



Spin Fishing A "How To" Guide.

Getting Started - The Beauty of Spin Fishing

The beauty of spinning lies in its simplicity - it's a method which requires little in the way of equipment, doesn't demand great experience or technique, but offers an effective means of getting started in the wonderful pursuit of angling for freshwater sports fish. Spinning can also be a highly productive method which opens up more water and more fishing opportunities, even for experienced anglers. Often, when the right conditions prevail, it will out-fish other techniques. This resource has been put together primarily as an introductory guide for those new to the sport, however it will also provide useful tips and advice on the latest techniques to help proficient anglers catch more fish. It focusses on spin fishing in rivers, but similar principles also apply to still water such as lakes or estuaries.

What gear do I need?

Rods

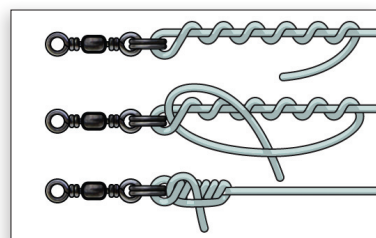
There is a large range of spinning rods on the market - be sure to let the staff at your local tackle store know that you require it for freshwater spin fishing, so you don't inadvertently end up with a saltwater 'spinning' outfit designed for softbait fishing.

Ideally the rod needs to be between 6'6" and 7' long, and preferably of graphite construction. Graphite rods help achieve better hook-set than soft fibreglass rods, but it is also lighter and therefore far less demanding when casting all day long.

Look for a rod with a minimum of six guides - these will distribute the line evenly when playing a fish, enabling better control and less chance of line wear. Some rods come in multiple pieces and these are excellent for packing into backcountry areas.

Reels

Spinning reels are generally considered far easier to master than other reel designs. The recommended line weight marked on the reel should be matched to the rod line weight, and ideally the lighter the better. It is important that your drag is set at the correct pressure - you should be able to pull line off steadily without any slipping. Don't have the drag so tight that it cuts into your hand when testing the tension, and nor should it be so loose that there is barely any tension at all.



Line

For the main line, either braid or nylon can be used. Braid line between 3-6lbs will help with hook-set and increase casting distance dramatically. Note that braid is typically twice as strong as its rated breaking strain, so do not worry if the ultra thin line looks somewhat flimsy! Because there is quite a lot of stretch in nylon, braid is increasingly becoming the preferred option today. If opting for nylon, remember that the heavier it is, the less distance you will cast - anything over 6lbs is too heavy.

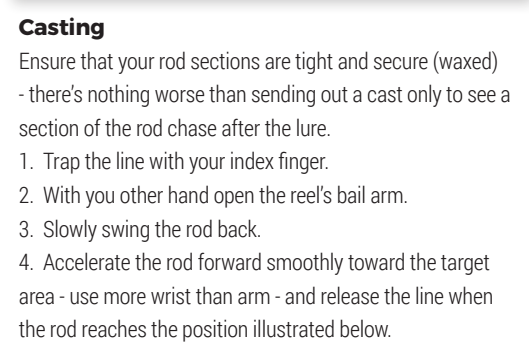
Knots and spooling tips

If using nylon main line, you can tie the line directly to your lure. For braid main line, a nylon leader (a length of line between the lure and the main line) of 3-4m should be attached so the fish has less chance of spotting the braid. A Double Uni Knot is best for joining a light leader to light braid (you'll find a demonstration on YouTube). When putting the line on your reel (spooling) with either line, ensure it is wound on tightly as loose winding will cause loops and tangles. If in doubt, ask the staff at your local tackle shop to spool it for you.



