

Kayaks

Kayak fishing is a great way to get kids hooked on the outdoors

Hobie



for Kids

KAYAKS AND OTHER SMALL WATERCRAFT

continue to grow in popularity with people of all ages, and they are one of the easiest and most affordable options for getting out on the water as a family.

As with many things in the outdoor world, there have been so many innovations in the kayak industry. We now have more personal boating options and gear to go with them than ever before.

Introducing the sport of kayak fishing to kids is a great way to get them hooked on the outdoors for life. Approaching this in the right manner is important to ensure kids enjoy the best the outdoors has to offer. We will cover a few tips here to help you do just that.

First off, plan a trip one-to-one with an experienced kayaker until you know that the child is experienced enough to be independent. Safety is always of paramount concern, so dedicating your attention to the success and safety of the youngster is very important—more on safety later.

Ideally, you will want to find calm water and mild current unless you have a very experienced paddler. I live in the Austin area and we have Brushy Creek Lake Park and Lady Bird Lake (formerly known as Town Lake). Both of these examples are perfectly situated for kayaking.

Story by
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Even the more sophisticated maneuvering technology available on modern kayaks is relatively easy for kids to master.

Numerous other small neighborhood lakes in this area also fit the bill, being shallow and not overrun by motored propellers.

Saltwater bay systems and other slow moving water is good for inexperienced youngsters to fish in. As paddling and navigating skills improve, the options of where to go will broaden as well.

Be conservative in the amount of time you plan for your outing. This is especially important with younger kids with respect to bathroom breaks. You may be able to spend all day out on the water in your kayak, but that will most likely not be ideal for a kid's first time. Keep your first trips short and, most of all, fun.

If you have a very young kayaker, consider a double kayak with the youngster as a passenger instead of in charge of the vessel. Let your kid get the feel of it.

Know your boat, its stability and its limits if you are hosting a child. For older kiddos, make sure you select the right-sized kayak and the right-sized paddle. Remember, aside from foot pedals or other means of hand-powering a kayak, the paddle is their main connection to the water. It needs to be easily manageable and comfortable for the child to use.

Let's talk about youth fishing gear. Kid-sized rod and reel sets are cheap for a reason, because they usually don't stand the test of time. I recommend young anglers start out with a five-foot-six-inch to six-foot lightweight rod and a spincast or spinning reel.

I prefer kids to get proficient with a spinning reel, because it is usually easier to get tangles out than with a close-faced spincast reel. This is important as you want to spend more time fishing than fiddling with tangles.

Kids can usually learn how to cast a spinning reel with a little practice in the backyard. Trust me; they will appreciate having adult-sized gear rather than a kiddie rig with cartoon character or fairytale movie themes.

As adults fishing on our own or with other adults, we brave the bugs, wind, rain, cold, heat or other outdoor extremes.

Kids won't tolerate these conditions for long. That being said, you should do everything you can to make them comfortable on your trip.

Safety should obviously be of paramount concern so making sure your kids have a PFD (life jacket) that fits well is very important. Take along other safety items for the water such as a line and float and know how to use them.

Taking a swimming or kayaking course before you got out on a big adventure is always recommended. After all, you can never be too safe out on the water.

When approaching the sport of fishing in a kayak, start with a simple, but fun pursuit. Go after some bluegills or other panfish at first. Concentrate on fast, fun and small reward fishing action before you go after the largemouth bass on the lake or specs and reds on the bay.

The key here is to ease kids into the really popular adventures you might be used to. Make it an easy, but fun and rewarding trip at the beginning of this journey. Most kids are happy to catch anything, not necessarily the biggest or best fish.

Kids need to understand why kayak fishing is superior to other types of fishing, so they can see how stealthy kayaks can be and how these small vessels can get into areas bigger boats cannot explore. Like most things in the outdoors, if we inspire and educate the next generation, they will get as excited about it as we are. They'll be motivated to continue the pursuit of this adventure on their own in their later years.

Kayak fishing requires a sort of minimalism in the fishing gear selection because of space restrictions. You should keep your selections few and just stick with the basics.

Fishing technique and form can always develop and improve in the future. Fish with simple means at first and, especially for younger kids, bring along some snacks and drinks that will keep everyone fed and hydrated throughout the duration of the trip.

Other considerations to make sure you note for kids and kayaks include remembering sunscreen, bug spray and sunglasses. Kids sometimes don't care for wearing sunglasses in the great outdoors but I think they are important for the simple reason that they protect the eyes. After all, when you are slinging hooks in close proximity, especially if on the same kayak, sunglasses do much more to protect the eyes than just the obvious protection from the sun.

If your kids are enjoying this voyage into the small boat fishing realm, it won't be long before they start asking you when you can go again. Most of all, have fun, be safe and enjoy all the outdoors has to offer you and your family.

