



# SAILEE'S GUIDE TO HANDLING FISH

## Sailee's Guide to Handling Fish

Catch it. Care for it. Release it right.

G'day REEFIES! Sailee here!  

You've felt the bite, the reel is screaming and finally...

**FISH ON!** 

You land your fish and everyone wants to have a look, grab a photo and celebrate the catch.

But there's something really important we need to remember:

**Being a great angler isn't just about catching fish — it's about looking after them too!** 

Whether you're planning to release your fish or take it home for dinner, knowing how to handle it safely is one of the most important skills every REEFIES angler can learn.

Let's make sure we give our fish the best possible chance after the fight.

---

## First Rule: Wet Hands!

A fish has a protective coating called its **slime coat**.

Think of it as the fish's very own waterproof, protective jacket!

If you **handle** a fish with dry hands, you can rub off some of this important coating.

So before touching your fish:

-  Wet your hands
-  Use a wet towel or rag
-  Use suitable wet gloves if required

**Wet hands = happy fish!** 🐟 👍

And please don't squeeze the fish any harder than necessary.

---

## 👏 Handle With Care!

Fish aren't designed to be held like a football.

Support the fish properly and avoid squeezing its body or putting unnecessary pressure on its jaw, gills or internal organs.

If you're taking a quick photo, have your camera ready **before** you lift the fish out of the water.

That way you can:

- 📷 Grab the photo
- 💧 Get the fish back in the water

Nice and quick!

**Photo first. Fish back in the water. High five afterwards!** 🙌

---

## ⚠️ Not Everything in the Water Wants a Hug!

This is **SUPER IMPORTANT**, REEFIES.

Some of the creatures we catch around the Whitsundays are definitely better admired from a safe distance!

There are fish and marine animals with:

- 🦷 Sharp teeth
- 🦂 Spines
- 🦂 Venomous spines
- 🦷 Powerful jaws
- ⚡ Other ways of defending themselves

A fish such as a **stonefish**, for example, should **never be handled casually**.

And remember, sometimes a fish doesn't look dangerous until you get a little too close!



Stonefish – Highly Venomous

If you don't know what it is — don't grab it!

## 🤔 “Sailee, What Fish Is This?”

Great question!

If you're not sure what you've caught, **stop and identify it before handling it.**

The Queensland Government's **Qld Fishing 2.0 app** can help anglers identify species and check important fishing information.

You can also ask an experienced angler or your local tackle shop for advice.

[Queensland Government fishing information and Qld Fishing 2.0 app](#)

### 🛒 REEFIES Local Tip

The team at **Tackle World Airlie Beach** are a great local resource for fishing gear and advice.

Before heading out, ask about:

- 🎣 The right hooks
- 🪝 De-hookers
- 📏 Measuring tools



Fish-handling gear

Local species

Supporting local tackle shops helps keep our Whitsunday fishing community strong — and you might learn something new while you're there!

---

## Getting the Hook Out

Sometimes getting the hook out is easy.

Sometimes...

**NOT SO MUCH!** 😬

If the hook is easy to reach, use suitable pliers or a hook remover and carefully remove it.

A **de-hooker** can also be very useful, particularly when you want to minimise handling.

But here's an important rule:

**Don't wrestle with a fish just to get a hook out.**

If the hook is deeply swallowed or difficult to remove, don't keep pulling and twisting.

Getting advice from an experienced angler or following appropriate fish-handling guidance is much better than turning a simple hook removal into a wrestling match!

---

## Keep Your Fish Breathing!

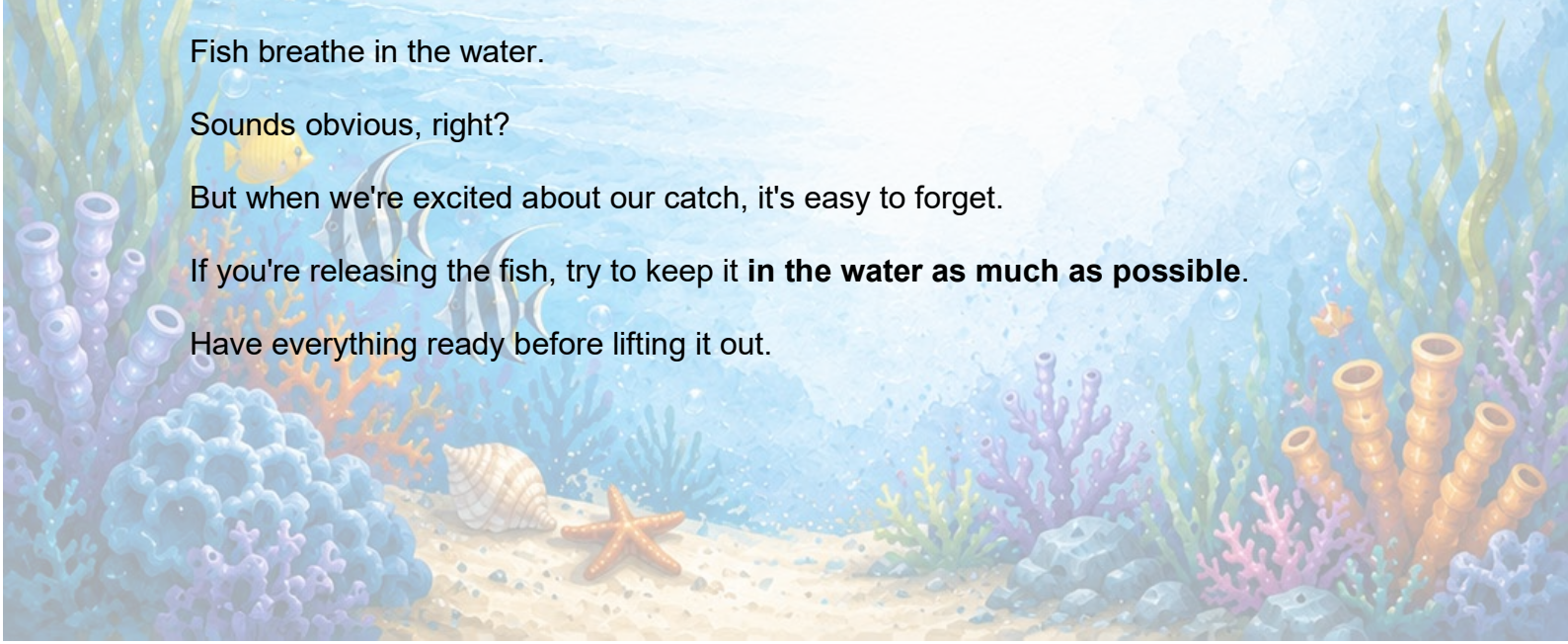
Fish breathe in the water.

