

# **First Time Fishing Checklist**

## **Your Complete Guide to Getting Started in the Tri Cities**

### **Welcome New Angler!**

*This checklist will ensure you're ready for a successful and fun first fishing trip on the Columbia, Snake, or Yakima Rivers!*

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## **BEFORE YOU GO - PREPARATION CHECKLIST**

### **LICENSES & REGULATIONS**

- ☐ **Washington Fishing License** (Age 15+)
- ☐ **Catch Record Card** (if fishing for salmon/steelhead)
- ☐ **Current Regulations Pamphlet** (free at license vendors)
- ☐ **Check Emergency Regulations** at [wdfw.wa.gov](http://wdfw.wa.gov)
- ☐ **Screenshot/Print License** on phone for backup

### **PLANNING YOUR TRIP**

- ☐ **Choose Your Spot:**
    - ★ *Beginner-Friendly:* Columbia Park Pond, Howard Amon Park
    - ★ *River Access:* Leslie Groves Park, Chiawana Park
  - ☐ **Check Weather** (Wind under 15mph is best for beginners)
  - ☐ **Tell Someone** where you're going and when you'll return
  - ☐ **Set Realistic Time** (Plan for 2-3 hours your first trip)
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## **ESSENTIAL GEAR CHECKLIST**

### **BASIC FISHING EQUIPMENT**

- ☐ **Fishing Rod & Reel** (6-7 ft medium action for beginners)
- ☐ **Fishing Line** (8-12 lb test monofilament)
- ☐ **Tackle Box** with compartments
- ☐ **Hooks** (Size 6-10 for general use)

- ☐ **Weights/Sinkers** (*Assorted split shot*)
- ☐ **Bobbers/Floats** (*Red/white plastic works great*)
- ☐ **Pliers** (*For removing hooks*)
- ☐ **Nail Clippers** (*For cutting line*)
- ☐ **Stringer or Bucket** (*If keeping fish*)
- ☐ **Landing Net** (*Helpful but optional*)

## **BAIT & LURES**

- ☐ **Live Bait Options:**
    -  **Worms** (*Great all-around choice*)
    -  **PowerBait** (*For stocked trout*)
    -  **Minnows** (*Check regulations*)
  - ☐ **Starter Lures:**
    -  **Spinners** (*Size 2-3 Rooster Tail*)
    -  **Jigs** (*1/8 oz for panfish*)
    -  **Soft Plastics** (*Grubs or worms*)
  - ☐ **Bait Container** with lid
  - ☐ **Backup Options** (*Fish can be picky!*)
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## **COMFORT & SAFETY CHECKLIST**

### **SAFETY FIRST**

- ☐ **Life Jacket** (*If fishing from boat/dock*)
- ☐ **Sunscreen** (*SPF 30+ - reapply often!*)
- ☐ **Sunglasses** (*Polarized help see fish*)
- ☐ **Hat** with brim
- ☐ **First Aid Kit** (*Include bandaids for hook pricks*)
- ☐ **Cell Phone** (*In waterproof bag*)
- ☐ **Whistle** (*For emergencies*)

### **CLOTHING & COMFORT**

- ☐ **Layered Clothing** (*Tri Cities weather changes fast!*)
- ☐ **Rain Jacket** (*Just in case*)
- ☐ **Extra Shirt** (*You might get splashed*)
- ☐ **Comfortable Shoes** (*May get wet/muddy*)
- ☐ **Towel** (*For hands and equipment*)
- ☐ **Folding Chair** (*Many spots don't have seating*)

### **FOOD & HYDRATION**

- ☐ **Water Bottle** *(More than you think you need!)*
  - ☐ **Snacks** *(Granola bars, fruit, sandwiches)*
  - ☐ **Hand Sanitizer** *(Clean hands before eating)*
  - ☐ **Wet Wipes** *(For quick cleanup)*
  - ☐ **Small Cooler** with ice *(For drinks & caught fish)*
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## HELPFUL EXTRAS CHECKLIST



### NICE TO HAVE

- ☐ **5-Gallon Bucket** *(Serves as seat, storage, and fish holder)*
  - ☐ **Fishing Multi-Tool** *(Combines many tools in one)*
  - ☐ **Ruler or Tape Measure** *(Check legal fish sizes)*
  - ☐ **Camera** *(Document your first catch!)*
  - ☐ **Plastic Bags** *(For trash and wet items)*
  - ☐ **Rag or Old Towel** *(Handling fish is slimy!)*
  - ☐ **Spare Hooks & Weights** *(Easy to lose as beginner)*
  - ☐ **Small Notebook** *(Track what works!)*
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## AT THE FISHING SPOT CHECKLIST



### WHEN YOU ARRIVE

- ☐ **Check for Posted Signs** *(Rules, warnings, limits)*
- ☐ **Observe Other Anglers** *(See what they're using)*
- ☐ **Look for Fish Activity** *(Jumping, splashing, ripples)*
- ☐ **Find Safe Spot** *(Stable ground, away from power lines)*
- ☐ **Set Up "Base Camp"** *(Organize gear within reach)*



