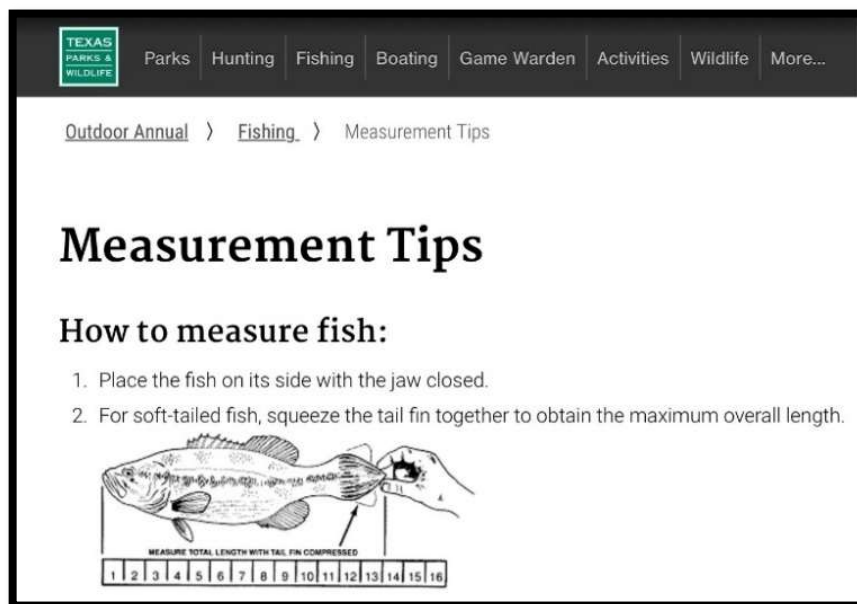
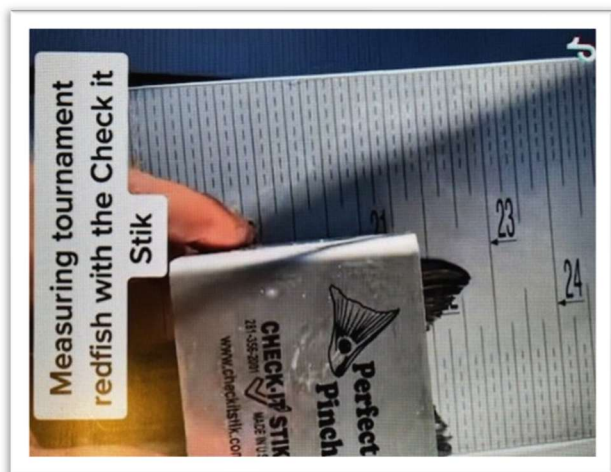


## How to Measure and Photograph Tournament Fish

As part of the learning experience and to comply with Texas Parks & Wildlife sportfishing regulations, 4-H youth should be familiar with the 2025-2026 Texas Outdoor Annual. We follow this regulatory agency's guidelines regarding **how to measure fish**.



<https://tpwd.texas.gov/regulations/outdoor-annual/fishing/>



Using Perfect Pincher to compress tail



Mouth closed & tailed manually pinched

## Follow these steps to enter all fish (except catfish) for judging:

*Youth can utilize the help of other people to assist them in measuring and photographing*

1. Open the FishDonkey app.
2. Place fish on the Check-It-Stik® brand measuring board.
  - Lay all fish on their side to be photographed (except for catfish).
  - You may hold your fish on the Check-it-Stik, just be sure NOT cover the mouth and tail with anything that blocks these views.
  - Ensure the snout is touching the front of the measuring board (where the 4-H clover is located).
  - Mouth of fish must be **closed** (you can hold it closed).
3. Use your Perfect Pincher tool to compress the tail or manually pinch the tail to a point to get maximum length.
4. Read the length of the fish in whole numbers and 2-digit decimal place.
5. Capture picture of the whole fish on the Check-it-Stik, with mouth closed and tail compressed.
  - Photograph must be clear and measurement on board must be legible (watch out for glare from the sun).
  - Photos must be taken with the FishDonkey app open as this will timestamp the photo when taken.
6. Enter species and length of fish in FishDonkey
7. In FishDonkey, capture a hero pic of yourself and your fish.
  - Each photo submitted must also include a separate “hero” pic that documents the face of the youth participant with the fish caught (examples: posing, on measuring board, holding).
8. Pictures CANNOT be uploaded from your camera file. They MUST be taken with the FishDonkey app open. We WILL NOT accept photos emailed.



Example Hero Pic



Pics captured with the FishDonkey app open can be “pushed” through to load on the leaderboard by opening your digital live well in the app on a later date (they will be timestamped on the date taken).

Don't have internet to upload at your fishing spot? No problem, remember they are timestamped when you take them in the app so you can upload from the app when you have internet or even from a computer. Just make sure they are all pushed through FishDonkey before close of the tournament.

