



A Quick Start Guide To **SALTWATER** *Fishing*





A Quick Start Guide to Saltwater Fishing



Whether you are seeking the calm enjoyment of fishing off a pier in a beautiful location, or the adrenaline rush and challenge of deep sea fishing, saltwater fishing is a rewarding hobby that appeals to many people.

Follow the tips and tricks from this guide and you'll be on your way to becoming a successful saltwater angler.



Saltwater Safety

Good thorough planning is important before you set out. A valid saltwater fishing license is a must and don't forget essentials like water, sunblock, bug repellent and a first aid kit for a safe and enjoyable experience. If you will be boating make sure a properly sized Personal Flotation Device is on board for each person and every item found on your State Parks and Wildlife Department checklist for boating safety should also be on board.



If you are prone to motion sickness, take a medication 4 hours prior to getting on the boat to allow the medicine to be in your system and greatly improve your odds against sea sickness. Limit alcohol consumption and always let someone know of your plans and when to expect you back. Finally, keep a close eye on the weather and remember to put the drain plug in the boat before launching.



Tackle and Gear

The strength of saltwater game fish can often exceed what you might imagine. To be prepared use a medium to heavy action rod with a reel large enough to provide power comparable to the rod. Familiarize yourself with the reels functions and set the drag so it prevents overloading the test strength of the line you're using. Braided line or a quality fluorocarbon line in a 20 to 60 pound weight works best.

Another valuable piece of gear is a large aerated bait bucket or live wells that are not over stocked to keep baits healthy. If it's a hot day try to keep the water temperature from getting too warm in your bait buckets by adding ice in a zip-loc bag.

A dedicated ice chest with several plastic water bottles that are frozen is an excellent way to store your legally sized catch from the moment it's caught.



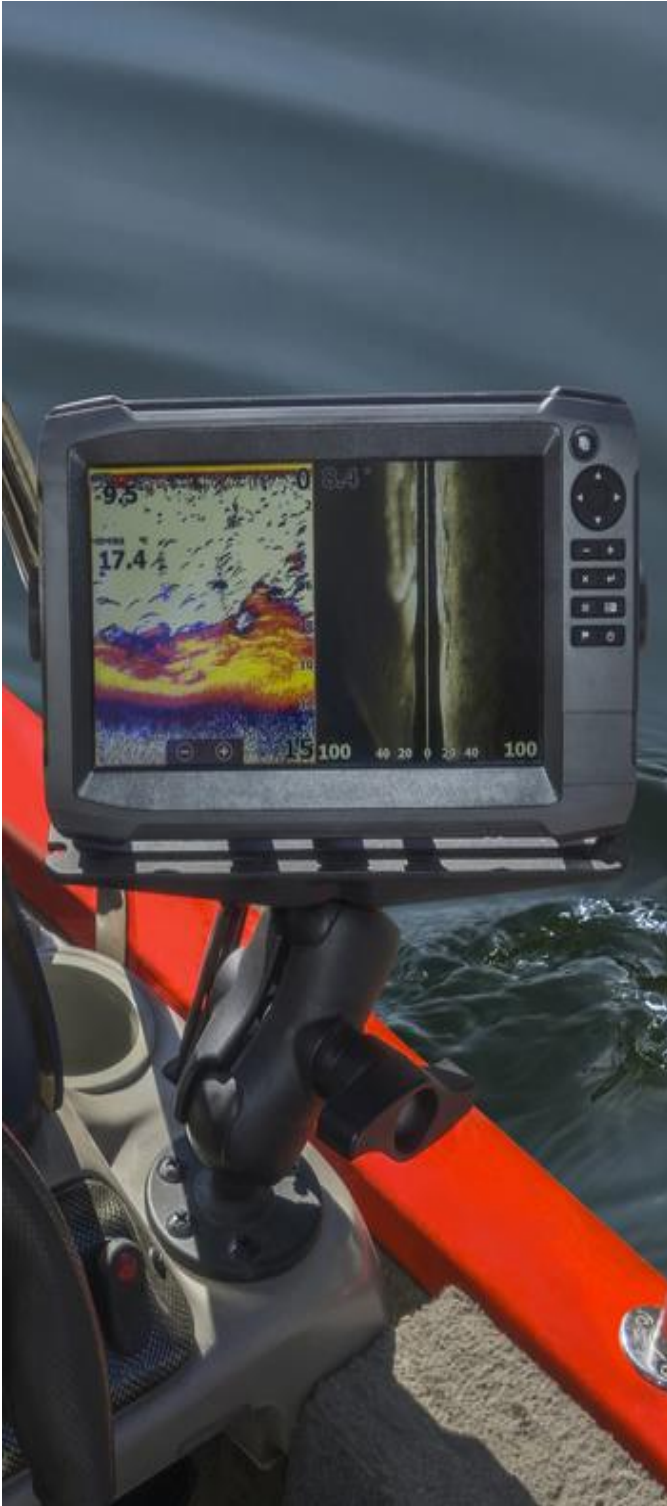


More tools of the trade

A great investment for a saltwater angler just starting out is a quality electronic fish finder. It's been said that 95% of the fish are in 5% of the water, so a fish finder can increase your odds of success right away.

