

Reading the Water

The Joe Humphreys' Fly Fishing Stream School - Inspired by the Methods of Joe Humphreys

READING THE WATER

Your Stream Map Guide

"The angler who reads the water catches the fish. The angler who ignores it just gets tired."

"Look up. You've been staring at the water from the moment we made the first cast. I'd like to stop and live the moment." - Joe Humphreys

The 6 Water Features - Where Fish Hold

RIFPLE	Shallow, fast, rocky - food factory Fish: Bottom, feeding upstream Technique: Tuck Cast with weighted nymph
RUN	Medium depth, steady pace - comfortable zone Fish: Mid-water column Technique: Tuck cast or nymph with indicator
POOL	Deep, slow - refuge zone Fish: Tail when feeding, deep when spooked Technique: Dead drift nymph or dry fly
SEAM	Line where fast meets slow - THE MONEY ZONE Fish: Exactly on the seam Why: Maximum food, minimum energy
EDDY	Circular current, water swirls upstream Fish: In eddy facing its current Note: Eddy currents are REVERSE direction
POCKET WATER	Chaotic boulders with pockets - best fish Technique: Bow-and-Arrow cast only Joe: This is where the best fish hide

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Approach & Stealth

- Always approach from DOWNSTREAM - fish face upstream
- Wade slowly: shuffle, don't lift, push water gently
- Crouch as you approach visible fish
- Avoid light-colored clothing
- Know the trout's 'window': looking up, a trout sees out through a cone of about 45 degrees from straight overhead, so it can spot you on the bank. Stay low and back.

The Observation Checklist

"These fish don't want the flies swinging down over them. They want a perfect natural drift." - Joe Humphreys

- ☐ Where is the fast water? Where is the slow water?
- ☐ Where do they MEET? (That's your seam - start there)
- ☐ Are any fish visible? Rising? Holding near bottom?
- ☐ What insects are active? Any flying above water?
- ☐ What's the water temperature?
- ☐ Where is the easiest place for a trout to hold and eat?

Water Temperature Guide

Below 40F: Lethargic. Nymph slow and deep.

40-50F: Begin feeding. Small nymphs, slow drift.

50-60F: PRIME feeding. All techniques work.

60-65F: Active but watch for fatigue.

Above 68F: DO NOT FISH. Release immediately.

Joe's Final Advice

"Never leave the bridge hole. And never walk past a seam without fishing it."