

Bait Fishing



A how-to guide to Bait Fishing. A great method for catching fish!

Getting Started - Bait Fishing

Bait fishing is one of the most enjoyable and accessible ways to experience New Zealand's world class freshwater fisheries. Whether you're new to angling or want to try a different technique, bait fishing offers a simple and highly effective method for catching trout and perch in our rivers, streams, and lakes.

With only a small amount of gear and a little know how, anyone can head out and be successful. This brochure introduces the essentials of bait fishing – what you need, areas to target, how to get started, and tips to help you catch more fish.

Where Can I Use Bait?

First of all, you need a trout fishing licence. These are easily purchased through our website or outdoors stores, and there are a range of options available to suit your budget, including day licences, local area licences through to full season licences.

Along with your licence you'll receive a regulations booklet with all the information on the fisheries in your region. This will let you know in which waterways bait is permitted – there will be an 'FSB' ('B' meaning bait fishing is permitted) annotated alongside the waterway.

If you are unsure, just call your local Fish & Game office and they'll be happy to point you in the right direction.

What Gear do I Need?

Having the right gear makes bait fishing simple, effective, and enjoyable – especially for beginners. You don't need expensive equipment; just a few well chosen basics will set you up for success.

Rod:

A 2-6kg rod, around 6-8ft in length, is well suited to this method.

Tip:
Smaller
hooks can result
in more bites,
especially in
clear water.

Reel:

Spinning reels are easy to use and many anglers already have these. Spooling the reel with 6-8lb nylon is recommended as a starting point in terms of breaking strain.

Hooks:

Choosing the right hook size is essential for effective bait presentation.

- **Size 8-10** – perfect for worms, grubs, and egg imitations in smaller streams.
- **Size 6-8** – good general purpose hooks for lakes and rivers using larger worms or shrimp baits.
- **Long shank hooks** help with easy removal when using soft baits like worms.
- **Circle hooks** (optional) are more likely to result in mouth hook-ups so are great for anglers who plan to release fish.

Sinkers:

- **Ball or barrel sinkers** for bottom fishing and drifting.
- Carry a few sizes so you can adjust for depth and current speed.

Floats:

- **Slim, sensitive floats** are ideal for fishing mid water or near the surface in lakes and slow rivers.
- Choose a float just buoyant enough to support your bait without creating drag. Bubble floats, which can be partially filled with water to aid casting, are very versatile.

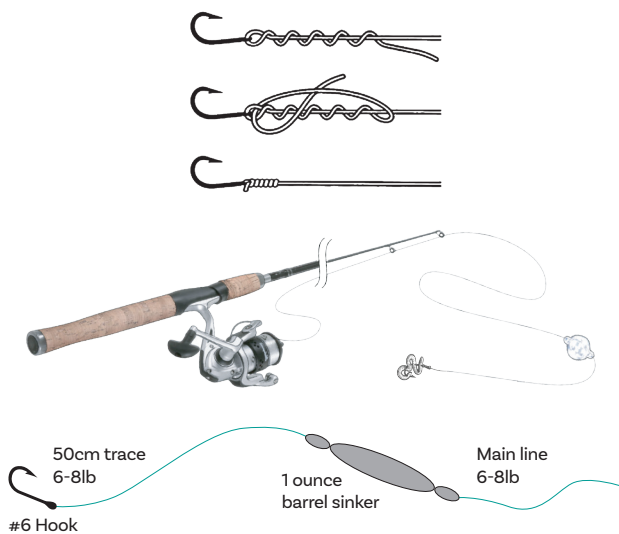
Useful Tools and Equipment:

- A landing net for securing your catch.
- Long nose pliers or forceps for safe hook removal.
- Clippers or scissors to trim knots neatly.
- Small tackle box to keep everything organised.

Knots and Setting Up

Simple knots are all that are required when bait fishing. The improved clinch knot (shown in the diagram below) is a strong knot for attaching your nylon to the hook.

Bait can be used with a barrel sinker as shown below or in shallower water replace the sinker with a float and set the length of the 'trace'/'leader' according to the depth of the water where the fish are feeding. The trace/leader is the term given to the section of nylon between the sinker or float and the hook.



What Baits Can I Use?

Some of the most effective permitted baits are earthworms and cooked shrimp, the latter which you can be purchased from your local supermarket.

Huhu and grass grubs are also good, but these insects are not quite as easy to find.

Small baitfish like smelt work well too. They are often caught as bycatch by whitebait anglers. A quick chat with a friendly whitebaiter can get you enough for the season—just freeze in small bags for later use.

During summer, cicadas can be very effective when fished on the surface of the water or just below. Use a bubble float, part-filled with water to aid casting, and at least 6ft of leader between the float and the hook/bait.

There is a full list of permitted baits in your regulations guide (see the section titled 'First Schedule').

Where Should I Fish?

Once you've established that bait fishing is permitted in your chosen waterway, you should look for areas that have deep, slow-flowing water such as the tidal reaches of rivers.

That's not to say bait fishing isn't also a great method for small streams and faster flowing rivers. In smaller streams a sinker may not be necessary and drifting a bait downstream under a bubble float can be effective.

Look for structure such as submerged logs or large boulders and drift your bait close to these spots.

In faster flowing rivers, look for deep, dark pools to cast your bait into and then wait!

Bait fishing can also produce good results in lakes. Hot spots are drop-offs from shallow to deep water, inflowing streams, or where peninsulas jut out into the open water.

Again, bait fishing isn't allowed everywhere so be sure to check your regulations booklet.

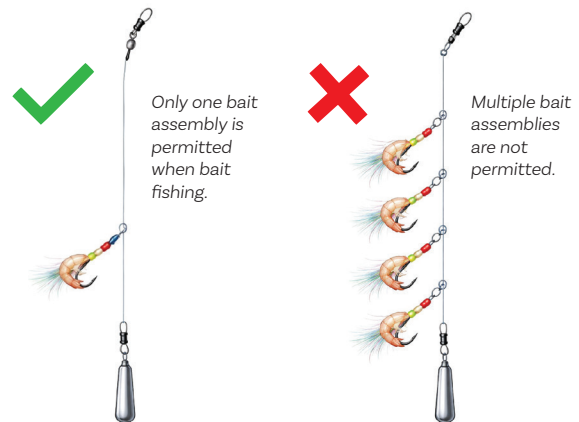
If you're looking for place to fish near where you live, or further afield, check out our online interactive access maps – scan the QR code.



How Many Hooks Can I Use When Bait Fishing?

Only one bait assembly is permitted when bait fishing. This means either one hook rigged with a number of baits, or a single bait rigged with a number of hooks.

See the diagrams below – the set up with the green tick is permitted; the one with the red cross, using multiple baits/hooks, is not.



General Tips for Better Success

- Keep your bait fresh – trout can be selective, so fresh is best.
- Stay quiet and low – trout spook easily in clear water.
- Strike gently – trout often mouth bait before swallowing.
- Always follow local regulations regarding baits, seasons, and methods. The regulations booklet that accompanies your trout fishing licence has these details.

Check your Regs

Be sure to check that bait fishing is permitted in the water you intend to fish – many waters do not permit bait fishing. Check the Sports Fishing Regulations supplied with your licence or the website fishandgame.org.nz