### STARTING TO FISH

- ☐ **Start Simple** *(Worm under bobber is perfect)*
  - ☐ **Check Your Drag** *(Line should pull out with firm pressure)*
  - ☐ **Cast to Different Spots** *(Fish move around)*
  - ☐ **Be Patient** *(15-20 minutes per spot)*
  - ☐ **Stay Quiet** *(Fish can hear/feel vibrations)*
  - ☐ **Watch Your Line** *(Not just the bobber)*
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## WHEN YOU CATCH A FISH

### SUCCESS CHECKLIST

- ☐ **Stay Calm** (*Don't jerk too hard*)
- ☐ **Keep Line Tight** (*But not too tight*)
- ☐ **Let Drag Work** (*Don't force it*)
- ☐ **Use Net if Available** (*Support fish's weight*)
- ☐ **Wet Hands** before handling fish
- ☐ **Check Size Limits** (*Measure if unsure*)
- ☐ **Quick Photo** (*Hold fish horizontally*)

### CATCH & RELEASE

- ☐ **Minimize Air Time** (*Under 30 seconds*)
- ☐ **Remove Hook Gently** (*Use pliers*)
- ☐ **Support Fish in Water** (*Let it recover*)
- ☐ **Release Facing Upstream** (*In rivers*)

### KEEPING FISH

- ☐ **Verify Legal Size** (*Check regulations*)
  - ☐ **Dispatch Quickly** (*Be humane*)
  - ☐ **Keep Cool** (*On ice or stringer in water*)
  - ☐ **Note on Catch Card** (*If salmon/steelhead*)
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## END OF TRIP CHECKLIST

### LEAVE NO TRACE

- ☐ **Pack Out ALL Trash** (*Including fishing line*)
- ☐ **Check for Forgotten Gear**
- ☐ **Release Unused Bait** (*Away from fishing area*)
- ☐ **Thank Other Anglers** (*Build community!*)

### AT HOME

- ☐ **Clean Fish Immediately** (*If keeping*)
- ☐ **Rinse All Equipment** (*Prevents rust/smell*)
- ☐ **Dry Everything** (*Before storing*)
- ☐ **Record Your Experience** (*What worked/didn't*)

- ❑ **Share Your Story** (*Social media, friends*)
  - ❑ **Plan Next Trip!** 🎉
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## 📍 TRI CITIES BEGINNER HOTSPOTS

### ☀️ TOP 5 FIRST-TIMER LOCATIONS

- 1. Columbia Park Pond** 📍 *Kennewick*
    - ✓ Stocked with trout
    - ✓ Easy shore access
    - ✓ Bathrooms available
  - 2. Howard Amon Park** 📍 *Richland*
    - ✓ Lots of shore fishing
    - ✓ Playground for kids
    - ✓ Well-lit paths
  - 3. Wade Park** 📍 *Pasco*
    - ✓ Family-friendly
    - ✓ Calm water
    - ✓ Picnic areas
  - 4. Wye Park** 📍 *Near Sacajawea State Park*
    - ✓ Where rivers meet
    - ✓ Variety of fish
    - ✓ Beautiful views
  - 5. Two Rivers Park** 📍 *Pasco*
    - ✓ Less crowded
    - ✓ Good bank access
    - ✓ Multiple species
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### 💡 FIRST-TIMER PRO TIPS

#### 🎯 TIMING YOUR TRIP

- 🌅 **Early Morning** (6-9 AM) = Most active fish
- 🌃 **Evening** (2 hours before sunset) = Second best
- ☁️ **Overcast Days** = Fish bite all day
- 🌸 **Spring & Fall** = Best seasons for beginners

## SIMPLE STARTER RIGS






**For Trout:** Worm or PowerBait under bobber, 2-3 feet deep

**For Bass:** Plastic worm, Texas-rigged, fish near weeds

**For Panfish:** Small jig or worm, 1-2 feet under bobber

**For Catfish:** Worm or hot dog on bottom with weight

## COMMON BEGINNER MISTAKES TO AVOID

-  **Too Much Gear** - Start simple, add as you learn
  -  **Wrong Time** - Avoid midday sun in summer
  -  **Too Much Noise** - Fish spook easily
  -  **Giving Up Too Soon** - Fish aren't always hungry
  -  **Ignoring Weather** - Wind and rain affect fishing
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## ESSENTIAL APPS & RESOURCES

### DOWNLOAD BEFORE YOU GO

- ☐ **Fish Washington** - Official WDFW app
- ☐ **Weather App** - Check wind & conditions
- ☐ **Knot Guide** - Practice tying knots
- ☐ **Fish Identifier** - Know what you caught
- ☐ **Tide/River Levels** - For Columbia River

### LOCAL RESOURCES

- ☐ **Bob's Sporting Goods** - Pasco (Ask for beginner tips!)
  - ☐ **Sportsman's Warehouse** - Kennewick (Free fishing seminars)
  - ☐ **Local Facebook Groups** - "Tri Cities Fishing"
  - ☐ **WDFW Office** - Pasco (Maps and advice)
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## CONGRATS - YOU'RE READY!

### REALISTIC FIRST TRIP GOALS

- ☒ **Successfully cast** without tangling
- ☒ **Tie a hook** on your line
- ☒ **Identify** 2-3 fish species

- ✓ **Meet** another angler
- ✓ **Have fun** regardless of catching fish!



### **REMEMBER:**

- **Every expert was once a beginner**
- **No fish? Still a good day outdoors!**
- **Each trip teaches something new**
- **The fishing community loves helping newcomers**