What lures work best and where

There is a huge range of lures available on the market, and it's best to have a variety to suit different conditions. By far the best lures on the market today are the bibbed, Rapala-type designs which have a plastic 'lip' at the front to help it swim deeper. Natural 'Trout' patterns or those which imitate bullies or whitebait (in season) produce great results. Other great lure choices are Kilwell Daffy's, Phils Favourites in 7 gram, Kilwell Gypsy's and Mepps/Velctics bladed spinners. Some regions also permit the use of scented soft plastics where bait fishing is allowed, which can be very effective, but first check your local regulations on the Fish and Game website www.fishandgame.org.nz. Look for lures that have a weight range between 5 to 10 grams - this is, however, dependant on the depth of water you are fishing. If you are fishing deeper water, change to a heavier lure etc. Our rivers have an abundance of bullies and trout fry, so think like a trout and try to mimic the colouration and pattern of these prey items. Whatever lure you choose, consider the impact on the fish if you plan to release it. Replacing treble hooks with single hooks is a great idea as it minimises damage to the fish and mostly results in no difference to the hook-up rate. Adding a small snap swivel to your line, can help with quick lure changes and reduce line twist if using bladed lures.



Casting

Ensure that your rod sections are tight and secure (waxed) - there's nothing worse than sending out a cast only to see a section of the rod chase after the lure. 1. Trap the line with your index finger. 2. With your other hand open the reel's bail arm. 3. Slowly swing the rod back. 4. Accelerate the rod forward smoothly toward the target area - use more wrist than arm - and release the line when the rod reaches the position illustrated below.

How to catch fish on a spinner

With spinning you can work either upstream or downstream. With bibbed lures it's best to position yourself at the top of the run or pool, cast directly across and allow your lure to gently swing through the current while retrieving. Always follow the lure downstream with your rod tip low. Let the current work the lure's action or movement. When fishing upstream, ensure you retrieve just slightly faster than the current moving towards you so there is enough speed to impart action in the lure. In both instances, the lure should generally move at the same pace as a real fish. Cast beyond the place you expect fish to be and retrieve through this 'strike zone'. This is where accuracy and practice pays off.

Finding Fish

Hot spots are undercut banks and shaded areas, in front of or behind structure such as large boulders, submerged logs or sections of river bank that jut out into the river. Also, the fast white-water at the heads of pools will yield results, or target sections of the river where there is a noticeable change in water flow - often trout will hold on the edge of slow moving water, ready to dart into the fast current to snatch food items or flee from threats. If the river is coloured from higher than normal flow, look towards the tails and mid sections of pools. The diagram below shows prime trout lies and positions. The lower reaches or confluences of side streams and tributaries that enter a main river are also great spots to locate fish - this is particularly the case during higher flows. If the water you are fishing is deep, take your time, work the lure slowly and vary the retrieve speed - you are trying to mimic a wounded or fleeing fish, a straight retrieve often does not work as well as an erratic one. When fishing lakes, look for inflowing streams (where spinning is permitted), structure (such as logs, prominent shelves or headlands jutting out into the water, weed beds), and drop offs where there is marked change in lake depth. same pace as a real fish. Cast beyond the place you expect fish to be and retrieve through this 'strike zone'. This is where accuracy and practice pays off. Again, your lure should be fished as close to the bottom as possible - real baitfish seldom swim midway or high up in the water column.

Check the regulations

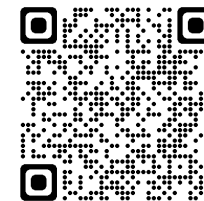
Be sure to check that spinning is permitted in the water you intend to fish - some water is restricted to fly fishing only. Check the Sports Fishing Regulations supplied with your licence or the website www.fishandgame.org.nz

Looking for more information?

We've got plenty more helpful information online. For more tips, articles and access info, use the map of New Zealand on www.fishandgame.org.nz to navigate to your region's webpages.



Check out spin fishing action on Fish & Game's YouTube TV channel.



