Common trout species in Oregon

Rainbow
Rainbow trout are the most widely stocked and distributed trout in Oregon. They occur naturally in many rivers and streams and are stocked in ponds and lakes. They are highly variable in color, often silvery, with light pink to red stripe along sides. The can reach up to 30 inches in length. Rainbow trout prefer cold, clear water and are most often found in water 45-300 degrees Fahrenheit. Their diet consists of minnows, crayfish, insects, and other small aquatic life, making them susceptible to a well-presented spinner, flatfish or fly.

Redband Rainbow
Redband trout are a subspecies of rainbow trout indigenous to Central Oregon and adapted to the arid conditions east of the Cascades. They inhabit cool streams and rivers as well as some lakes, and they can grow up to 18-inches long.

Brook
Brook trout are an introduced fish species that were first stocked in the early 1900s. While technically not a trout (they are a member of the char family), their life history, ecology and habitat are similar to brown and rainbow trout. Brook trout are widely distributed from high mountain lakes to headwater drainages. They are the most prevalent game fish in both wilderness and non-wilderness high lakes. In small streams and high lakes brook trout are typically small – 5- to 7-inches long. In larger streams and rivers they can reach more than 25 inches.

Because insect larvae and nymphs make up a large part of their diet, they are a favorite target of fly fishers who use flies mimicking these insects. However, these aggressive biters will also go after a variety of other baits and lures.

Cutthroat
Cutthroat trout get their name from the red-orange slashes on the underside of the lower jaw. The most common variety available to most anglers is the coastal cutthroat found in many streams and beaver ponds in coastal drainages. Trout that remain in the stream year round may not get any bigger than 8- or 9-inches long but reward the angler with an aggressive bite and enthusiastic fight. The sea-run strain that travels to saltwater to feed may reach an impressive 17 inches.

Brown
These nonnative trout, introduced in the U.S. in 1883, have a reputation for being wily and elusive. While they prefer cold spring-fed rivers and streams, brown trout also can be more tolerant of warmer streams and lakes. These trout can range in size from 11-inches long in small streams up to 30 inches in larger rivers and lakes. While brown trout have a varied diet, anglers targeting large brown trout often use spinners or flies that mimic minnows.

Anglers can experience a lifetime of varied and rewarding adventures fishing for trout in Oregon’s shaded coastal streams, alpine lakes, urban ponds and high desert rivers.

Where and when to fish
Trout are widely distributed and can be found in almost any water body that provides:

- cool, clean water
- food such as aquatic insects, minnows and crawfish
- cover and protection from predators

Trout habitats are often divided into lakes and ponds (stillwaters) or rivers and streams (moving waters). Fish location, behavior and fishing tactics will vary depending on whether you’re fishing in stillwaters or moving waters.

Finding trout in rivers and streams
In moving waters, trout tend to hold in one spot and wait for the water current to bring food to them. A primary food source for these fish is aquatic insects adrift in the current. In addition to looking for food and protection from predators, trout in moving waters are also looking for a place to rest from the current. So some likely places to look for trout in rivers and streams include:

- behind rocks or other structure
- overhead predators

Finding trout in lakes and ponds
In stillwaters trout are on the move, “cruising” the water looking for food. At the same time, trout don’t want to get too far away from cover that offers protection from predators. Some likely places to look for trout in lakes and ponds include:

- near or above aquatic vegetation
- around logs, stumps, rocks or other structure
Most rivers and streams fish best in the spring and fall when water temperatures are cooler. Very few rivers and streams are stocked, so you’ll be fishing for naturally reproducing fish. As the water gets warmer, look for trout in faster riffles where the water gets re-oxygenated at it tumbles over rocks. Some rivers, especially in Central Oregon, are open for trout year round. Fishing can be good in the winter months – for hardy anglers willing to brave the cold and snow – but look for trout in slow, calm waters where they don’t have to fight the current.

**Fishing techniques for lakes and ponds**

Good starter outfit could include:

- A rod and reel, and a small spools of 4X and 5X tippet
- Weight forward, 5-weight fly line
- Matching fly reel
- Graphite 5-weight fly rod, 9 feet long
- A lightweight 6-foot spincasting or spinning rod with matching reel and 4-6 pound monofilament line
- A handful of 1/16 oz. spinners
- Worms
- A package of #5 lead split shot
- Couple of red/white bobbers
- Jar of PowerBait or PowerEggs
- Couple of red/white bobbers
- Package of size 8 bait hooks
- A handful of 1/16 oz. spinners
- Used to join two lines (one short) together.

**Fishing knots**

Fishing knots allow you to properly tie your line to your hook lure, and other tackle. These knots are easy to tie and are especially good for nylon lines.

Three knots to know

**Improved Clinch Knot**

An old standby known as the fisherman’s knot.

**Palomar Knot**

The easiest to tie, a good choice to hold terminal tackle (hooks, swivels and lures).

**Arbor Knot**

Quick, easy connection for attaching line to the reel.

**Knots You Need to Know**

- Blood Knot
- Improved Clinch Knot
- Palomar Knot
- Arbor Knot
- An old standby known as the fisherman’s knot.

Knots break when they slip, and they slip if they aren’t properly tied. To tie your knot, you need to:

1. Tie your hook to the line properly.
2. Make sure you know how to tighten every knot properly.
3. Just before you tighten the knot, moisten it with saliva.
4. Test each knot before you make that first cast.
5. Practice tying knots.

More fish are probably lost because of improperly tied knots than any other single reason. Yet anglers who spend hours practicing their casting, studying entomology or tying flies often neglect this simple and, ok, boring fundamental. But if tying better knots might help you land more fish, it makes sense to give knot tying a little more attention.

**Tips for tying better knots**

- Learn to tie a few simple knots well.
- There are dozens of knots for the angler. They publish whole books with nothing but pictures of how to tie knots. But start with just three knots, and learn how to tie them really well. Some good choices are:
  - Improved clinch knot—to tie the hook to the line
  - Surgeons knot—to tie two lines together
  - Palomar knot—another knot to tie the hook to the line
- Make sure you know how to tighten every knot properly. Knots break when they slip, and if they aren’t properly tightened. Pull on all the lines going into or coming out of the knot. Tighten both the short tag ends and the longer standing lines.
- Just before you tighten the knot, moisten it with saliva.
- This little bit of moisture does two things: it helps the knot “seat” or fully tighten, it also reduces friction heat that can cause the leader or tippet to stretch and weaken.
- Test each knot before you make that first cast.
- Give the line a few heavy tugs. Wrap the bend of the hook around a ring (the finger holes of your hemostat, a d-ring on your vest, etc.) and tug on the tippet to make sure the knot is secure.
- Practice tying knots.

Most people either laugh or groan at the thought of practicing knots. But standing on the shore with fish jumping all around you is a terrible place to try to remember how to tie a clinch knot. It’s not like you have to practice every day – you’re not learning a musical instrument. But grab a bit of line and some hooks, and tie a few favorite knots over and over again. Do this a couple of times and you’ll be pleased with how easily it comes back to you when you’re on the water.

For more information about trout fishing in Oregon, check out the ODFW Web site at [www.odfw.com](http://www.odfw.com). There you can buy a license, check out the Sport Fishing Regulations, see the Trout Stocking Schedule and get an update on current fishing conditions with the weekly Recreation Report, which includes fishing updates on almost 200 rivers, streams, lakes, reservoirs and ponds throughout the state.