



Tips for Leading a Scout Group Fishing Event in a COVID-19 Environment

Prepared by the Training and Education Task Force of the Fishing Sub-committee
Boy Scouts of America

These tips were created to help reduce the personal health risk of exposure to and infection with COVID-19. You will also find some great information on how to put on a fishing program. The information was gathered from a variety of sources, including BSA webinars, the Centers for Disease Control, and personal experience. These tips are a “hands on” supplement to the Updated Guidance for CAI’s on COVID-19 issued by BSA Fishing on June 9, 2020 at <http://bsacai.org/news/9025666>.

While this information is current as of June 11, 2020, it could change as time progresses. Remember - the CDC and BSA National offer guidance; State and Local Health Departments and your local Boy Scout Council set the rules.

Best Practices

1. Plan your activity ahead of time with event and unit leaders. **Allow extra time for washing hands and disinfecting equipment and other surfaces before and after each use.**
2. Understand your Council, State and Local Health Department guidance and rules.
3. Review the information on the BSA Camp Director Resource page. It has lots of great resources. Go to <https://www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/cd-resources/>.
4. **High Risk** participants are those who are 65 and older and those that have diabetes or other chronic health conditions. **High Risk participants are discouraged from attending the event.** For further information on “People Who are Higher Risk for Severe Illness”, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>. Things **High Risk** volunteers can do to help:
 - Expedite communications for planning and scheduling.

- Recruit staff and participants.
 - Manage publicity before, during and after the event.
 - Schedule transportation.
 - Set up equipment before participants arrive and take it down after the event.
 - Provide virtual or socially distant instruction for den leaders.
5. Consider back-up or supplemental activities:
 - a. Backyard bass - see <http://backyardbass.com>.
 - b. Distance and accuracy casting contest - bring a 100-ft tape and some hula hoops.
 - c. Knot-tying contest - see 101Knots at <https://www.101knots.com/category/fishing-knots> for fishing knot images and bring pre-cut cord.
 6. Make sure all volunteers understand that there is a personal risk and sign a “COVID-19 At Risk Waiver”. Check with your local Council.

Planning and Preparation

1. Online Training

Check out <https://my.scouting.org/> to see what’s available.

- For weather see <https://www.scouting.org/?s=weather>.
- For hazardous weather see <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/alerts/hazardous-weather-training/>.
- For Safe Swim Defense see <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/gss/gss02/>.
- For Safety Afloat see <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/safety-moments/safety-afloat/safety/safety-moments/safety-afloat/>.

2. Documentation

Document event plans and procedures with emphasis on health and safety. Ensure they are consistent with local Council and State and Local Health Department requirements. Work with the local Council Health and Safety Committee to review and approve plans and procedures before the event.

3. Safety

Follow the [Guide to Safe Scouting](#). See some specific tips below under **Fishing with the Scouts**.

4. Location

When selecting a fishing location for Cubs, use a pond with easy access to water without obstructions to casting. Ideal locations have no moving water and are shallow near shore.

5. Equipment

We recommend fixed-line cane poles for younger Scouts and closed-face spin-casting or spinning outfits for older Scouts. Scouts may want to bring their own tackle, but don’t spend time fixing personal gear if it needs repairs. Let them use your gear instead. Avoid fishing rods with cork handles - they’re harder to sanitize. Also avoid lures with multiple hooks.

6. Cane Poles

Secure the line to the top of the pole with a double surgeon's loop or double overhand knot and piece of blue painters' tape. For each pole you'll need:

- 6-lb or 8-lb monofilament line
- Small clip-on float or bobber
- Small weight #7 or split shot below the bobber.
- Size 6 or 8 hook, J or Circle style. Circle hooks are the safest. Standard baitholder hooks also work - just crimp down the barb.

7. Spin-cast or Spinning Outfits

Use similar line, weights and hooks. Make certain that the line goes through all the guides, the line is running freely on the reel, and the drag is set properly.

8. Additional Materials and Equipment

- An extra spool of monofilament fishing line, hooks, small clip-on bobbers or floats, and lead-free split shot.
- Fingernail clippers (on a lanyard) for cutting line (staff).
- Needlenose pliers or forceps - one for each staff member who will be helping Scouts at the waterfront.
- A roll of blue painters' tape to keep tied-on lines and hooks in place.
- Eye protection for all Scouts and adults.
- Disposable face masks or face coverings, and gloves for staff.
- Water cooler.
- Disposable cups.
- Alcohol wipes, sanitizing wipes or alcohol (70% minimum) dispenser with pump or spray.
- Paper towels.
- Trash bag in a trash can. Have extra bags on hand.
- Two-way radios, or at least a cell phone and the phone numbers of key staff.
- Plenty of bait.
 - Use cut-up pieces of earthworms or nightcrawlers, grubs, mealworms, waxworms, crickets or even camp hot dogs (when you run out of everything else). Use scissors or knife and cutting board for cutting worms (staff).
 - While some national chain stores carry bait, check out and support your local bait and tackle shop. Many of them are proud to support local Scouting.
 - Make arrangements to purchase and store larger quantities of bait in advance. Use a cooler to keep bait dry and cool.
 - Use smaller containers to distribute bait (staff or older Scouts).
- Floatation device.