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Lower North Island

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Fishing Access Map

Also inside:
• Reading the Water
• Spin Fishing
• Tips & Tricks



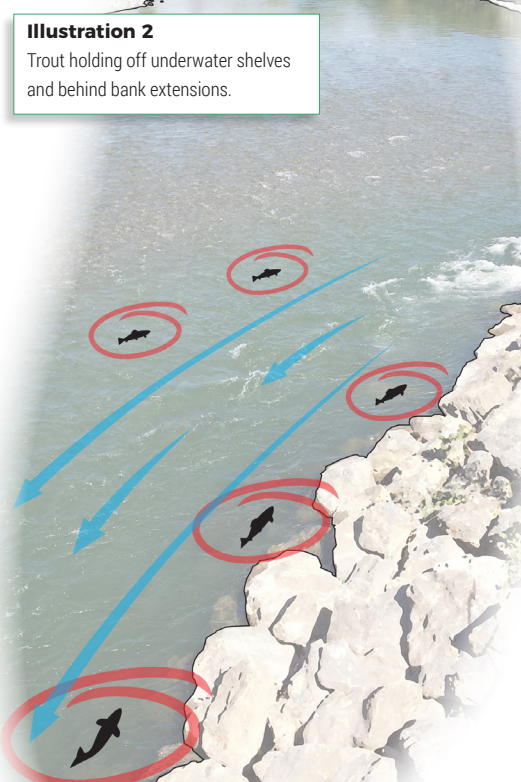
Reading the water... and finding the fish.

From casting... to catching

The biggest step an angler can make in the transition from casting proficiently to regularly catching trout is understanding where the fish are likely to be. One of the most common mistakes made by anglers who are new to freshwater fishing is putting their flies or lures in the 'wrong' places. The prime focus should be locating feeding trout, and greatest success will be achieved in places where there is an abundant food supply, cover or deep water for shelter, and well-oxygenated water. Finding a place where all of these requirements are met will result in the angler finding trout... and hopefully catching them too!

Key river structure

While every river and stream is quite unique there are always general patterns and features (or 'structure') that are the same. Water moves from one pool to the next via a narrow rapid or 'riffle' section of faster flow. As the water continues past the 'head' (the top of the pool) it widens, deepens and slows. Beyond this section - referred to as the 'stomach' - the depth starts to decrease again and the flow velocity increases towards the 'tail' or end of the pool.

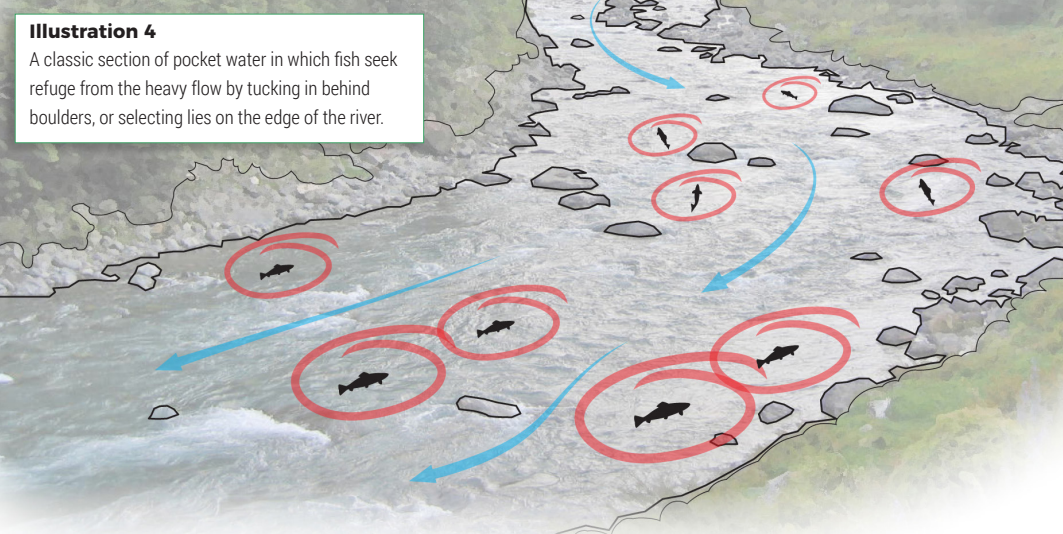


Trout are lazy

In Illustration 1 there are four fish icons closest to the head of the pool, holding outside the fastest flow (depicted by blue arrows). These are the prime trout 'lies', or holding water, in any pool. Fish use a lot of energy trying to keep station in fast water so they position themselves just outside the flow. Here they have ready access to well-oxygenated water and food items spilling out of the heavy current, as well as a fast escape route if disturbed. The trout towards the back of the pool are likely to be smaller specimens pushed out of the prime lies by the dominant fish.

