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EVERYONE CAN BE A LIFESAVER



**Royal Life Saving**  
ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY - AUSTRALIA

FACT SHEET No.21

# Rock Fishing



## Q. What is rock fishing?

A. Rock fishing, is fishing from rock ledges, submerged rocks, rock faces and rocks that go out into the water.

## Q. Why is rock fishing dangerous?

A. Rock fishing is probably the most dangerous sport in Australia. Between 1992 and 2000, 74 people, in New South Wales alone, died while rock fishing. It is dangerous due to the difficult locations where people are fishing, the sometimes unpredictable nature of the ocean and rocks which can be slippery, wet, uneven and often sharp.

## Q. What is the best type of gear to wear when rock fishing?

A. Always wear a personal flotation device (PFD), and wear gear that stops you from slipping into the water such as shoes with non-slip soles or cleats. Rock plates or cleats are essential on wet, weedy rocks. Also, wear head protection. Evidence suggests that many people who have drowned received some sort of head injury. Wear lightweight gear that reduces problems if you do go into the surf such as shorts and a spray jacket. Jumpers may be difficult to take off and will weigh you down when wet.

## Q. How do I know whether a spot is safe for rock fishing?

A. No place is perfectly safe for rock fishing. To minimise risks, fish only with others in places where experienced anglers go. Spend at least half an hour watching the wind and wave action before deciding whether a place is suitable. Think – what will your fishing spot be like in a few hours time with different tides and weather? Perhaps a local can help you with this information.

## Q. What should I do if I or another fisherman gets into trouble?

A. Don't ever turn your back on the sea – if the waves, weather or swell threaten your fishing spot then leave immediately. If you do find yourself in trouble, stay calm. If you are washed in, swim away from the rocks and look for a safe place to come ashore or stay afloat and wait for help to arrive. Always wear a PFD. Fish in a group of at least three people and stay within sight of each other. If someone is washed in, one person can stay and help by throwing a rescue device while the other alerts emergency services (dial 000 or 112 on a mobile). Know your exact location to tell emergency services.

## Real Life Story - Rock Fishing Tragedy

A man has drowned rock fishing. The man, who was fishing from slippery rocks with four friends drowned after a wave knocked all five people over and washed him into the water. This incident serves to remind people that rock fishing is a dangerous sport. In order to minimise their risk of drowning when rock fishing, people should always wear a PFD, check conditions before they choose a location and to never rock fish alone.

**ROYAL LIFE SAVING HAS DEVELOPED A NUMBER OF FACT SHEETS ON WATER SAFETY ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA.**

Contact Royal Life Saving on: **1300 737 763**  
or download them from: **www.keepwatch.com.au**

## Rock Fishing Safety Checklist:

- PFD (lifejacket) worn especially if not a strong swimmer
- Appropriate footwear, clothing and head protection worn
- Float and line carried to help anyone washed in
- Observed conditions before commencing fishing
- Safest possible location chosen
- Fish with other people
- Waves watched whilst fishing to monitor conditions
- Aware of changing tides and weather whilst fishing

**ALWAYS WEAR CORRECT GEAR, INCLUDING PFD's, TO MAXIMISE SAFETY WHEN ROCK FISHING.**

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