Fishing Fun!
Children engage in a dramatic play fishing game and learn about fish.

Quick Facts
Fish are water-dwelling animals that live in oceans, rivers, lakes, streams, and ponds. They have gills for breathing oxygen in water. Most are covered with protective scales and swim by wiggling their bodies back and forth. Fish use their fins to steer.

There are about 20,000 species, or kinds, of fish exhibiting a wide variety of body shapes and lifestyles. Different species of fish live in different habitats and have different needs for water, food, and shelter. For instance, some fish live in the open ocean, some in tropical coral reefs, and others in cold mountain lakes. Some eat plants, some eat bugs or smaller fish, and others eat decaying matter. For shelter, some swim in schools to confuse predators (animals that may catch and eat them), and some hide among rocks, plants, or plants.

To catch a fish, a person needs to know where the fish lives, what it likes to eat, and when it is most active. One also needs to be aware that fish have excellent vision, can hear and detect vibrations, and can smell and taste food. Depending on the situation, people may use hands, spears, poles, nets, or highly sophisticated tracking devices for catching fish. People who use the familiar fishing line (string) and hooks to catch fish are called anglers. Fishing gear is called tackle.

Most anglers attract fish with some kind of bait. They might use the actual food of a particular fish (such as a worm or insect), or something that looks like food (such as a spinner, plastic worm, or feather fly). Anglers usually attach the bait to a long hook connected to a fishing line. The line is supported by a pole. Additional line is wound up on a reel attached to the pole. Anglers use the rod and reel to cast the bait and hook fish out into the water.

It is important that people who fish follow all fishing rules and regulations. These rules help conserve fish populations and also help anglers be successful. Regulations may limit the size, number, or kind of fish that may be caught, and may require a license to fish. In some cases, only “catch and release” fishing is allowed, which means the fish must be let go. Some bait is illegal in certain areas. Contact your state wildlife agency to find out what kind of bait you can use.

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Fishing Fun!
Warm Up

1. Begin by asking children how they would describe what a fish is to someone who doesn’t know where to fish live? How do they move? What kinds of things do they eat? How do they protect themselves? Write their ideas on the board or on chat paper. Ask them how they are the same as things that might help someone catch a fish.

2. Build a fishing dock out of blocks, and add mats or boxes “boats.” Allow children to built a dock out of blocks, and add mats or boxes “boats.” Allow children to experiment with fishing using the Fishing Fun! figures and poles (see Preparation). Fishing hats, life jackets (if available), rulers, and other materials.

Take Me Outside!
Fish Tag
Lots of predators besides people eat fish: larger fish, seals, bears, and pelicans are just a few. Many fish hide from predators under docks or rocks, among cattails, or other places. Let’s play a game where a predator (one child) tries to catch fish (the other children) by tagging them. The predator can choose what kind of animal to be. Fish are “safe” if they stand on touch a safe spot, like a lily pad (hula hoop), cattail (safety cone), rock (cardboard box), or dock (carpet square). If things moving, fish can stay in the safe spot only as long as it takes them to count to five. After the predator catches a fish, play again with a new predator.

Prepare:
You may provide sticks or have children bring them from home or search for them in the school yard. Follow directions on page 79 to prepare Fishing Fun! figures and poles. If you like, set up one or more centers & extensions activities for free exploration.

Warm Up
Ask children whether any of them have gone fishing before. If so, where did they go and what did they do? Did they catch a fish? Did they keep and eat the fish or let it go? If not, do they have family members that go fishing? What gear (tackle) do people use for fishing?

Pantomime going fishing using invisible “props,” and invite children to come along. Dig in the ground with a “shovel,” Excite, “find a “worm” and place it in a “container.” Pick up a “fishing pole,” put it over your shoulder, and walk in place, find a “rock” and sit on it, take out your “worm” and put it on the “hook.” Cast out your “line” and wait for a strong tug on the line. Gently reel in your line and pull out a big “fish.” (Sometimes only “catch and release” fishing is allowed, so you might also pantomime letting the fish go.)

Also allow children to explore the centers you have set up. As children are exploring the Fishing Fun! figures, ask how they might make sure there are enough fish for everyone to catch some. If appropriate, you might suggest the Mighty Math “Measure Your Catch” activity.

Wrap Up
• Name something you discovered about fishing or about fishing.
• Look at how we described fish (in Step 1), is there anything you would add or change?
• How was our fishing game like actually going fishing? How was it different?

