

# Fish Prints

Fish printing dates back to Japan over 100 years ago. Anglers made fish prints to record their catches and to save information on fish biology. The Japanese term for fish printing is “gyotaku” (pronounced ghio-ta-koo), and it is an art form that can be useful in other ways as well. Although this method of printing does not provide the best avenue for fish identification, it can be useful for learning external anatomy as well as recording a catch. The print can be made on a shirt, and you can wear your catch proudly!

## MATERIALS

dead fish—bluegills work best  
lots of paper towels  
newspaper  
paint—for paper  
fabric paint—for t-shirts  
brushes  
paper—newsprint, rice paper or  
construction paper

**Note:** If using fabric paint, carefully follow the directions. Washing the shirt before the paint is “fixed” to the shirt causes the paint to wash out.

## PREPARING THE FISH FOR PRINTING

1. Wash the fish in water to remove slime and dirt.
2. Wipe the skin dry with paper towels.

## PAINTING THE FISH

1. Place the fish on newspaper.
2. Paint the fish’s body, working from head to tail.
3. Paint fins and tail last.  
Remember—a little bit of paint is better than a lot.

## PRINTING THE FISH

1. Lift the fish and place a clean sheet of newspaper under the painted fish.
2. Gently place the paper or shirt right on top of the painted fish. If using a t-shirt, place a section of folded newspaper inside the shirt, between the front and back.
3. Press printing material firmly against the fish. Be careful not to move the paper or shirt because the paint will smear. Also, make contact with all of the fish.
4. Gently peel printing material away from fish with a smooth motion.



**ACTUAL FISH PRINT  
BY KELS Y RICHARDSON, AGE 9**

*Adapted from 4-H National Sportfishing Program, Aquatic Ecology Curriculum, prepared by Mary Riley, Michigan State University, 1998.*