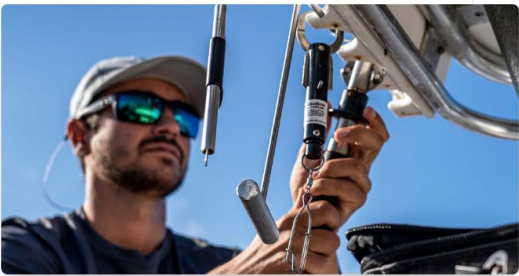


Best Practices



Prepare for Trip

- **Have a plan:**
 - What species are you targeting?
 - What depths are you fishing?
 - How do you plan on catching the fish?
 - The season, size, and bag limits for the species you're targeting.
 - Incorporate releasing fish into your routine fishing plan – plan ahead for how you will release fish.
- **What to bring?**



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 - Incorporate releasing fish into your routine fishing plan – plan ahead for how you will release fish.
- **What to bring?**
 - All necessary gear to release fish (dehooking devices, venting tools, descending devices, and enough weight to descend the fish you are targeting).
 - Gear that prevents further injury to fish, including heavy enough tackle, proper hooks and bait for your targeted catch.
- **On the water:**
 - Know what to do before a fish gets to the surface in order to effectively release it.

Minimize Fight Time and Hook Injury

- **Why it matters?**
 - The longer a fish fights, the more lactic acid builds up in a fish, which can lead to death.
 - Lighter gear will lengthen fight time and increase predation encounters leading to unnecessary death of fish.
 - Light gear is likely to lead to more breakoffs and excessive gear left either in a fish or in the ocean.
- **What to do?**
 - Use heavy enough rod, reel and terminal tackle to quickly get fish to the surface.
 - Use non-stainless steel, non-offset circle hooks to prevent gut hooking fish.
 - Cut the line if a fish is gut hooked; trying to pull the hook out will lead to further injury. Non-stainless steel hooks will rust or fall out over time.



Minimize Air Exposure and Handling Time

- **Why it matters?**
 - Fish use a lot of energy and oxygen during the fight, which needs to be replenished in order to fully recover.
 - Fish are unable to breathe out of the water and need oxygenated water running over their gills in order to breathe.
- **What to do?**
 - Only hold a fish out of water for as long as you can hold your breath.



- **What to do?**
 - Only hold a fish out of water for as long as you can hold your breath.
 - If a fish is not showing signs of barotrauma, use a dehooking device to quickly release the fish over the water.
 - If you plan to take a picture, have a camera ready prior to pulling the fish out of the water.
 - If a fish is gut hooked, cut the line and get the fish back in the water quickly.


Presence of Predators

- **Why it matters?**
 - Although it is often unavoidable, predators such as sharks, dolphins, barracuda, goliath groupers and others may take your catch from your line.
 - Interactions with predators lead to fewer fish available both to anglers and in the ecosystem to grow and spawn.
 - Predators may interact with fish being descended leading to a loss of gear.
 - Predators consuming hooked fish results in frustration when angling.
- **What to do?**
 - Move or rotate spots frequently. Although predators are quick to appear to boats, it is often possible to get a few good fish in the boat before they arrive.
 - Use heavy tackle to reel fish up quickly before predators get to them.
 - If you are worried about losing gear while descending fish



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- Use heavy tackle to reel fish up quickly before predators get to them.
- If you are worried about losing gear while descending fish, try rigging your descending device and weight with steel leader.




Photography and Handling


- **Why it matters?**
 - Fish are often injured if improperly handled.
 - Improper handling can cause you to drop the fish, leading to physical injury/harm.
 - Fish have a protective coat of slime over their scales. Removing this slime makes fish more susceptible to disease.
- **What to do?**
 - If you plan on releasing fish and want a picture, have a designated camera ready before you pull the fish out of the water.
 - Hold the fish horizontally to support the body weight of the fish.
 - Try to avoid putting your hands in the gills of the fish.
 - Use wet gloves or a wet rag to improve grip, minimize slime loss and avoid injury to hands.

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