

The Ultimate Fly Fishing Check List

Over 80 fly fishing items to check-off before you head out to the river.

Ugh! I forgot my nail knot tool! Have you ever been standing in the middle of a river and realized you forgot something? Or you're 2 hours from home and remember you forgot the oars to the drift boat? You could say these problems are the makings of great stories, but I'm here to tell you, I want my stories to be about **fish**.

At the bottom of this post I've attached what I'm calling the ULTIMATE FLY FISHING CHECKLIST. It can be conveniently downloaded as a .PDF and printed off.

If you're starting the season out, do some practice casting. This gets the muscle memory going. You want to make your first cast to fish a good one.

I've broken the checklist down into three sections "Essential", "General Fishing" and "Optional" of fly fishing gear you may need for an outing. For the Essential Fly Fishing gear, I've included some reasoning for packing it. Some items will seem obvious, but maybe I can give you some tidbits to think about when compiling your fly fishing tackle.

Essential Gear

- Fishing license or permits. You should also check to see if the regulations have changed where you're intending to fish. I know one of the rivers I fish has 6 different sets of rules as the river empties into Lake Huron. Luckily in the age of the interweb you can quickly look up changes.
- Rod, Reel and appropriate line for your targeted fish. If I'm going to a "mystery" river that I've never fished, but know trout is my prey. I grab my trusty 9', 5 weight rod with floating weight forward line. I think of this fly rod as my Michigan 80% rod. It can handle 80% of anything I might find in my home state. A little light for steelhead and to stout for bluegills but most fish in between are fair game.
- Waders, belt, boots and a wading jacket. I carry a light weight packable wading jacket everytime I go out. Fishing always seems to be better when the weather is a little bit nasty.
- Flies, this could be a long list, but I'm going to make a short statement. If you usually fish dry flies only, I'd recommend mixing in some old stand-by streamers and nymphs. It has saved the day for me a couple times.
- Leaders, A couple of each in sizes 2X to 7X. They are small and light so extras are easy to pack. Remember to check them over nicks and knots.
- Tippet, A 25 yd spools in sizes 2x through 7x. Some days it seems like you just eat tippet up. If chasing salmond add some 1x.

- Clippers and a nail knot tool. I use a combo tool with both on it, which I've forgotten before. Trying to clip line close to a knot is tuff with your teeth!
- A smile and good attitude – I'm mixing this in to see if your reading. Fishing and even reading about fishing is suppose to be fun. Enjoy
- Fly floatant, is essential for dry fly fishing. Apply it to your flies and let it dry before your outing and they will be read to go straight out of your fly box.
- Line cleaner and dressing, your line will last longer, float higher and cast farther. Learn how to clean and condition quickly by reading the blog article titled XXXXX.
- Split shot, beads, swivels and indicators. I've even started bringing a 4 foot section of sinking line. That little section has allowed me to switch over to streamer fishing in a pinch.
- Vest or gear bag, I've tried a vest on and off for years. I seem to migrate back to a small bag to carry my goodies.
- Polarized Sun Glasses, vital to see fish and protects your eyes from flying hooks.
- Hat - protection from the sun and flying hooks. Look for a hat with a dark underside it helps cut down on glare.
- A hook hone or a hook file. "Sharp Hooks Catch Fish" should be a slogan. A hone is cheap insurance, keep it handy and touch up your hooks often.
- Sun Screen – To much sun can be dangerous, protect yourself. Wash your hands well after applying sun screen so you don't contaminate your flies.
- Insect Replenant – In Michigan, black flies and mosicetois can drive you off the water. Carry a small bottle and apply to exposed skin.
- Small first aid kit with tape and ointment, this is always a good idea. An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.
- Multi-tool aka Leatherman™ useful for reel repairs. Tightening screws, bending hooks, cutting.....you get the idea.
- A safety pin or two, a quick fix for zippers, ripped clothes and cleaning hook eyes.
- Ziplock Bags – To fish, you need to be by the water. Eventually you will fall in, a waterproof bag will keep your wallet, phone and camera dry.
- Water and a snack, a little food and water will extend an outing. Stay hydrated and keep your strength up with an energy bar.

General Fishing

- Net
- Back up rod, reel and line
- Hatch chart
- Wading Staff – this could be essential if you wade fast water or rivers with cobble bottoms.
- “The Reel Winder” replaces the need for extra spools.
- Fly desiccant
- Assortment of float indicators
- Knot guide
- Thermometer
- Stripping basket
- Camera
- Lip balm
- Forceps
- Wader repair kit
- Fishing buff
- Sun gloves
- Leader straightener
- Alternate fly lines, sinking, intermediate

Optional or to consider taking

- Flashlight
- Boga-grip or fish safe pliers
- Compass
- Bandanna

- Small roll of tape
- Super glue
- Paper and pencil
- Measuring tape
- Day pack
- Bug tube
- Reel oil
- Layers of clothing, fleece, stocking/ski hat that covers your ears, extra socks
- Waterproof matches or lighter
- TP or disposable wipes
- Parachute cord
- Hip waders
- Neoprene gloves
- Finger less gloves
- Medicines
- Assortment of float indicators
- Knife
- Trash bag
- Two way radios
- Pliers
- Towel
- Hand sanitizer
- Chemical hand and foot warmers
- Cooler
- GPS

- Benadryl for insect bites
- Pain Killer, Tylenol, Aspirin
- Sandals
- Binoculars
- Maps
- Spare keys
- Candles
- Space blanket
- Water proofing spray
- Whistle
- Scissors
- Headlamp
- SD card, have the guide take pictures on your card.
- 5-minute epoxy
- Tip top and guides
- Needle, thread and bobbin
- Swim bag – extra clothes in a waterproof bag.
- Life jacket or inflatable
- Float tube, fins
- Drift boat and all the goodies that go with it including the oars!
- Spare glasses and repair kit
- Extra batteries
- EpiPen or asthma inhaler