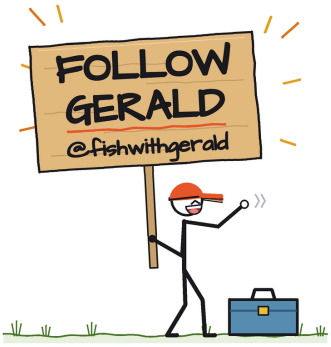
Gerald's Beginner Bass Checklist

Prepared beats perfect.

Everything you need for your first bass trips, and nothing you don't. Check it off the night before, so on the water all you have to think about is fishing.



1 Before you go

- [ ] A **fishing license** for your state, if you need one
- [ ] Read the **local rules** for where you're fishing: limits, sizes, where you can fish
- [ ] **Tell someone** where you're going and when you'll be back
- [ ] Check the **weather and wind**. Storm coming? Go another day.

2 Rod, reel and line

- [ ] **One spinning rod and reel.** A ~6'6"–7' medium-power rod does most jobs.
- [ ] Spooled with **~8–12 lb monofilament** line
- [ ] An **extra spool** of the same line
- [ ] One rod is plenty. Learn it first.

3 A small tackle box

- [ ] **Texas-rigged soft plastic worms**, plus worm hooks and a few bullet weights
- [ ] A **topwater** lure (top of the water)
- [ ] A **crankbait** (the middle)
- [ ] A **spinnerbait** (to search) and a **jig** (for cover)
- [ ] One lure per job. Add more when you know what job it's for.

4 Tools

- [ ] **Needle-nose pliers** to unhook fish
- [ ] **Line clippers** (nail clippers work)
- [ ] A **small towel** and a **bag for trash and old line**
- [ ] Learn **one knot** well, like the Palomar or the improved clinch. Practice it at home.

5 Stay safe

- [ ] A **life jacket** that fits. On any boat or kayak, wear it.
- [ ] **Look behind you** before every cast
- [ ] **Sunglasses** to guard your eyes from hooks, plus a hat and sunscreen
- [ ] **Water, snacks** and a small **first-aid kit**
- [ ] Your **phone in a waterproof bag**

6 Be good to the fish

- [ ] **Wet your hands** before you touch a fish
- [ ] Hold a bass by the **lower lip**, and support the belly on a big one
- [ ] Keep it in the water as much as you can. Quick photo, gentle release.
- [ ] **Pack out every scrap of line.** Loose line tangles up birds. Gerald knows.
- [ ] **Clean, drain and dry** your boat and gear before you fish new water

7 Pack your mindset

Bad days still count. No bites tells you where they aren't. A snag means you found cover. A backlash means you're learning. Go again, 1% better every trip.

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