

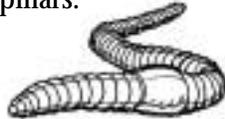
THE KID'S GUIDE TO FINDING BACKYARD FISHING BAIT

Using bait is the easiest way to catch freshwater fish. But you don't need to visit a bait store or tackle shop for bait. Finding bait can be a lot of fun and a great way to get ready for a fishing trip.

Many great fishing baits are available in your backyard, or in any plot of vacant ground or parkland. Check with Mom or Dad to make sure that you have permission to hunt for bait.

Worms are the most popular bait, and you can find them almost anywhere. Other good baits are grasshoppers, crickets and caterpillars.

Some popular baits and tips to find them are:



WORMS - There are all types of worms, but the following tips will help you get a bunch of them for fishing:

- Know where to look. Earthworms and larger "nightcrawlers" are found in rich soft soil. Smaller ringed manure worms are found in farm manure, around stables and barnyards. Worms are seldom found in hard or sandy soils.
- Look for worms after a rain. Worms come to the surface then. You can also easily pick them up early in the morning. Check on driveways, sidewalks & under rocks.
- Try at night in the spring or fall, and use a red plastic covering over your flashlight. Worms won't see the red light. You can easily pick them up as they move on the surface.
- If it hasn't rained for a while, try looking under old boards, bricks, logs or debris where the soil is still moist. Grab the worm as soon as you pick up the board, since they immediately try to go down a hole.
- Piles of compost, farm manure, leaves or mulch are also good spots to search for manure worms. Use a garden rake to sort through these piles to find worms.

- Once you have worms, keep them in a large container filled with soft earth or compost. An ideal way to keep a dozen or more worms is in a large coffee can. Ask Mom or Dad to help you use a can opener to remove both ends, and then use the snap-on plastic lids (you will need two) to hold the worms. Since worms tend to go deep, simply turn over the can and open the top lid to get worms when fishing.
- You can keep worms for weeks or longer in a large container of soft soil, mulch, compost or similar natural debris. Feed them with coffee grounds and vegetable scraps. Maintain a "worm bed" with a wood box from which they can't escape, sunk in the ground and covered with a tight lid. Keep worms cool, covered and slightly moist and you will have worms any time you want to fish.



CRICKETS AND GRASSHOPPERS -

Try these methods to get these active insects and good bait.

- Look for grasshoppers early in the morning on summer days, where they can be picked off of weed stems before the sun warms them.
- You can find grasshoppers in fields and gardens from mid-spring through late-fall. Crickets are found around sheds, homes, fences, garages,



sidewalks, under stones, or anyplace that has nooks and crannies where a cricket can hide.

To keep them from escaping, be careful to surprise them with a cupped hand as soon as you see them.

- You can trap crickets by placing a slice of stale bread in a hidden location and checking it daily to catch and trap crickets. Try also putting bread in a jar placed on its side. Keep the lid next to the jar to trap crickets when you check it.



- Pick caterpillars off of trees and bushes and store them in a coffee can as you do with crickets and grasshoppers.

- If not using caterpillars within a day or two of catching them, be sure to keep them with a few leaves of the same plant or tree where you found them. Most caterpillars eat only leaves from a specific kind of tree or plant.

- Keep caterpillars in a coffee can or similar container. Use a mesh or screen lid held in place with a rubber band, or punch holes in a plastic lid.



Use care in collecting all bait. Be careful when checking for worms and crickets under boards, since boards can hold rusty nails. Also, pull a board back towards you to keep the board between you and any bait. Sometimes baby snakes will be found under those same boards! Spiders, including poisonous types, can be found in the same areas. Watch for fire ants in some areas, and be aware that some bees and wasps nest in the ground. Be careful also when collecting caterpillars. Some caterpillars – particularly large ones and those with fine hairs – can sting! Use light cotton gloves for protection.

- Hold an old sheet as you and a friend run through a field to trap fleeing and flying insects, including grasshoppers.
- Store crickets or grasshoppers in a lidded coffee can. Be careful – they can and will try to jump out. To keep them alive, punch holes in the lid so that they can breathe.
- To keep crickets and grasshoppers for weeks, feed them a few vegetable scraps, moistened to provide water.



There are lots of other baits available that you can find for freshwater fishing, but starting with these will give you a good supply of readily available bait all year round. For more information, look in your library or tackle shop for books on bait.



CATERPILLARS - These larvae of moths and butterflies are also good bait, and readily available through the summer and fall. Try these tips to get a supply:

- The best caterpillars are those with smooth bodies, not the ones with a lot of fine hairs. Run a hook through them side-to-side or lengthwise.



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