Other prime trout 'lies'

Illustration 2 shows the current entering the pool after flowing over a shallow shingly section, then running hard up against the boulder bank on the right hand side. There is a defined shelf or drop-off into deeper water at the head of the pool. This is a prime lie for fish as it offers refuge from the fast flow, while also providing ready access to food items dislodged and/or channelled by the faster current. The fish on the right of both illustration 2 and 3 are holding in areas of slower moving water created by bank extensions or protrusions. Again, these lies give respite from the fast flow but allow the trout to quickly dart into the current to pick up food items or seek shelter in deeper water. See Illustration 3



Reading pocket water

Pocket water is the term used for a fast flowing stretch of river broken up by exposed boulders scattered throughout the run. Miniature pools or 'pockets' of holding water are essentially created behind the boulders because they slow the flow and deeper bowls are scoured out by the action of the disturbed flow. Although reading

pocket water effectively is a more difficult skill to master than other sections of a river because of the disturbed nature of such reaches, often the larger trout will be found here. Working the pockets with a large, highly visible dry fly or a nymph-indicator rig, while avoiding drag, is the best technique. See Illustration 4

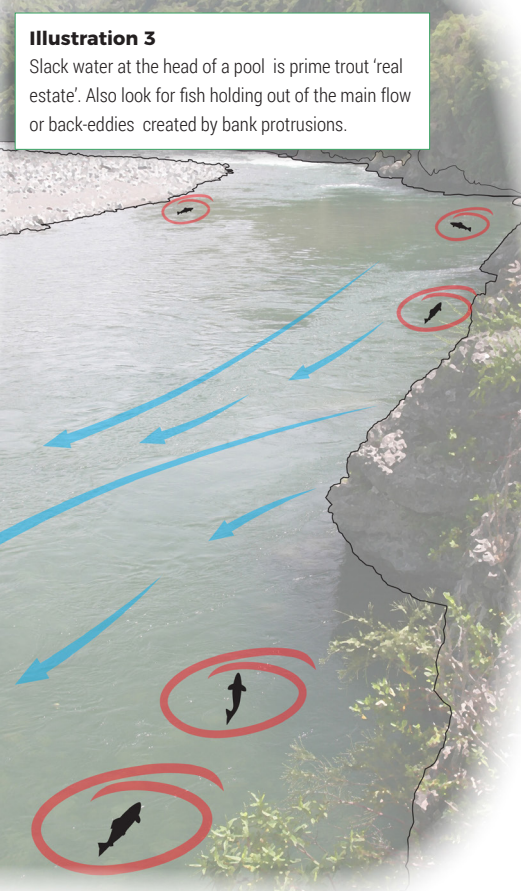


Illustration 3
Slack water at the head of a pool is prime trout 'real estate'. Also look for fish holding out of the main flow or back-eddies created by bank protrusions.

Fishing lakes and spring creeks

Despite rivers being, by nature, comparatively more complex to tackle when fishing, the different structural components are more readily defined than they are in lakes and spring creeks. However, apply the notion of trout requirements to the latter two and you'll also enjoy greater success on such waterways. For example, identify defined drop-offs around lake edges, or rivers and streams entering the main body of water - these are prime places to target trout. Spring creeks are more stable and placid than rivers and subsequently have less defined pools and rapids. Trout will often use bank extensions for shelter from the flow, and the more defined current lines that form off these protrusions effectively channel food into a concentrated area, meaning the fish don't have to expend too much energy moving around to feed. Overhanging vegetation and areas behind submerged logs or willow root balls are also likely lies to look for feeding fish.

*This guide covers only the very basics of how to 'read water' and find fish. For more in-depth knowledge, recommended reading is *Stalking and Catching Trout* by Les Hill and *Gaerne Marshall* who we thank for their generous input into this resource.*