9. Important Contacts

Provide a list of important names and contact information as a handout or post at the event.

- Camp Ranger (if event is at a Scout Camp)
- Program Director
- Fishing Instructor
- Health Officer

- Safety Officer

10. Staff Assignments

- **Fishing Instructor**

He or she will run the fishing operations. He or she will need some assistants. If possible, recruit parents, Den Leaders and staff who like to fish and ask them to help with the event. They should work with small groups. The Fishing Instructor should talk to the Den Leaders and other staff ahead of time. Make sure they know how to bait a hook; how to instruct Scouts on how to use a cane pole or a spin-cast fishing outfit; and how to detect a bite, set the hook, and play, land, remove the hook and safely release a fish.

- **Health Officer**

He or she is responsible for ensuring that Council, State and Local Health Department COVID-19 safe distancing, sterilization and other health procedures are followed. For small events, the Health Officer and the Safety Officer may be the same person with dual responsibilities. If separate, they should work closely together.

- **Safety Officer**

He or she is responsible for ensuring that Scouts are careful with rods and especially hooks, are aware of water hazards, etc. He or she acts as a lifeguard/monitor for the event. He or she (or the Health Officer) will also carry a first aid kit or have one quickly available. He or she should know the BSA fish hook removal procedure (string pull method) and be prepared to clean and sterilize any wounds.

- **Quartermaster**

He or she (wearing gloves) will distribute, collect and disinfect poles and fishing rods. He or she will also repair or re-rig poles as needed.

- **Baitkeeper**

He or she will be in charge of the bait supply.

- **Parents and Guardians**

- Parents will assist with social distancing by being the go-between for the staff fishing instructor/leader and the Scout.
- Parents will help their Scouts to understand instructions as well as catch and release his or her fish.

11. First Aid

- Have a first aid kit at the fishing area.
- For any situations beyond basic first aid by staff or parents, the event **Health Officer** and/or **Safety Officer** should evaluate.

Fishing with the Scouts

At a distance, welcome the Scouts, their parents and leaders, and give them safety and fishing instructions. Show older Cubs how to rig their own pole. **Make it BRIEF!**

1. Consider a one-page summary handout with safety and fishing guidelines as well as important contact information that is sent out before the event and available as a handout or is posted at the event.
2. Safety instructions for Scouts and adults should include:
 - Stay hydrated.
 - Wear a hat for sun and fishhook protection. Broad brimmed hats are preferable.
 - Wearing eye protection while fishing or being around someone who is fishing.
 - Use sunblock, but don't get any on the bait!
 - With adult permission, use bug repellent as needed. Don't get any on the bait!
 - No running.
 - No throwing rocks or sticks.
 - No wading.
 - No bare feet - keep your shoes on.
 - Hooks – if possible, use barbless hooks or bend down the barbs. Note who to see if someone gets hooked (**Health Officer** or **Safety Officer**).
 - **All hooks are sharp!** Treble hooks pose an extra safety hazard and are NOT recommended.
 - Sinkers - use lead-free sinkers, hand-wash after handling or use latex-free gloves, and never put any sinker in the mouth or use teeth to close a split-shot sinker.
 - Casting - look around before you cast. Make sure no-one is close enough to get hooked.
3. Scout fishing instructions should include:
 - How to rig a line on the rod.
 - How to tie an improved clinch knot or Palomar knot on the hook.
 - How and where to put on a float or bobber.
 - How and where to put on a weight or split shot, if used (with pliers or forceps).
 - How to select a hook: hook style "J" or Circle hook, hook size 6 or 8. Note: Don't jerk a circular hook; they set themselves. See <https://anglerwithin.com/3-reasons-you-should-use-circle-hooks/>.
 - How to crush or bend down the barb of the hook.
 - How to bait a hook.
 - How to use a cane pole or a spin-cast fishing outfit, including safe casting. When using a cane pole, use a simple drop cast or pendulum swing.
 - How to watch your float; detect a bite; set the hook; play, land, hold the fish; remove the hook; and safely release a fish.
 - What to do if a fish swallows the hook. Cut the line and release the fish - the hook will dissolve in time.
 - How to ID the fish.
 - How to revive the fish, if needed.
 - How to avoid turtles and what to do if one is caught.

