

Shark-Smart Fishing

**Help released sharks survive.
Fish safe and Shark-Smart!**



Shark survival: why it's important

Sharks are apex predators that play an important role in marine ecosystems. Releasing sharks in a way that increases their chance of survival is an important step toward healthy, sustainable shark populations.

Shore-based Shark Fishing

If you plan to target or keep sharks caught from shore, including structures attached to shore such as jetties, bridges and piers, you are required to pass an online educational course found at MyFWC.com/SharkCourse.

Once completed, you will go to FWC's online licensing system, GoOutdoorsFlorida.com, where you will get the no-cost, Shore-based Shark Fishing permit. Both the permit and the training must be renewed annually. You are not required to have this permit if you are fishing for sharks from a vessel.

Prohibited species: Know before you go!

- Many shark species are prohibited from harvest, possession, or landing in Florida waters.
- Prohibited shark species must remain in the water with the gills submerged.
- Prohibited shark species must be released without delay when fishing from the shore.
- Do not bring prohibited species onto a vessel, pier or bridge or onto dry land beyond the surf zone.
- If hook removal will delay release, cut the hook or the leader as close to the hook as possible. A device capable of cutting the hook or leader such as bolt or cable cutters is required gear when fishing for sharks from shore.
- Treat unknown catches as a prohibited species and release them.

Negative shark encounters

Not every encounter with a shark is intentional or wanted. Sharks have taken fish off the line and even bite boat motors. Negative shark interactions are an unfortunate side effect of healthy and sustainable shark populations. While it may be unfavorable, the best way to avoid negative interactions with sharks is to move to another area away from where shark activity is occurring.

Shark-Smart tackle

- Proper tackle is the first step in responsible catch-and-release shark fishing.
- Use non-stainless steel, non-offset circle hooks.
 - Less likely to hook fish in vital organs
 - Easier to remove
 - More likely to rust away
 - Required gear when fishing for sharks from shore or vessel when using live or dead natural bait
- Flatten or file down hook barbs.
- Use appropriate hook size for the shark targeted.
- Use heavy tackle, a minimum of 80-pound test.
- Tail-ropes are a commonly used gear that can be helpful in controlling the shark for a quick release, but should not be used if they delay release.
- The possession/use of a device capable of quickly cutting the leader or hook when targeting sharks is required (when fishing from shore or a vessel).

Shark-Smart handling and release

Sharks are powerful animals. Ensure the safety of both the angler and the shark by handling and releasing Shark-Smart.

- Minimize fight time. Use Shark-Smart tackle.
- Do not target sharks if the surf is too rough to release appropriately and safely.
- Keep sharks, especially the gills, in the water.
- Removing sharks from the water can increase the likelihood of injuries to the shark.
- NEVER bring a large shark onto a fishing vessel, a pier or bridge or onto dry land beyond the surf zone unless you plan to harvest it.
- Minimize handling and release time and do not delay release just to take pictures.
- Do not sit on the shark's back.
- Use a long-handled dehooking device to help with hook removal if it does not delay release.
- If you cannot safely and quickly remove the hook from the mouth, a bolt cutter may be used to cut the hook. If this method delays release or it becomes unsafe to do so, leave the hook in the shark and cut the leader as close to the hook as you can. Wire leaders can be cut with wire cutters.
- Sharks that swim off with a long length of line behind them may be less likely to survive.

Prepare

- Have release tools ready and know how to use them.
- If taking photos, make sure the camera is ready beforehand.
- Ensure everyone knows their role in the release procedure prior to the fishing trip.

Location, location, location!

Fish Shark-Smart from a boat:

- Keep the shark in the water alongside the vessel.
- Release activities such as taking photos and removing the hook should be done while the shark is in the water.

Fish Shark-Smart from the shore:

- Keep the shark in as much water as is safely possible.
- Avoid shark fishing on crowded beaches or during high-traffic times of the day.
- Avoid shark fishing near swimmers or popular swimming areas.
- Chumming is prohibited from the beach when fishing for any species.
- Sea turtle nesting season is from March through October each year. During these months, use only amber or red lighting when fishing from the shore at night.

Fish Shark-Smart from a pier:

- Most piers and bridges are high above the water, making handling and release difficult. Catch-and-release shark fishing is not recommended from these locations.
- Do NOT bring a large shark onto a pier or bridge. Instead, walk the shark to the base of the bridge/pier before removing the hook or cutting the line.
- Small sharks can be brought up from the water for hook removal by using a bridge/pier net.
- When releasing, use the pier net to lower the fish back down to the water.

**Learn more about shark fishing regulations at
MyFWC.com/Fishing/Saltwater/Recreational/Sharks**

**FWC Marine Fisheries Management Division can be
contacted at 850-487-0554 or Marine@MyFWC.com.**