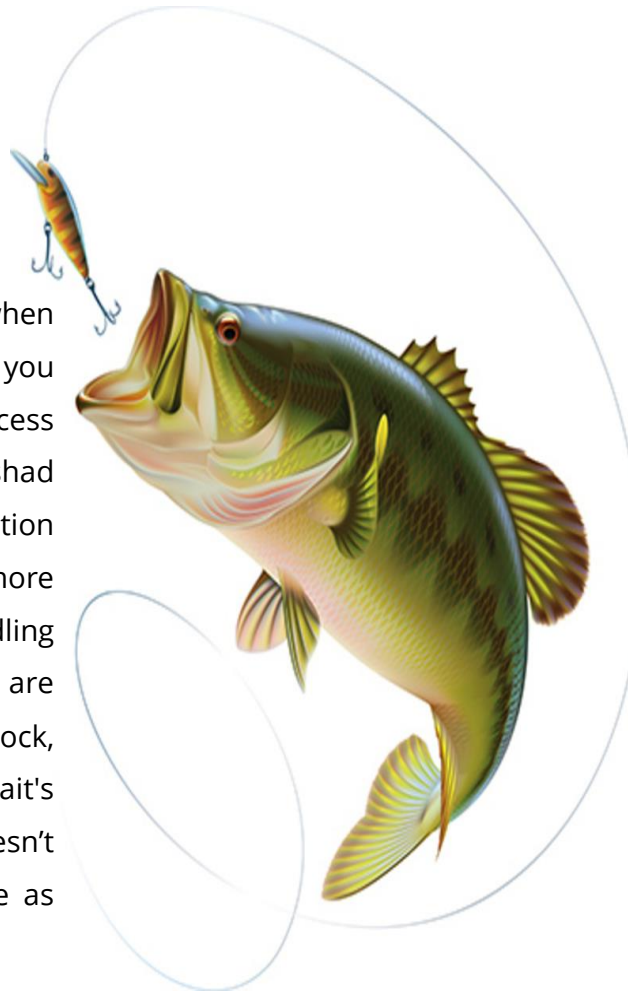
A fishfinder is an electronic device, consisting of a display and a transducer that uses sound waves to "see" things in the water under your boat or from the pier.

Not only can it provide valuable information like depth and temperature of water but it also helps you avoid dangerous obstructions below the surface when boating. Some models offer GPS tracking, acting as a backup for your boat's GPS system and also allows you to mark productive spots, increasing your efficiency on an outing.



The best of The Baits

There are two main categories of bait used when game fishing, they are natural and artificial. If you are new to the sport you will have more success using live natural baits such as shrimp, croaker, shad and other baitfish common to your fishing location as well as crabs (cut large claws off to make it more inviting to game fish) and sand fleas. When handling bait use vinyl gloves or ensure that your hands are clean and free of contaminants like sunblock, cologne and gasoline to avoid spoiling the bait's scent. Hook your live bait in a way that doesn't damage vital organs, allowing the bait to move as naturally as possible.



When bait becomes lethargic replace it. With live baits make sure to avoid setting the hook until the fish has had time to start swallowing the bait. Once that happens lower the rod tip quickly and reel in the slack then set the hook with a smooth solid motion keeping the line tight as you reel in. Adjust the drag as needed and use the power of the rod to exhaust your catch and avoid excessive speed on retrieval. Use of a net is recommended to aid in landing your catch. If necessary dead bait or cut baits can be used but are not as successful in most cases.

The second type of bait is artificial baits such as shiny spoons or slabs. Endless shapes, colors and styles of both soft plastics and hard body styled baits are available and the techniques to fish them with are many. The weather conditions, lunar influence, tides and type of fish you are fishing for all have an effect on which artificial bait to select and how to use it. This is why it is suggested that some experience should be acquired before choosing artificials, but don't be afraid to try.



Get your Game Fish on

Location has an influence on the types of fish you will usually catch, however one of the exciting aspects of saltwater fishing is you never know what you will reel in, which only increases the fun and anticipation.

There are some predominant species that are commonly caught with some variation between the bay and deep sea. Fish that you can expect to hook in the bay are Flounder, Spotted Sea Trout (Specks), Black Drum, Red Drum (Reds) and Snook.