## Catfish qualification

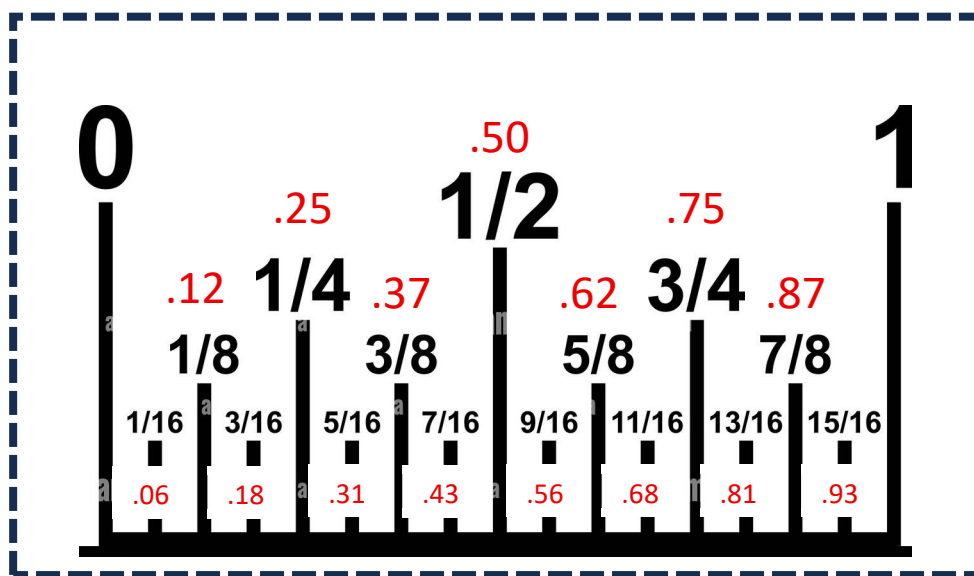
- Lay the fish on its belly, on the Check-it-Stik, and use the Perfect Pincher tool or manually pinch the tail to a point to get maximum length.
- Catfish longer than the length of a Check-it-Stik should be measured on the measurement board in conjunction with a tape measure from the start of the board to the end of the fish. See example below.
  - i. Do not run the tape measure under the fish – the whole tape from beginning to end of tail must be visible.
  - ii. You must use the **video feature** in FishDonkey to document the measurement of your fish from the snout to tail – move slowly to ensure all is captured in the recording.



How to use Check-it-Stik with tape measure for fish longer than Check-it-Stik

## How to Read an Inch in Decimals

- Enter the length of your fish in whole number and 2-digit decimal place, i.e. 10.25
- Do not round up the numbers.
- The last black line that the end of the pinched tail touches is the measurement to be recorded.
- When fish are judged, the length you enter will be verified and confirmed. If length entered is more than documented, tournament judges will modify.



Tip: Cut out, put in plastic bag and take fishing for easy reference!

## Responsible Handling of Tournament Fish

Not every fish is a "keeper." You may catch a fish that's under legal size or too big to fit in your cooler. You may land a magnificent trophy and decide to return it to the water so that you — or some other lucky angler — will have a chance to catch that fish again. Whatever your reasons for choosing live release, you want to give your fish the best possible chance of survival.

### How to Begin

- Set the hook quickly to reduce likelihood that fish will swallow the bait.
- Play and land fish as quickly as possible. Playing fish to exhaustion can harm the fish.
- When fishing in deep water, bring fish in slowly to help it adjust to changing pressure.
- Consider using barbless hooks.
- Keep your release tools close by.

### Handling Your Catch

Proper handling protects both you and the fish. Some fish have sharp fins or teeth that can cut you. See Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) [Angler Education pages](#) for tips on how to handle different species.

- Minimize the time the fish is out of the water (no longer than you can hold your breath.)
- Leave fish in the water if you can and use a tool to remove the hook.
- If possible, keep the fish from thrashing without using a net. If a net is required, use a rubber-mesh landing net instead of abrasive nylon.
- Avoid removing the slime/mucus layer, which protects fish from parasites and infections.
  - Try to keep fish off the ground or floor of a boat.
  - Use a wet rag or glove, or wet hands before handling fish.
  - Turn fish on its back and cover its eyes to calm it.
  - Don't put your fingers in the eyes or gills.
- Smaller fish (< 5 pounds) can be vertically held by the lower jaw, either by hand or with grippers. Hold larger fish horizontally and support with two hands.

### Removing the Hook

- Use needle-nose pliers, hemostats, or a hook remover to remove the hook and protect your hands.
- Back the hook out the opposite way it went in.
- [Watch this video](#) to learn how to remove a hook embedded deep within the fish.
- For a larger fish in the water, slip a gaff around the leader and slide it to the hook. Lift the gaff upward while pulling downward on the leader.
- Do not jerk or pop a leader to break it. This can injure vital organs in the fish.

### Letting it Go

- Place fish in the water, gently supporting the mid-section and tail until it swims away.
- Resuscitate an exhausted fish by moving it or facing it into the current, gently forcing water into the mouth and over the gills.
- Watch the fish when released. If it doesn't swim away, recover it and try again.