

LET'S GO CARP FISHING!

Simple advice,
practical tips and
everything you need
to get started



CATCH

Your first carp



CARE

Keep fish safe
and healthy



RESPECT

Our waters
and wildlife



ENJOY

A great hobby
for life

By Clive Branson

Former World Angling Champion

Clive Branson



Visit for more free
fishing resources:

www.clive-branson.co.uk



Find suitable
equipment at:

www.fishingtacklebox.co.uk

MEET THE CARP

Carp are one of the most popular and exciting fish to catch in the UK. They are strong, powerful and can grow to a very good size. There are three main types of carp you are likely to catch in our waters.

All carp are special and help to make our lakes, rivers and canals a healthier environment.



COMMON CARP

The common carp is the most well-known type. It has large, regular scales covering its body and can grow to over 30lb in UK waters. Common carp are very strong and provide exciting sport for anglers of all ages.

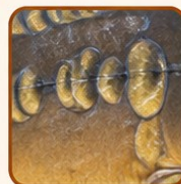


Large, regular scales



MIRROR CARP

The mirror carp has fewer scales, often in irregular patches, which give it a distinctive, attractive appearance. They can grow to a similar size as common carp and are just as strong and rewarding to catch.



Irregular scales in patches



LEATHER CARP

The leather carp has very few, or no scales at all, giving it a smooth, leathery appearance. They are less common than the other two types but are still found in many UK waters and can grow to an impressive size.



Very few or no scales

DISCOVER MORE ABOUT OUR WONDERFUL FISH

Carp are just one of the many fascinating fish that live in our lakes, rivers and canals.

Would you like to learn more about different freshwater fish, their habits, habitats and the importance of protecting them?

Visit Our Jewels in the Water for information, illustrations, music and conservation.

www.jewelsinthewater.co.uk

*Learn about our fish. Appreciate their beauty.
Help protect their future.*

OUR
JEWELS
IN THE WATER



SCAN ME

CHOOSING YOUR CARP FISHING TACKLE

Good tackle doesn't have to be expensive. Get the basics right and you can catch carp without spending a fortune!

You don't need expensive equipment to catch carp. Here's a guide to the basic tackle you'll need to get started. Simple, reliable tackle will catch plenty of carp and make fishing more enjoyable.

ROD AND REEL

A 10–12ft carp rod is ideal for beginners. It's easy to use and perfect for float fishing or simple ledger methods. A good quality fixed spool reel, loaded with 8–12lb line, will be likely to catch.



Look for a strong, reliable rod and reel. You don't need the most expensive models.

FISHING LINE

Use good quality monofilament line in the 8–12lb range. This is strong enough for carp but still fine enough not to spook them.



Good line is important - it needs to be strong, reliable and in good condition.

FLOATS

A simple, strong float is perfect for shallow or marginal fishing. Use a robust waggler or carp float that can handle larger fish.



A larger, stronger float helps you spot bites and cope with big carp.

HOOKS

Use strong, reliable hooks in sizes 8–14 depending on your bait and fishing method. Wide-gape hooks are a good all-round choice for carp.



Make sure your hooks are sharp and check them regularly.

BAIT

Carp love a variety of baits. Sweetcorn, bread, pellets and boilies all work well. Start with something simple like sweetcorn or bread – they're inexpensive and very effective.



Try different baits to see what works best on your local waters.

LANDING NET

A large, strong landing net is essential for carp fishing. Choose one with a deep, soft mesh to keep fish safe.



A bigger net makes it easier to land fish safely.

UNHOOKING MAT

Always use a proper unhooking mat to protect carp. It provides a soft, safe surface while you unhook and photograph your catch.



Keep fish safe – always use an unhooking mat.

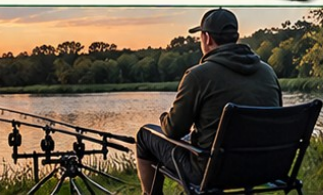
OTHER USEFUL ITEMS

A few other items will make your fishing easier and more enjoyable:

- A landing net handle and spare net if possible
- Disgorger or long-nose pliers
- A bait box
- A small chair or seat box
- A towel to keep your hands wet
- A simple keepnet (if allowed)



**KEEP IT SIMPLE, KEEP IT SAFE
AND ENJOY YOUR CARP FISHING!**



BAITS THAT CATCH CARP

Simple baits can catch big carp!

Carp are not fussy feeders and will eat a wide variety of baits. Here are some of the most popular and effective baits to try when you are starting out. The best bait often depends on the venue and the time of year, so have a go with different baits to see what works best.



SWEETCORN

Sweetcorn is one of the best baits for carp and is a great choice for beginners. It's cheap, easy to use and works well on most waters. You can use tinned sweetcorn or pre-prepared vacuum-packed corn.