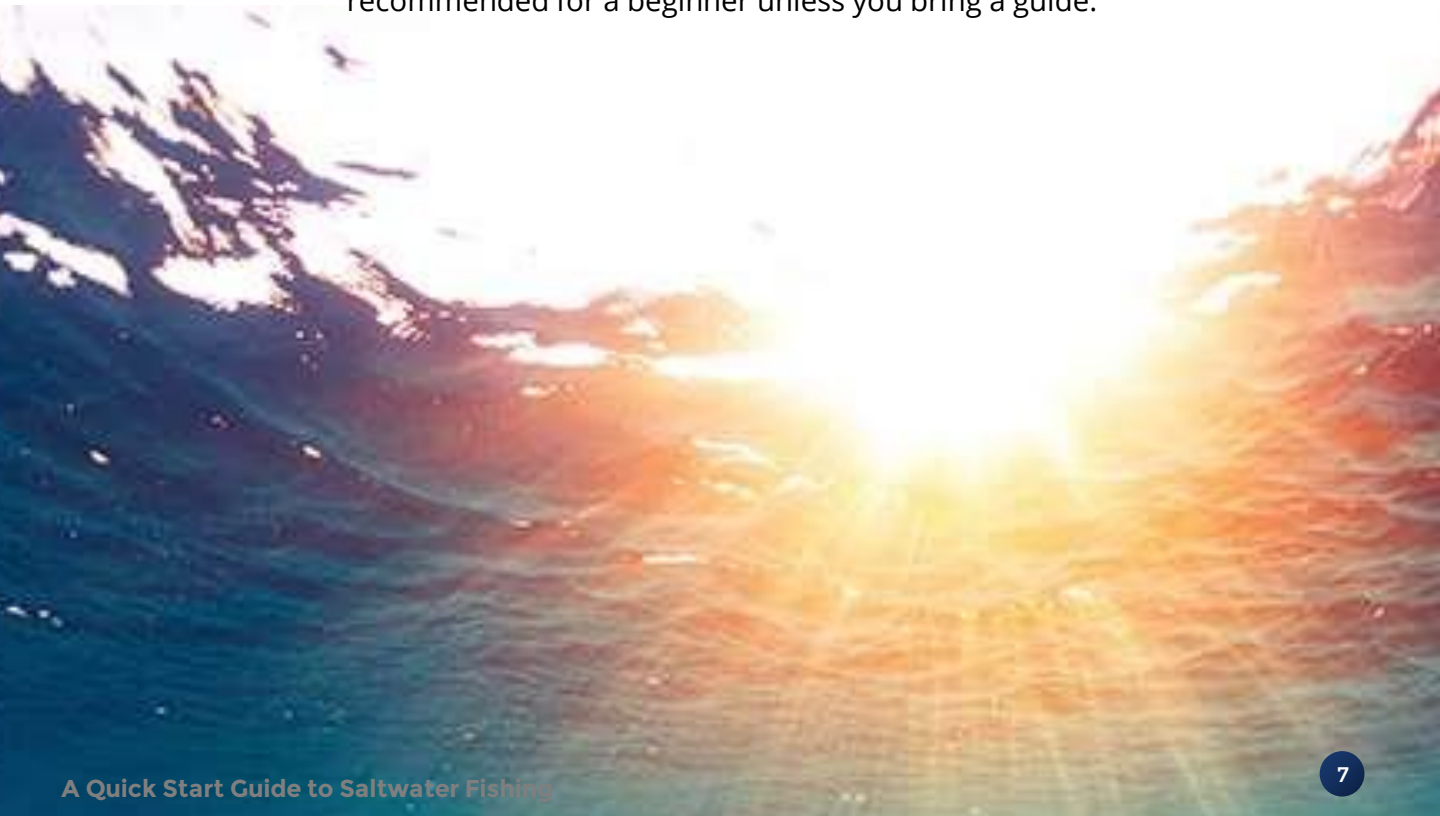
While fishing in the sea, species such as Snapper, Amber Jack, Mackerel, Tarpon, Tuna and Dolphin (not Porpoise) are common... Should you have Porpoise close to the area you're fishing you might consider relocating as the game fish tend to flee from these predators leaving you in empty water.



Start Simple



If you are brand new to the world of saltwater fishing pier fishing is a great way to start. When pier fishing weather doesn't play as big of a factor and you don't need all the extra gear that you would need to bring if you were on a boat. Timing is important in pier fishing however, so make sure to check the tide charts for your location before setting out. Another way to test the waters of fishing is to try surf fishing. With this type of fishing you'll be standing on the shore or wading in the surf. You'd be surprised at the variety of fish that can be caught without ever going out into the ocean! Deep-sea fishing is a rewarding challenge but not necessarily recommended for a beginner unless you bring a guide.





Tying it up

By following these proven methods and with the right gear, your chances of success are high. If you aren't successful on your first try, don't be discouraged, evaluate what you did or didn't do and discuss this with others who fish. Then come try your skills again and remember "the worst day fishing beats the best day working!"

Until then, "Tight Lines."

