**Knot a Problem**

Fishing line requires special knots to hold the hook or lure securely. The improved clinch knot is easy to tie and works for any fishing situation. Practice it at home so you don't waste fishing time trying to remember how to do it. If your knot doesn't look right, or if your line looks worn or frayed, cut it and retie. Good fish are lost because of bad knots.

1. ![Diagram of knot 1](image1.png)
2. ![Diagram of knot 2](image2.png)
3. ![Diagram of knot 3](image3.png)
4. ![Diagram of knot 4](image4.png)
5. ![Diagram of knot 5](image5.png)
6. ![Diagram of knot 6](image6.png)

**Fish Finding**

Fish hide around rocks, logs and trees in the water, these are great places to cast your bait. Start in one spot for about 15 minutes. If you don't get a bite, move to the next likely area. Keep your line semi-tight. When your bobber goes under or your rod tip twitches, you may have a bite. Try moving your bobber up or down the line to fish shallow or deep areas.

**Best Times to Fish**

You can catch fish any time, but they usually bite best from 30 minutes before sunrise until two or three hours after the sun is up. They get hungry again 30 minutes before sunset and bite well for about an hour or two.

**Pan Dressing**

1. Use a spoon or scaler. Hold the tail firmly and scrape the scales off in short strokes from the tail to the head.
2. Remove the fish's head by cutting across the back and behind the fins on each side of the fish.
3. Cut off the bottom front fins and cut a slit in the belly. Remove any remaining organs.
4. Rinse the fish in fresh, cold water and put on ice until ready to cook.

**Fry 'Em Up**

- 3 pounds pan-dressed fish
- 2 cups cornmeal
- 1 cup flour
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon paprika or black pepper
- ½ teaspoon red pepper (optional)

Soak fish in slightly salty water 30 minutes before frying. Drain and rinse. Mix dry ingredients. Roll fish in mixture and drop carefully into vegetable oil heated to 350 degrees. Fry until fish flakes easily with a fork (usually about 5 minutes).

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There’s nothing better than a lazy afternoon on the bank of your favorite fishing hole, dreaming about a lunker that’s about to make your bobber disappear. If you’re already a fisherman, then you know the thrill of anticipation. If you’re not an angler, here are a few tips to get started.

**Starter Species**

Sunfish

Members of the sunfish family often are referred to as bream. They live around vegetation and sunken trees in the shallow water of lakes, ponds and streams. They can be caught on worms, crickets and grasshoppers.

Bass

Bass are top predators in Arkansas waters. They hide in underwater grass, bushes and other heavy cover to ambush baitfish and other small aquatic animals. They can be caught on worms, minnows and other small fish.

Catfish

Catfish, particularly channel catfish, are very popular for food and fun. They can be found in most lakes, ponds and streams. They can be caught on worms, hot dogs, shrimp, sour bacon and practically anything else that stinks.

**Gear to Get**

It doesn’t take much to get started. A rod or pole, line and hook are all you really need to catch fish. Here’s a description of items that work best for beginners.

**Rods and Reels**

Cane Pole – As basic as it gets. Just a long pole of bamboo or fiberglass with a line tied to the end. Just swing out the bait and lift when you get a bite.

Spincast – Also called a “push-button” rod and reel. It’s inexpensive, easy to use and a good choice for beginners to get their line a little farther than a cane pole can offer.

Spinning – Also called an “open-face” reel. This is a good choice for beginners and advanced anglers alike. The reel is mounted to the bottom of the rod and can cast light lures and baits very far.

Baitcasting – Primarily used for bass and catfish. This rod-and-reel combination can be tricky for beginners because the line can tangle (backlash) in the reel on the cast.

**Line**

Monofilament line is an inexpensive, durable option for beginners and advanced anglers. Different line sizes are best for each species. In clearer water, use as light a line as possible. In muddy water, heavier line will help haul in bigger fish. 10-lb. test line is a good size for all-around fishing.

- Sunfish – 2-lb. to 10-lb. test
- Bass – 6-lb. to 20-lb. test
- Catfish – 6-lb. to 40-lb. test

**Hooks**

Match the size hook with the type of fish you’re after. Long-shanked hooks are easier to remove from a fish’s mouth but may spook finicky fish.

- Bream – Long-shanked hooks in sizes 10 through 6
- Bass – Medium- to long-shanked hooks in sizes 4 to 3/0
- Catfish – Medium- to long-shanked hooks in sizes 4 to 3/0

**Bobber**

There are many types and sizes of bobbers. They can be made from wood, foam or plastic. A basic clip-on bobber works fine for most anglers. Always use the smallest bobber possible, one that goes under easily when the fish takes the bait.

**Weights**

Basically just something to get your bait down to the fish’s level. Non-lead sinkers are available and don’t hurt the environment. Split-shot works well for beginners, as do egg sinkers. Try to use as little weight as possible, just enough to keep the bait from floating to the surface.

- Bullet Sinker
- Split Shot
- Casting Sinker
- Egg Sinker