# How to clean and keep your catch

## Cleaning a Fish

Many anglers like to simply clean the fish and cook it whole. This works best for fish that have no or very small scales such as trout.

Your catch should be cleaned and gutted as soon as possible. Fish are slippery and knives are sharp – be careful!

**1.** Rinse the slime off the fish, lay it on a cutting board, and insert the knife tip into the fish's anus. You can use a small towel to help get a secure grip on the fish as you're cleaning it. Cut upward along the belly to the head. Keep the knife blade shallow so you don't puncture the intestines.

Insert Knife Here

Slit
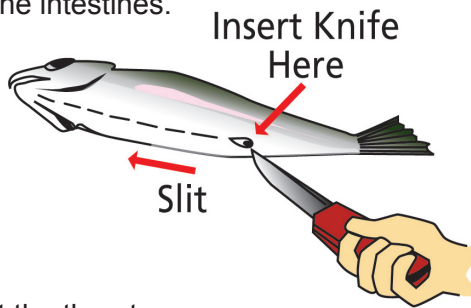
**2.** Make a cut at the throat to separate the gills from the head.

Head and Gills
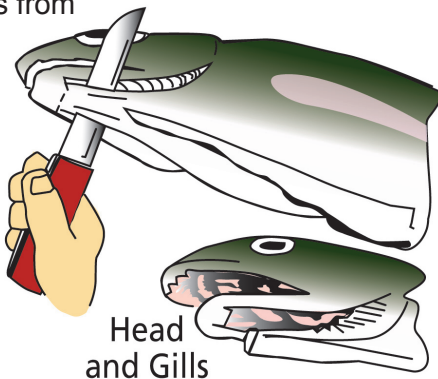
**3.** Spread the body open and remove the gills and entrails.

Hold Jaw

Pull

Gills and Entrails
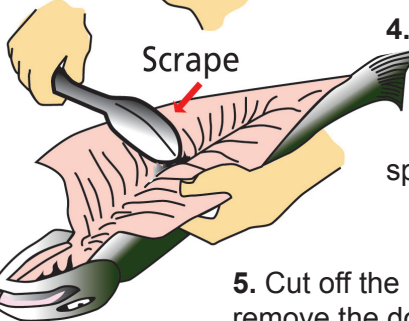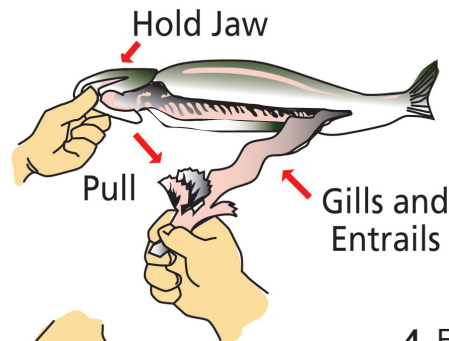
Scrape

**4.** Fish have a kidney along the length of the backbone. Scrape it out with a spoon or your thumbnail.

**5.** Cut off the head; if desired, and remove the dorsal fin. Rinse the fish in cold, clean water and keep the fish cool until ready to prepare.

The Dorsal Fin

## Freezing Your Catch

If you don't plan to eat your fish in a day or two, you'll want to freeze it. Most freezing methods work best if you quick freeze the fish first – place uncovered fish on a sheet of aluminum foil in the freezer to freeze it as quickly as possible.

The best method for keeping fish in the freezer is to vacuum seal it, which protects the fish from freezer burn. Quick freeze the fish, then seal it in a vacuum seal bag. Vacuum sealed frozen fish should be eaten within three or four months.

Another way to protect fish from freezer burn is to freeze it in a block of water. Quick freeze individual portions, place each in a zip lock freezer bag, fill with water and freeze.

Finally, if you're going to be eating the fish within two weeks you can double wrap quick frozen fish tightly in plastic wrap (squeeze out as much air as possible) and then put in a freezer bag.