Spin Fishing Advanced

Gear & Equipment

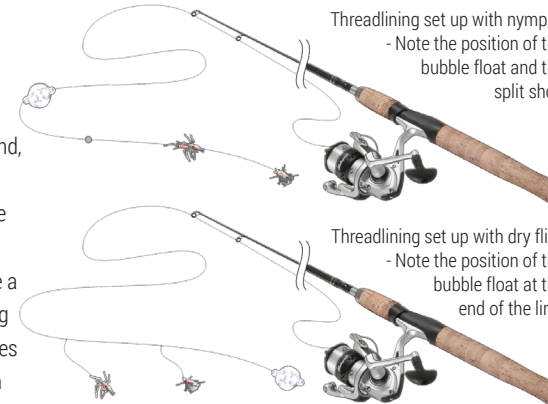
The techniques outlined here can be used with any dedicated freshwater spin fishing rod-reel set up. Make sure the rod is no shorter than 6ft. A longer rod - 7ft - can be advantageous for fishing larger rivers as they enable you to cast further. A good compromise is a 6'6" rod. They should be rated around 6 to 10lb. Two-piece spinning rods are most common, and generally least expensive, however, four-piece rods are much handier for packing into the backcountry or stowing in the car or boat. Go for the best quality reel you can afford. Quality reels have the best drag mechanisms and this pays dividends when fighting large trout, possibly the fish of a lifetime. Gone are the days of tying your lure direct to a fully loaded reel holding 10lb monofilament line. Today, braid is where it is at; control, casting and 'feel' is vastly improved as there is no stretch. Braid of between 4-6lb is ample - remember that it always over tests (i.e. breaks at double or more what the manufacture states). Bright colour braid can be handy for keeping in touch with you lures/flies and with a sufficiently long leader (3m) won't spook trout even in crystal-clear water. You'll need to learn the Albright knot for attaching braid to nylon mainline. (search it on YouTube).

Dry Fly Threadling

This is a different technique, not often seen in New Zealand, but it can be deadly. There are key differences from the nymph set-up. For dry flies the terminal rig has the bubble float at one end, and two or three dry flies tied off in a 'ledger' style (see illustration). If you are unsure how to tie a ledger rig, there are some easy to follow videos illustrating this on YouTube. The dry flies set up in this manner creates a dangling effect off the main tippet which the angler can control by lifting or lowering the rod tip. You can achieve a realistic dapping motion of an insect hovering over the water and this makes for exciting takes, particularly if there are an abundance of medium-sized rainbows! The method is also exceptional when caddis and sedge flies are hatching en masse. Cast across and allow the flies to swing as they move downstream; at the same time control the height of the imitations with the rod tip to create a skating effect that mirrors the action of the naturals. Large terrestrial patterns can also be used effectively by casting upstream to sighted trout or through likely lies and allowed to drift back in the current without drag. Think cicada season or when hoppers are about. Stay in touch with the flies by winding in any slack line at the same speed as the current, not faster, so you can strike when a trout takes. High-visibility braid as the main running line can help.

Soft Bait

A supple bait is better than nylon main line; jig heads should be 1/12oz or 1/16oz (this may vary depending on the size and depth of the water, with larger deeper rivers needing heavy heads). Experiment with colours. Even outlandish looking soft baits will catch finicky trout. If the fish are shy, go natural to imitate smelt or bullies. Larger soft baits with a well-defined belly are good smelt imitations. Paddle tail baits are great for giving the lure movement and vibration that can provoke an aggressive strike. Soft baits can be fished upstream or downstream, the latter technique being best for blind fishing larger, deeper water. When working the soft bait downstream, cast directly across and as you slowly retrieve, twitch the rod tip up and then allow the bait to drop again. This gives the lure a realistic darting action. If you're fishing up river, cast at a 45-degree angle upstream. The retrieve should be marginally faster than the current, letting the bait swing downstream and behind. Keep the line tight and maintain contact with the lure as takes can be very gentle, especially with larger trout.



Threadline & Flies

Using flies on threadline gear with a bubble has been around for a while but is overlooked these days. It's a shame because the technique is really effective, and can even out fish traditional fly angling techniques. Trout that are in lies which can't be reached with a drag-free drift using fly angling gear can often be tempted with the threadline and bubble method because braid and nylon has a much smaller diameter than fly lines so drag is significantly reduced. What's more, you can cover much more water with longer casts, and more drifts, than traditional fly fishing because there is no need for false casting. Top it off with the fact that you can cast in wind that would have a fly fisher with their head in their hands and you have an incredibly versatile and effective fish-catching method that works.