

AN ANGLERS GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE FISHING

Fishing with the future in mind

Rod-and-line fishing is a more sustainable practice than people think. Anglers often return fish to the water to give them a second chance to reproduce. However, many fish die during or after the unhooking process. Therefore, to ensure angling doesn't harm inshore ecosystems by depleting fish stocks and reducing reproductive rates, anglers must use less damaging equipment, adopt more careful unhooking techniques, and respect the minimum size regulations.

Hook Choice

Fish usually suffer fatal injuries when hooks are swallowed deep into the mouth cavity where many vitals exist. Fortunately, there are two simple ways you can reduce the risk of deep-hooking a fish:

- **Switch to circle hooks** as they are designed to roll around the mouth cavity until they hook the jaw
- **Upsize your hooks.** Many species have extremely large mouths compared to their body size

Unhooking Techniques

The following techniques should be employed to minimise damage to the fish whilst unhooking:

- **Use a landing mat** to prevent potentially fatal damage to the skin
- **Use an unhooking tool** as they are proven to reduce physical trauma to the mouth and decrease unhooking times
- **If a fish is deeply hooked, do not remove the hook!** instead, cut the line or the hook.

Size regulations

Regulations are in place to prevent anglers from keeping fish that haven't reached reproductive maturity. Below are the minimum size limits for some common UK inshore species:

Seabass	Mackerel	Pollock	Whiting	Cod	Wrasse
42 cm	30 cm North Sea	30 cm	27 cm	35 cm	23 cm
Anglers are limited to keeping one bass per day per angler	20 cm rest of UK				

Minimum size limits for most species can be found by searching: Minimum Conservation Reference Sizes (MCRS) in UK waters

