Fishing teaches respect for fish and wildlife. Whenever possible, use barbless hooks, and return live fish to water.

Learn More:

- All things fishing: [Take Me Fishing](#)
- [American Sportfishing Association](#)
- [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)
- [Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#)
- [International Game Fish Association](#)
- [U.S. Coast Guard’s Boating Safety Division](#)
- [Leave No Trace](#)
- Video about ice fishing: [YouTube](#)
- Minimizing fishing’s impact on the environment: [Seafood Watch](#)

Include Girls with Disabilities

Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information available at [Fishing Has No Boundaries](#).

Safety Activity Checkpoints

Make sure you've got the right life jackets. If girls are wading in water more than knee-deep or fishing from a boat, ensure that they wear a U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jacket (Type III recommended) that fits according to weight and height specifications. Inspect life jackets to ensure that they are in good condition and contain no tears. [Read about Coast Guard life jackets.](#)

Verify instructor knowledge and experience. Ensure that the adult or fishing instructor holds American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue certification or possesses equivalent certification or documented experience (competencies); the ratio of instructor to participant is 1:10. Consider additional adult watchers for groups that are more scattered and/or not clearly visible at all times.

See the “Offshore Water Vessel” safety activity checkpoints for deep sea fishing trips or any chartered boat fishing trip.

Observe fishing and environmental regulations. When selecting a fishing location, follow local, state, and federal fishing regulations and obtain fishing licenses, where required. Use the correct type of bait and fishing gear permitted in that area, and learn about limits on the number, size, and kind of fish that you can keep.

Verify safety of ice-fishing location. Ensure that ice is solid and thick enough to support the ice fishers' weight. Opinions vary about the appropriate thickness of ice for fishing. Generally the thickness should be between 4 and 6 inches. Your local department of natural resources can provide help. The Department of Natural Resources of the State of Minnesota also provides [guidelines for ice thickness](#). Once arriving at a lake, check the ice thickness, keeping in mind that temperature, snow cover, currents, springs, and rough fish all affect the relative safety of ice. Also, ice is seldom the same thickness over a single body of water, and can be 2 feet thick in one place and 1 inch thick a few yards away. Assess the ice depth at least every 150 feet. [Read more on ice-fishing safety.](#)

Know where to find first aid. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first aid. Basic ice rescue techniques should be practiced. Appropriate rescue equipment needs to be on hand (for example: ring buoy, rope, throw bag, pole, ladder, and—where necessary—boat).

Safety requirements vary:

- **From a dock:** Fishing from a dock requires the presence of a first-aider with American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue certification. The ratio of adult watchers to participants is one to ten, except for Daisies where the ratio is one to six. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.
- **Wading above the knee:** Fishing while wading, above knee-deep requires the presence of a first-aider with American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue certification. The ratio of adult watchers to participants is one to ten, except for Daisies where the ratio is one to six. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.
- **Wading below the knee:** When fishing from a shoreline or while wading (up to knee-deep), the presence of a first-aider with American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue is recommended, but not required. However, Coast-Guard approved personal flotation

devices or other water rescue equipment must be provided. The ratio of adult watchers to participants is one to ten, except for Daisies where the ratio is one to six. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.

- **Fishing from small craft:** American Red Cross Small Craft Safety Certification; the ratio of adult watcher to participant is one to ten, except for Daisies, where the ratio is one to six. Additional adult watchers are necessary for groups that are spread out or out of direct sight.

Select appropriate boats for water and passengers. Make sure craft weight and capacity are not exceeded (some crafts clearly display maximum capacity). Consider weather and water conditions, weight of passengers, and equipment.

File a float plan for extensive boat trips. If going on an extended boat fishing trip, file a float plan with a reliable person who will notify local authorities should your group not return. Float plans must include the names of people on board, destination, craft description, times of departure and return, and additional details about routes and marine communications. The Coast Guard provides an electronic, printable form.

Remove fishing gear, bait, and any dead fish at the end of the fishing activity.

Safety Gear for General Fishing

- Fishing rod appropriate to the type of fishing
- Fishing tackle (and tackle box) appropriate for the size and skill level of the participants and the type of fish to be caught
- Tools for removing hooks and cutting lines
- Layered, non-cotton clothing that's easily changeable depending on temperatures (waterproof jacket recommended)
- Boat shoes, closed-toe and non-slip hiking/sport sandals with heel strap, water socks, or shoes (no flip-flops)
- Cooler and ice for keeping fish cool and avoiding spoilage (if intended for consumption)
- If fishing from a boat, at least one graspable and throwable Coast-Guard approved personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water
- Fishing net

Safety Gear for Ice Fishing

- Snowsuit, warm coat, hat, and mittens
- Lightweight rubber gloves or hunting/fishing gloves
- Waterproof boots that protect against cold temperatures
- Fishing rod (1- to 3-foot rods are most common)
- Fishing tackle appropriate for the size and skill level of the participants and the type of fish to be caught (and tackle box)
- Tools for removing hooks and cutting lines
- Ice auger (ice saw or chisel); [read about augers and other equipment](#)
- Jigging rod/pole or tip-up to catch fish

- Ice bucket and scoop
- At least one graspable and throwable personal flotation device (Type IV buoyant cushion or ring buoy or equivalent) immediately available for each group on the water
- Flashlight and lantern
- Cooler for storing fish (if intended for consumption)
- Shanty (optional)
- Ice sled for pulling equipment (optional)

Ice Safety Quiz

Please read information from both the Minnesota and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources website on ice safety. Then take the quiz below and submit to your council.

[Ice Safety - MN Department of Natural Resources](#)

[Ice Safety - WS Department of Natural Resources](#)

True or False:

1. _____ Booming and Cracking ice is very dangerous.
2. _____ Ice freezes uniformly. If the ice is 12 inches thick in one area of the lake, then it is 12 inches thick everywhere else.
3. _____ New clear ice is safest, strongest ice.
4. _____ If you fall through, you should remove your winter clothes immediately in the water to help keep you afloat.
5. _____ Ice, six inches thick, can support a pick-up truck.
6. _____ A ladder can be used to assist someone who has fallen through.
7. _____ Ice claws are simple to make at home and a very convenient tool to help yourself get out of the water.
8. _____ If you were to fall through, you should swim away from where you came from, since that ice must be very thin.
9. _____ It is recommended to wear a life jacket underneath a winter coat while on the ice.
10. _____ Cold blood can linger in your arms and legs and suddenly rush to your heart and cause cardiac distress.

Short Answer:

1. Where can you find information about lake conditions?
2. What are some ways to measure the thickness of the ice?
3. What are some items that you should always bring with you out onto the ice?

4. What 5 ways can you assist someone exiting the lake after breaking through?
5. After someone falls through and they successfully exit the water, how would you treat them for hypothermia?