

# NEW TO FISHING?

## How To Get Started

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My brother-in-law asked the question, “How do you get started fishing?”

It was a great question, as I have found great joy, solitude and fellowship in fishing and teaching others about fishing. Through fishing, I have learned about conservation and taught my son, nieces, nephews and fishing customers, both young and old, about nature and our beautiful bays and coastal shores. This type of knowledge is a must to share with others, particularly with children and is the reason I enjoy fishing with others and writing about it.

How does someone get starting saltwater fishing? I asked a number of bait shop owners this question and the consensus is that your first rod and reel should be simple and versatile. And, you do not have to spend a lot of money.

### Start with modest gear

Start out with modest equipment, particularly if you will be taking children. Then, as you get more serious and like the sport, invest in upgrading your equipment. **Rod and reel combinations** can be bought at all of the local bait and tackle shops and a host of department stores with sporting goods departments.



rod and reel combos

Do not spend more than \$125 for your first rod and reel. In fact, when on sale you can spend as little as \$49 for a combination rig and about \$125 for a good combination rod and reel.

Most tackle shop owners recommend starting with a medium or medium-heavy action spinning rod, six or seven feet long and a mid-sized spinning reel. The Penn line (or equivalent) of spinning reels is a good quality reel that has a range (good, better, best) of reels in their line and they are durable, forgiving and economical at their low end. Match this with a medium or medium-heavy rod and you can cast from docks, piers, jetties, the shore and fish for blue fish and bass. But, it can also be used to bottom fish for scup, summer flounder (fluke) or tautog.

### Don't be afraid to ask questions

Go to bait and tackle shops and tell them you are just starting out and need some advice. This is the advantage of going to a bait and tackle shop, you can ask them how to rig the rod and reel, what bait to use, where to fish in the area, etc. It is in the shop owner's best interest to sell you something practical that works for you and your budget, as his or her business is built on people just like you and I coming back time after time for bait, gear, repairs, etc. For this valuable advice and service, you can expect to pay more for your gear than at a large sporting goods store. However, I have never left a bait and tackle shop with bad advice.

Remember, you learn by doing and learn from others fishing. Ask questions of those fishing alongside you. Do not get frustrated. My friend Jim Malachowski first taught me the basics of fishing with artificial baits. I can't tell you how many times I would share my frustration of not finding fish. But after learning the basics, and practicing by going fishing and learning the habits of species (when to fish for them) I met with success.

### Where to fish?

Fishing from bridges, docks or jetties is usually good when water is moving around the structure and fish generally feed on smaller fish and organic life that grows or makes their habitat on or near structure (such as crabs and mussels).

Get the basics down before you go surf casting (as the surf is another element to learn how to negotiate. Moving water below your feet can be a distraction and can be dangerous.



The “West Wall” at the Point Judith Harbor of Refuge

Some good places to start fishing include jetties at Galilee and Matunuck; the breachways at Quonochontaug and Charlestown, RI; from Middle Bridge (South Kingstown); along the shore of coves in Warwick, East Greenwich, East Providence; from Beavertail Point (Jamestown), Point Judith (Narragansett); and docks around the Bay and ocean in Rhode Island.

### Scup, a great “first fish” to target

Scup is a good first fish to target from shore particularly with children.

They are fairly easy to catch if in the area and this year the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management has *Special Area Provisions* where shore anglers can take 9" scup from shore rather than the normal 10" minimum size.



(to page 38)