Wild Wonderful Words
fishing bait tackle cast line habitat school predator angler

Materials and Prep
• Fishing Fun! figures, page 79
• sticks and string or yarn
• paper clips, packing tape and strong magnets
• building blocks, boxes, nets, fishing vests, fishing hats, rulers, and other materials for dramatic play (optional)
• materials for Centers & Extensions activities (optional)

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**Healthy Me!**

*Every Breath You Take:* People, fish, and other animals all need oxygen to live. Fish have gills that help them “breathe” oxygen underwater. First, they use their mouths to take in water and move it across their gills. Then, the gill takes oxygen from the water.

What parts of your body help you breathe? Take a big breath, in and out. How does it feel when air comes into your body? How does it feel when air leaves your body? Our bodies use noses, mouths, airways, and lungs to breathe and take in oxygen!

**Helping Hands**

*Clean Up:* Did you know that trash could hurt fish? Pieces of paper, gum wrappers, plastic bags, fishing line, and Styrofoam cups can wash into a pond, stream, or lake when it rains. There, trash not only blocks airways, and lungs to breathe air and take in oxygen!

**Mighty Math**

*Measure your Catch:* Places to See Fish: Visit a local fish hatchery, city aquarium, pet store or seafood market. How many different kinds of fish can you see?

*Fish School:* A group of fish is called a “school.” The fish move up, down, left and right. Encourage children to try moving their bodies like fish. When fish swim together in a group, the group has a special name.

*Fishy Swimming School:* Fish use their bodies to swim through the water. They can swim up, down, and twist their bodies to help them move up, down, left, and right. Encourage children to try moving their bodies like fish. When fish swim together in a group, the group has a special name.

*Practice Casting:* In an open area outside, set out hula hoops or empty kiddie pools to be “ponds” or “lakes.” Give children fishing poles with reels and weighted plastic plugs and help them practice casting, aiming toward the targets.

**Home Connections**

*Go Fishing!* Use what you’ve learned about fish and fishing to help plan a family fishing adventure.

*Places to See Fish:* Visit a local fish hatchery, city aquarium, pet store or seafood market. How many different kinds of fish can you see?

*Eat Up!* Enjoy fish for dinner!

See page 100 for a take-home Home Connections card.

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**Art Projects**

*Gyotaku—Japanese Fish Printing* Use a real head, fins, scales and tail-on fish from the grocery store (or a rubber fish replica) to make gyotaku prints, an ancient Japanese art form. Before children begin printing, give them time to explore the fish. Encourage them, but don’t require, that they touch the fish. What does its body look like? Feel like? How many fins are there? Where are the gills? (See page 79 for a fish diagram to help you answer children’s questions about the fish.)

To begin gyotaku, encourage a child to paint the surface of the fish with a light coat of tempera paint. Help the child lay a piece of paper on the fish and pat it over the fish. Lift paper to reveal the print.

**Tips and Safety Notes:** Consider substituting to the right of, under, above, far from, near, and so on.

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**Goin’ on a Fishin’ Trip** Do this call-and-response variation to “Goin’ on a Bear Hunt” with your group (see page 80):

*Fish Testing:* Offer unsalted whole-wheat crackers with different foods such as fish, a worm, a rubber fish, fish jerky, smoked salmon (or lox), tuna salad, sandwiches, and so on. Watch for sea food allergies.

*Pretzel Poles:* Use pretzels or baby carrots for fishing poles and bean spread or cream cheese for bait. Move children “fish” for fish-shaped crackers.

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**Centers & Extensions**

*Animal Science:* Set up a fish bowl or tank in your classroom so children can watch how fish move and breathe.

*Cause and Effect:* Anglers use bobbers and sinkers to position bait in the water. Explore the concept of sink/float with different sizes and types of fishing bobbers and sinkers in a pan of water.

**Bait and Lures:** Tie artificial bait and lures to lengths of fishing line and let children pull them through a pan of water to see how they move. Try flies, rubber worms, and spinners (without hooks). What might fish be attracted to these?

**Language Development** On the board, draw a picture of waves along the top and a fishing line, with hook and worm, down the center. Using words from a dictionary, have children turn turns positioning the fish according to a direction such as “Place the fish to the left of the hook.” Vary the directions, substituting to the right of, under, above, far from, near, and so on.

**Special Visitor** Invite a parent or guest (a wildlife agency office, and angler, bait shop owner, etc.) to share what he or she knows and loves about fishing.

**Fish Puzzle** Place Fish Puzzles (see page 80) at a center. Invite children to put the puzzles together. They may choose to glue the pieces to construction paper and draw in habitat components (food and shelter).