A single grain of sweetcorn on the hook is a great starting bait. You can also feed a few grains as loose feed.

BREAD

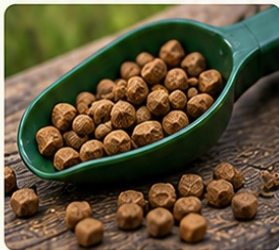
Bread is a classic carp bait and still catches plenty of fish. It's inexpensive and easy to use. Use a small piece of fresh bread on a size 8-12 hook. Flake or punch the bread so it stays on the hook.



Use fresh, soft bread. Flake it or use a bread punch to make a neat piece for the hook.

PELLETS

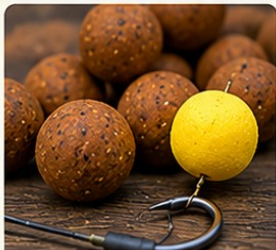
Carp pellets are highly attractive and work well all year round. They come in different sizes and flavours. For beginners, 6-8mm pellets are a good all-round size.



Soak pellets in lake water for a few minutes to soften them before using.

BOILIES

Boilies are a popular carp bait, especially on larger waters. They come in many flavours such as fishmeal, fruit and spice. Start with a small 12-14mm boilie. You can also use pop-ups to lift the bait off the bottom.



Try different flavours and sizes to see what the carp prefer. Pop-ups can be very effective.

OTHER BAITS TO TRY

Carp will also take other baits, including:

- Maggots (especially on smaller carp)
- Tiger nuts
- Particles such as hemp or maize
- Meat (on some waters)
- Luncheon meat
- Bait pastes and dough baits



Different baits work better at different times of year, so it's worth experimenting.

FEEDING TIPS

- ✓ Start with a small amount of feed to attract the carp.
- ✓ Use the same bait as you're using on the hook.
- ✓ Don't overfeed – a little and often works best.
- ✓ Try feeding a few metres out, or in the margins.
- ✓ Watch for signs of feeding carp such as bubbles, showing fish or movement.
- ✓ Be patient – it can sometimes take a while for carp to find your bait.



Feeding little and often will keep the carp interested without filling them up.

REMEMBER

Always check the local fishing rules for the waters you are fishing. Some venues may have restrictions on certain baits such as meat or large amounts of feed. Keep your bait and feed in suitable containers and take any rubbish home with you.

Keep it tidy and help protect our lakes, rivers and wildlife for future generations.

SIMPLE WAYS TO CATCH CARP

There are several ways to catch carp. Here are two simple and effective methods that are ideal for beginners – float fishing and ledgering. Both are easy to set up and will catch plenty of carp on most stillwaters.



Two simple methods that will catch carp and give you great days out!

FLOAT FISHING

Float fishing is a great way to start carp fishing. It's simple, exciting and very effective, especially in the margins or over shallow areas.

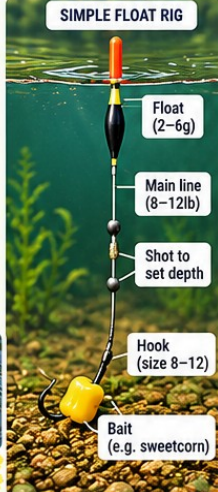
WHAT YOU NEED

- A 10–13ft float rod
- A fixed spool reel
- A strong float (2–6g)
- 8–12lb main line
- A size 8–12 hook
- Bait such as sweetcorn, bread or pellets



Float fishing is exciting as you can see the carp take the bait!

SIMPLE FLOAT RIG



LEDGERING

Ledgering is a simple and effective method, especially in deeper water or when fishing further out. You don't need complicated rigs – a basic running ledger will work well.

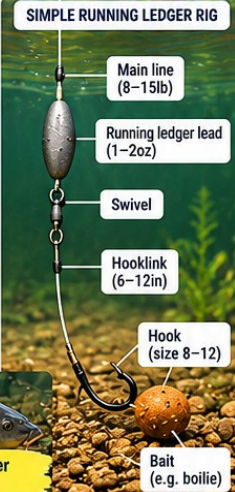
WHAT YOU NEED

- A 10–12ft carp rod
- A fixed spool reel
- 8–15lb main line
- A running ledger lead (1–2oz)
- A swivel and hooklink (6–12in)
- A size 8–12 hook
- Bait such as boilies, pellets, sweetcorn or bread



Ledgering is ideal for deeper water and can catch bigger carp.

SIMPLE RUNNING LEDGER RIG



BITE INDICATORS

There are three main ways to see or hear when a carp has taken your bait. Each method works well, and you can choose the one that suits you.

1. FLOATS



Watch for the float to dip, slide away or lift. Carp can take the bait very gently, so look carefully. Floats are ideal for beginners and great fun, especially for youngsters.

A floating indicator lets you see the bite happen in real time.