## Filleting and Skinning a Fish

Large fish such as Salmon, Steelhead and big trout or fish with large plentiful scales, such as bass and panfish, are easier to cook if they have been filleted and skinned first.
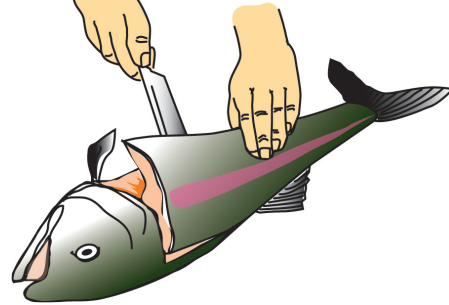
**1.** Lay the fish on its side on a flat surface. Cut the fish behind its gills and pectoral fin down to, but not through, the backbone.
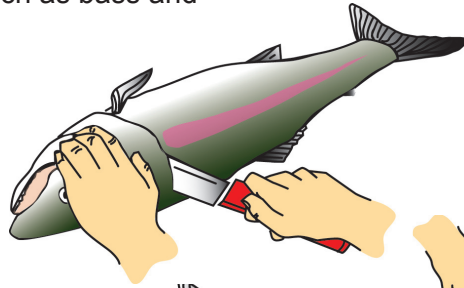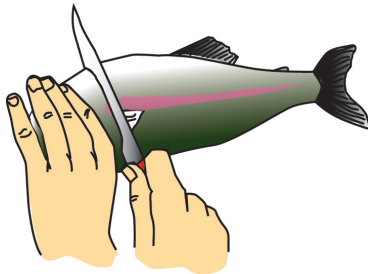
**2.** Without removing the knife, turn the blade and cut through the ribs toward the tail. Use the fish's backbone to guide you.
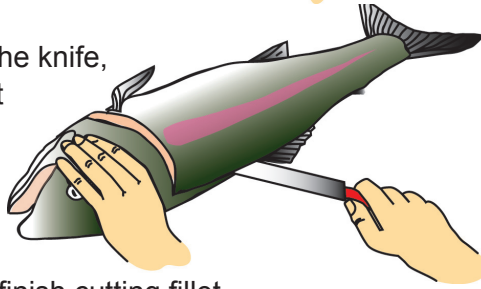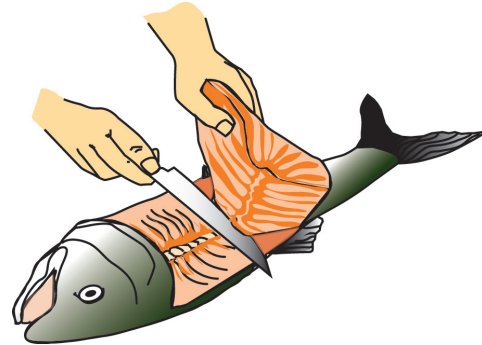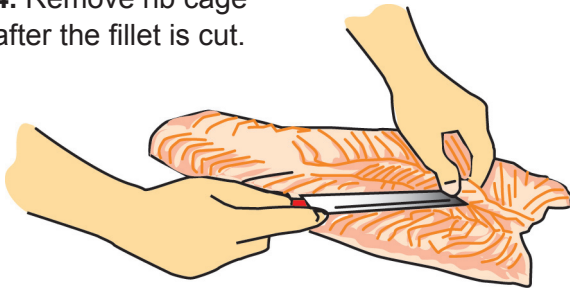
Turn fish around and finish cutting fillet away from the backbone.

**3.** Turn the fish over and repeat on the other side.

**4.** Remove rib cage after the fillet is cut.

**5.** To skin the fish place it skin side down on a flat surface, insert the knife blade about a 1/2 inch from the tail. Grip the tail firmly and run the knife blade at an angle between the skin and the meat.

## Releasing a Fish

Always wet your hands and handle the fish gently as you remove the hook. Grasp the fish carefully to avoid any spines on the back. If the fish is hooked deeply, you may not be able to remove the hook. Cut the line and release the fish. The hook will rust, dissolve or work its way loose. (Use barbless hooks if you plan on releasing the fish you catch – they can be much easier to remove.)

If a fish loses consciousness, try to revive it by gently moving it back and forth in the water so water moves through its gills. When the fish revives and begins to struggle, let it go. Fish do not always survive being caught.

**http://www.MyODFW.com**

OREGON
Fish & Wildlife