- Do not leave an unattended baited hook in the water.
4. Keeping your distance:
 - If you are setting up fishing stations, set up the stations in advance. Let Scouts draw a numbered popsicle stick that corresponds with a station number, and let them change places periodically. Discard the sticks when they are done fishing.
 - Scouts need to maintain a safe distance between each other. Not only to lessen the risk of virus exposure, but to help prevent fishing line tangles and hook snags. Note: Spacing can be a challenge when a Scout catches a fish. Everyone wants a close look.
 - Use the length of one or two poles as a distance guide.
 5. Monitoring fishing activities:
 - All adults have responsibility to keep an eye on the waterfront; especially for hook safety, water safety, and behavior concerns (running, throwing rocks or sticks, etc.).
 - Remind all Scouts they need to stay in their own groups, and to stay separated - even when someone catches a fish.
 - Make certain that hook barbs are bent down.
 - For Cub Scouts - rather than setting up a bait station, give Den Leaders and other assistants smaller containers with pieces of bait. Teach them in advance how to bait a hook or teach their Cubs how to do it.
 - For Webelos and above - allow each Scout to pick up a smaller container filled with a set number of bait pieces. Replenish bait as needed.
 6. Untangling lines:
 - If tangled, Scouts should bring in their lines and call for adult help.
 - Adult leaders will use disposable gloves and attempt to untangle the lines.
 - If it will take time to separate the lines and you have spares, let the Scouts use spare (disinfected) poles; otherwise, cut the lines and rerig the poles.
 7. Facemasks:
 - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends face masks/coverings at all times. See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>.
 - Follow the latest State and Local Health Department regulations and guidance.
 - The video “**Masks at Camp**” has some excellent suggestions. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnXEjg5CghY&t=74s>.
 8. Handwashing:

All Scouts and adults need to wash hands for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer before they enter the fishing area and before they leave.
 9. Disinfecting Equipment:
 - Keep disinfected equipment and used equipment in separate designated areas.
 - Disinfect fishing equipment before and after each use.
 - Scouts and adults need to see you wiping down all equipment and surfaces.

10. Working with Cubs, Scouts BSA and older youth.
 - Teach Scouts the basics. See the Fishing Merit Badge pamphlet for ideas and advice.
 - Have a fishing competition: most fish, smallest fish, longest cast, etc. Offer prizes or certificates.
11. Remember- give yourself more time than usual to conduct the event, and don't try to do it all yourself!!!

Post Event

1. Use Leave No Trace principles.
2. Using disposable gloves; pick up all garbage, including trash left behind by others.
3. Disinfect and clean up all equipment and surfaces.
4. Make sure your equipment is ready to use the next time and is returned to storage.
5. Tag any equipment damaged during the event so it can be repaired or replaced.
6. Recycle used monofilament.

Fishing Resources

BSA - Scout Fishing <https://www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/fishing/>
Fishing Merit Badge Counselor Guide
Fly Fishing Merit Badge Counselor Guide

Become a BSA Certified Angling Instructor <http://bsafishing.com>
 While you are there, check out the Blog Posts

Mecklenburg County Council Fishing Committee
mcc.scouting.org/fishing and <https://www.mccscouting.org/fishing-resources>

Intro to fishing - International Game Fishers Association (IGFA)
<https://learn-to-fish.igfa.org/courses/intro-to-fishing>

Take Me Fishing.org <https://www.takemefishing.org>

Educational Material by the State of Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife
<https://tpwd.texas.gov/education/angler-education/learn-to-fish>

- [Fishing Tips for Beginners](#) (PDF)
- [A Basic Guide for the Beginning Angler](#) (PDF)
 - [\(guía en español\)](#) (PDF)
- [Fly Fishing for Beginners](#) (PDF)
- Videos on YouTube:
 - [Getting Started: Fishing Resources](#)
 - [Safety While Fishing](#)
 - [Assembling Basic Gear](#)
 - [Tackle Boxes and Supplies](#)
 - [Bait and Lures](#)
 - [How to Cast](#)
 - [Freshwater Fishing](#)
 - [Saltwater Fishing](#)
 - [Fishing with Kids](#)
 - [Cleaning and Storing Fish](#)

State and Local Wildlife and Parks Departments. Here are a few:

<http://www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing.aspx>
<http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/fishing/Pages/default.aspx>
<https://huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/fishing>
<https://www.ncwildlife.org/Fishing/Fishing-in-North-Carolina>

Join the team - Become a BSA Certified Angling Instructor <http://bsafishing.com>

Have Fun and FISH ON!!!