2. BOBBINS AND SWINGERS



These attach to the fishing line when ledgering. They rise or fall as a carp moves the bait, helping you to recognise both runs and drop-back bites.

Bobbin or swinger rises or falls when the carp moves the bait.

3. ELECTRONIC BITE ALARMS



Electronic alarms make a sound, often with a flashing light, when the line moves. They are especially useful for ledgering and are usually used alongside a bobbin or swinger.

An alarm gives an audible and visual warning when you get a bite.

! NEVER LEAVE YOUR RODS UNATTENDED. Even when using electronic alarms, you must remain close enough to respond immediately to a bite. Carp can take your rod in seconds and must not be left unattended.

WHERE TO FISH

Carp are often found in the margins, near reeds, lily pads, islands and overhanging trees. Look for signs of carp such as bubbling, rolling or moving near the surface.



The margins are a great place to find carp.

PLAYING AND LANDING CARP

Carp are strong fighters, so take your time and let the rod and reel do the work. Keep steady pressure on the fish and guide it into a large, soft landing net. Always use a suitable unhooking mat.



Use a large, soft net to land carp safely and protect the fish.

TOP TIPS

- ✓ Keep your tackle simple to begin with.
- ✓ Use reliable, strong tackle.
- ✓ Start in the margins.
- ✓ Try different baits to see what works.
- ✓ Keep an eye out for signs of carp.
- ✓ Be patient – it can sometimes take time.
- ✓ Always respect the fish and environment.
- ✓ Follow the fishery rules.
- ✓ Take your litter home.
- ✓ Most importantly – enjoy your day out!

WHERE TO FIND CARP

Carp can be found in many different places in lakes, rivers and canals. They move around during the day, often feeding in specific areas. Here are some of the best places to look and the signs that carp are nearby.

Carp like to be where there is food, cover and a feeling of safety. Look for features that give them everything they need.

MARGINS

The margins are one of the best places to find carp, especially in warmer weather. Carp feel safe close to the bank where there is cover, natural food and shelter.



Try fishing close to the bank, under overhanging bushes or next to reeds.

REEDS AND LILY PADS

Carp often feed around reeds, lily pads and other weed beds. These areas provide food and cover, and the warmer water attracts natural food such as insects and small fish.



Look for open patches between the reeds or pads where you can present your bait.

ISLANDS

Islands are often carp hotspots, especially on larger lakes. They provide shelter and are usually surrounded by natural food. Carp often patrol the edges of islands, particularly in the early morning and late evening.



Try fishing around the edges of islands or in the gaps between islands and the bank.

OVERHANGING TREES

Carp love to feed under overhanging trees where insects and other food fall into the water. These areas also give them shade and protection, especially during hot weather.



Present your bait close to the branches without getting snagged.

DEEPER WATER

In hot weather, carp often move into deeper water where it is cooler and more comfortable. They will still feed, but you may need to fish a bit further out using a ledger or waggler.



Look for deeper areas, drop-offs or the edge of underwater features.

INLETS AND OUTLETS

Where rivers or streams flow in or out of a lake, it brings in fresh, oxygenated water and natural food. Carp are often found in these areas, especially after rain when food is washed in.



Look for flowing or moving water – these can be very productive spots.

SIGNS OF CARP

Even if you can't see the fish, there are often signs that carp are nearby. Keep an eye out for the following:

BUBBLING



Carp often blow bubbles on the surface as they feed.

ROLLING



You may see carp roll on the surface, especially in the mornings and evenings.

SHOWING FINS



Look for fins or backs breaking the surface as they move around.

FEEDING PATCHES



Look for areas where carp are feeding, such as popping boilies, disturbed water or signs of fish mouthing the surface.

TIME OF DAY

Carp can be caught at any time of day, but they are often more active in the early morning and late evening. In hot weather, they may feed during the night or in deeper water in the day.



Early morning and late evening are often the most productive.

SEASONS

Carp feed all year round, but they are usually more active in spring and summer when the water is warmer. In autumn they build up for winter, and in winter they feed less but can still be caught, especially on milder days.



Carp can be caught in every season – just adjust your approach and bait.

TOP TIPS

- ✓ Observe the water before you start fishing.
- ✓ Look for signs such as bubbles, rolling or feeding.
- ✓ Try different areas until you find carp.
- ✓ Keep your bait simple and present it carefully.
- ✓ Fish quietly and avoid making too much noise.
- ✓ Use polarised sunglasses to help you spot fish.
- ✓ Remember that carp move around – if you don't get bites, try a different spot.
- ✓ Enjoy the places you fish and respect the environment.

Carp can be found in many places – keep looking and you'll soon find them!

LOOKING AFTER YOUR CATCH

Care for your catch today so there are carp in our waters for tomorrow!

Carp are special fish and deserve to be treated with care and respect. By following a few simple rules you can keep them safe, healthy and ensure they can be caught again in the future. Good fish care is an important part of being a responsible angler.

