

“Doing the little things right will increase your angling success”

Or

“Seemingly insignificant things that make a difference”

Notes from a talk by Steve Culton, educational guide from Connecticut

- Translated by CB, reviewed by SWC

Yes, 10% of the fishermen really do catch 90% of the fish. It's true. It's not magic or luck, it's attention to detail. When you run into one of these people, chat him or her up and find out what they're doing that makes them successful. Don't be shy. The superstars in any sport work hard, play smart and are skilled in the fundamentals.

- Use sharp hooks. Not just sharp, but sticky sharp. Run it lightly across your fingernail, it should be sticky to your nail. Change hooks frequently, especially when fishing nymphs or fishing for steelhead. Use a bastard file to sharpen.
- Use a proper hook set. Complex topic that depends on the species of fish and how you're fishing for them.
  - Stripers. Hard, gut set.
  - Striped bass: Hard set and repeat it several times during play.
  - Trout on a dry fly: just raise the rod tip.
  - Trout on a wet fly swing: let them set the hook. Be ready to give line.
  - Big browns with mouse patterns: first action will be bumps, wait until you feel the weight of the fish.
  - Steelhead: Think of a reason to set on each drift. Set on the slightest indication of a fish.
  - “Short Strike” concept is flawed: be patient and don't pull the fly out of the fish's mouth
- Check your leader frequently (every 10 minutes) and change or repair if you find abrasions or a wind knot.

- Mend like you mean it: pick up the line aggressively and mend the whole line from the rod tip to the fly. If the fly moves, try lengthening the leader (and practice more) but the advantage of the subsequent clean drift outweighs this short disturbance.
- Move if you're not catching fish. Don't expect the fish to find you. Take a few steps up or down stream to change presentation angle.
- Flies in the water catch more fish. Limit false casts to one or two. Keep the fly in the water when you're moving up or down stream.
- Downsize your dry fly. During a hatch, if you've got the right pattern but aren't catching fish, change to a smaller fly in the same pattern, even if it's smaller than the natural.
- When fishing a dry fly, use a long leader to increase dead drift time. If a dead drift isn't working, try moving the fly.
- Take it to the bank. Shady or grassy areas of bank provide protection from predators.
- Use multiple flies. More targets in the water. Two-three wets will let you know what the fish are taking. Hanging a wet off a large attractor will make it easy for a fish to find your flies.
- Go to a soft hackle or an emerger pattern when a dry doesn't work.
- Know what your fly is doing when fishing wet or streamers. Often one bb is the difference between a good and a great fisherman because fish eat at different levels in the water. Watch fly speed and mend to slow it down if there's current between you and slower water near the bank.
- Keep an eye on what's going on in your yard. The fish in a nearby stream may be eating the ants or crickets you find. You can't fool Mother Nature and many hatches/bait appearances/fish runs occur when specific plants are in bloom.
- Attitude, attitude, attitude:
  - Fish Happy and with confidence.
  - Get adventuresome and fish where others don't go.

- Find your own truth by questioning “conventional wisdom”.
- “We fish for pleasure, I for mine, and you for yours” – James Lising

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