

## Preparation the key.

Anglers by and large go fishing for their own personal reasons. But at the end of the day, all anglers face the same decision upon landing a fish... keep it or let it go. Whatever the case, prepare before leaving home for either scenario.

### *Its a Keeper...*

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So you want a fish for tea or the smoker – great stuff. As soon as you get the fish to the bank or the boat, dispatch it quickly and humanely with a sharp blow to the head. *Do this before removing the hook!*

Then remove the stomach, kidneys (the red stuff along the backbone) and gills. Give the fish a quick wash and place in a Chilly Bin part filled with loose ice. *Job done!*

Whatever you do don't let the fish suffer a slow death, thrashing around on the bank or the deck. This is not only cruel, but will severely reduce eating qualities of the fish.

Also, remember to bury all offal, or take home for the garden – great for the compost. Left behind it is unsightly and spreads disease.

### *....no its going back*

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Too small, or just happy to release them, returning fish is a good thing to do. Unfortunately all too often anglers release fish with the very best of intentions, but the release technique, or lack thereof, can injure the fish, reducing its chance of survival.



It is important to understand a few facts about trout. Like most fish, trout have a slime coating to protect them from infection, which is quickly removed through being handled. Their vital organs and gills are fragile and easily damaged, especially if grasped tightly. Excessive stress through prolonged handling causes additional build up of lactic acid in the muscles and is the unseen killer of released fish.

***Inserting the fingers into the gill area will severely reduce the survival prospects on release.***

Ok, so how do you as an “angler” put survival back into the release.

- Carry a suitable pair of pliers or hook removing tool. Again aids in a quicker release and less likely to hook a finger.
- Use a landing net that has soft knotless netting material.
- If possible release the fish without lifting it from the water.
- Never, never, never touch a fish with dry hands!
- If the fish has swallowed the hook deeply (baitfishing) cut the line and leave the hook in place. The stomach acids dissolve the hook in a very short time.
- Avoid the death grip! Squeezing the fish when handling it will damage its delicate internal organs.
- Keep fingers away from the gills!
- It is generally accepted that holding a fish any longer than 30 seconds out of the water will greatly decrease its chances of survival. If taking a photo, setup the shot while holding the fish in the water (in the net). Lift, click, release...too easy.
- Never throw a fish back. Support it gently in the water till it retains it senses and swims away.



*A brown trout released in good health*