USE AN UNHOOKING MAT

Always use a proper unhooking mat when handling carp. It provides a soft, safe surface and helps protect the fish from injury.



Keep the mat clean, wet and easy to reach before you start fishing.

KEEP THE CARP WET

Always keep the carp wet while unhooking, handling and taking photographs. A wet fish is less likely to be damaged and will recover quickly.



Use water from the lake or river to keep the fish and your hands wet.

HANDLE WITH CARE

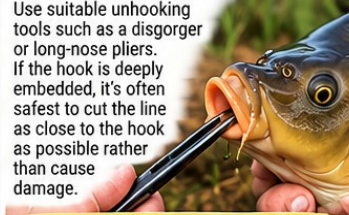
Support the carp with two hands – one under the belly and one near the tail. Never hold it by the gills and avoid squeezing too tightly.



Support the fish properly at all times.

REMOVE THE HOOK SAFELY

Use suitable unhooking tools such as a disgorger or long-nose pliers. If the hook is deeply embedded, it's often safest to cut the line as close to the hook as possible rather than cause damage.



Be gentle and take your time. The fish's safety comes first.

TAKING PHOTOS

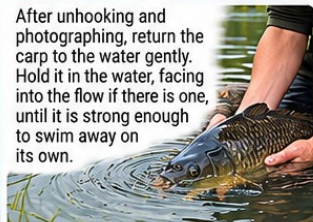
It's great to take a photograph to remember your catch, but keep the fish low to the ground over the unhooking mat.



Keep the fish low – over the mat and close to the ground.

RETURNING THE CARP

After unhooking and photographing, return the carp to the water gently. Hold it in the water, facing into the flow if there is one, until it is strong enough to swim away on its own.



Let the carp swim away when it is ready.

IMPORTANT TIPS

- ✓ Always use an unhooking mat.
- ✓ Keep the fish wet at all times.
- ✓ Handle the carp gently and support its body.
- ✓ Use suitable unhooking tools.
- ✓ Keep the fish low to the ground when taking photos.
- ✓ Return the carp carefully and let it swim away.
- ✓ Be prepared – have everything you need before you start fishing.
- ✓ Respect the fish and the environment.

WHY KEEP IT LOW?

Dropping a carp from a height can cause serious internal injuries. Even if the fish swims away, the damage inside can be fatal and it will most probably die later. Carp are heavy and their internal organs are delicate. Always keep the fish low to the ground, especially when taking photographs, and never lift it up high.



Too high – risk of serious internal injury.



Keep it low – much safer for the fish.

FISH WELFARE

Treat every carp with care, no matter what size. By looking after your catch, you help protect our fisheries so that others can enjoy them too.



Healthy carp, healthy waters and a better future for anglers of all ages.

FINAL TIPS AND ENJOY YOUR CARP FISHING!

You now have all the basic information you need to get started with carp fishing. It's a fantastic and rewarding way to enjoy the outdoors, relax and experience the excitement of catching one of our most sought-after coarse fish.

Keep it simple, be patient, learn from each session and most importantly – have fun!

QUICK CHECKLIST

- ✓ Check the local fishing rules and obtain the correct licence.
- ✓ Use sensible, reliable tackle that suits the size of carp.
- ✓ Start with simple baits such as sweetcorn, bread or pellets.
- ✓ Observe the water and look for signs of carp.
- ✓ Keep your baiting simple and don't overfeed.
- ✓ Be patient – carp can take time to find your bait.
- ✓ Use an unhooking mat and handle the fish with care.
- ✓ Keep the fish low when taking photographs.
- ✓ Return the carp safely and let it swim away.
- ✓ Respect the environment and take your litter home.

A REWARDING EXPERIENCE

Carp fishing can be exciting, challenging and very enjoyable. Every day on the bank is different, and there is always something new to learn. Whether you catch a small carp or a personal best, it's the experience, the time outdoors and the connection with nature that makes carp fishing so special.



Carp fishing is a great way to spend quality time with family and friends.

A LIFETIME OF ENJOYMENT

Carp are found in lakes, rivers and canals right across the UK, so there is always the chance of a great day out, close to home or further afield. As your confidence grows, you can try different baits, methods and venues. Most of all, enjoy the journey – carp fishing is a hobby that can give you pleasure for a lifetime.



Get out, enjoy the fresh air and discover the amazing world of carp fishing!

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MUSICAL TRIBUTES TO ANGLING LEGENDS



Songs and stories celebrating the great angling legends I've been fortunate to meet and fish alongside.

legendsinmylifetime.co.uk

Thank you for reading this beginner's guide to carp fishing. I hope it helps you to enjoy this wonderful sport and spend many happy days on the bank.

Clive Branson

Tight lines and see you on the bank!