Sounds obvious, right?

But when we're excited about our catch, it's easy to forget.

If you're releasing the fish, try to keep it **in the water as much as possible**.

Have everything ready before lifting it out.



- 📷 Camera ready?
- 📏 Measuring device ready?
- 🪝 Hook remover ready?

Great!

Then keep the fish out of the water for the **shortest time possible**.

**Think of it as a fishy pit stop!** 🏠 🐟

---

## Time to Go Home!

If you're releasing your fish, gently support it in the water.

Keep it upright and allow it to recover.

Depending on the species and conditions, the fish may need a little time before it is ready to swim away.

Don't rush it.

When the fish has regained its strength and can swim away strongly on its own...

**LET IT GO!** 🐟 🪝

Watching a fish swim away after you've caught it is one of the coolest parts of fishing.

You caught it.

You cared for it.

And now it's back where it belongs.

**That's a REEFIES release!** ❤️

---



## Keeping Your Catch?

Not every fish is going back in the water.

If your catch is legal to keep and you decide to take it home, good fish handling is still really important.

Keeping the fish cool and preparing it properly will help maintain its quality.

Depending on the species and your preferred method, this can include:

-  Bleeding the fish
-  Gutting it
-  Keeping it chilled
-  Cleaning it properly
-  Preparing it safely

And remember:

**Only keep what you're legally allowed to keep.**

Always check the current Queensland fishing rules, including size and possession limits, before heading out.



## The REEFIES Fish-Handling Challenge

Next time you catch a fish, see if you can remember these five steps:

### 1 WET

Wet your hands before touching the fish.

### 2 CHECK

Make sure you know what species you've caught.

### 3 CARE

Handle it gently and keep it out of the water for as little time as possible.

### 4 RELEASE

If you're releasing it, let it recover properly before swimming away.

### 5 RESPECT

Follow the fishing rules and look after our waterways.



## Sailee's Golden Rule

Here's the most important thing I want every REEFIES angler to remember:

**Treat every fish like it's your favourite fish.** 🐟💙

Even if it's a tiny fish.

Even if it's not the species you were hoping for.

Even if Dad says, **"That's bait!"** 😬

Every fish plays a part in our waterways.

The way we handle fish today helps protect the fishing adventures we want to enjoy tomorrow.



## Look After Our Whitsundays

We are incredibly lucky to live and fish in one of the most beautiful parts of the world.

From the islands and reefs to our estuaries and freshwater waterways, the Whitsundays are packed with amazing fishing opportunities.

So when you're out there:

- ♻️ Take your rubbish home
- 🎣 Follow the fishing rules
- 🐟 Handle fish carefully
- 🌿 Look after the environment
- 👯 Look after your fishing mates
- ❤️ Respect the animals we catch

Because being a great angler isn't about catching the most fish.

**It's about being responsible for the ones we do catch.**



## Ready, REEFIES?

The next time your rod bends and someone shouts...

# "FISH ON!"

Remember what Sailee taught you.

**Wet hands.**

**Handle carefully.**

**Know what you've caught.**

**Get the hook out safely.**

**Keep the fish in the water as much as possible.**

And if you're releasing it...

**Give it the best chance to swim away strong!** 🐟 🐠

Because at REEFIES, we're not just teaching kids how to catch fish.

We're teaching the **next generation of anglers how to care for them too.**

🎣 **Fishing. Adventure. Memories.**

And most importantly...

**Respect for the fish and the places we love to fish.** ❤️ 🐟

*Sailee* ♥

Official REEFIES Mascot  
Whitsunday Game Fish Club

