

The Joe Humphreys' Fly Fishing Stream School

Harvey Leader Training and Certification Guide

Youth Fly Fishing Curriculum - Ages 6-17 - Inspired by the Methods of Joe Humphreys

*"The secret of life is having something exciting to look forward to. And fly fishing is that -
you're going fishing."*

- Joe Humphreys

Instructor Training & Certification Guide

Everything You Need to Lead the Joe Humphreys' Fly Fishing Stream School Fly Fishing Program with Confidence

Section 1: Welcome to the Program

The Joe Humphreys' Fly Fishing Stream School is grounded in the philosophy and teaching methods of Joe Humphreys, one of America's most influential fly fishing educators. For nearly two decades at Penn State University, Joe shaped not just skilled anglers, but thoughtful stewards of coldwater resources. His influence extends far beyond the classroom - he has taught presidents, Olympic coaches, and thousands of students who continue to fish the waters he taught them to read.

This guide equips you - whether you are a volunteer instructor, physical education teacher, youth leader, or professional guide - with the philosophy, techniques, and teaching strategies necessary to deliver this program with authenticity and excellence.

Required Before Your First Session

REQUIRED: Watch the documentary film *Live the Stream* (2018) in full before teaching any Joe Humphreys' Fly Fishing Stream School session. This is not optional. The film follows Joe Humphreys at age 86 across the streams and memories of his life. It will give you the stories, context, and emotional foundation that written curriculum cannot provide.

The film documents: Joe's origin story (first fish at age 6, Thompson Run as his classroom); the saving of Spring Creek (his greatest conservation achievement); night fishing and the state record brown trout; working with veterans through Project Healing Waters; teaching city children their first fish; the quest for a 20-pound brown; and the Look Up moments that define his relationship with nature.

What Makes This Program Different

Most youth fishing programs teach casting first. This program teaches observation first.

Most focus on quantity of fish. This program focuses on quality of experience.

Most separate fishing from conservation. This program makes conservation central to every lesson.

Most ignore the "why." This program always explains the why before the how.

Before you read any further, here is a story that explains why this program exists.

A woman asked Joe if he could teach a busload of fifth graders - fifteen ten-year-olds - at Fisherman's Paradise. Joe said he would try. They got off the bus. He lined them up and got them casting. In a very short time, they were doing beautifully. He took them to the water. He put a fly on himself. A trout came up, looked at it, and he missed. He did not catch a fish.

That evening the woman called. One little girl had caught three trout. Another boy caught four. Another girl got two. Another got three.

"I just got outfished by a busload of fifth graders. And this game - the way the good Lord made it - nobody will ever have all the answers. It is always humbling." - Joe Humphreys

This is why we teach children first. They arrive without bad habits. They pay attention. They follow instruction. And the stream does not care how many books you have written.

Teaching this sport carries real responsibility - to pass on not just technique, but genuine respect for the water and the fish. Every young person an instructor teaches may fish for the next seventy years.

Section 2: The Humphreys Philosophy - Deep Dive

Before you teach a single cast, you must deeply understand Joe Humphreys' approach to fly fishing and to teaching. This section trains you in the foundational ideas that differentiate The Joe Humphreys' Fly Fishing Stream School from every other youth fishing program.

2.1 Joe Humphreys: The Full Story

Born January 19, 1929, in Curwensville, Pennsylvania, during the Great Depression. Moved to State College in 1935 when his father took a job at Penn State University. "Little did my father realize he also gave me my livelihood," Joe said. State College sat in the heart of Pennsylvania's limestone country - one of the finest wild trout regions in the eastern United States.

Joe caught his first fish at age 6 on Spring Creek - an eight-inch native brown that flew over his head and landed in the weeds. "I was just in awe of the beauty of that fish. This is where it all started." From that moment he was self-taught, pedaling his bicycle to Thompson Run - a small tributary - and spending hours watching trout, turning over rocks, and teaching himself the stream.

That first morning, Joe's father had never fly fished. He came simply to be with his son. He had a clumsy piece of equipment - Joe could never remember what it was. But he hooked a foot-long fish. He threw the rod down and pulled the fish in hand over hand. 'He had no experience whatsoever - he just wanted to be with his son.' That is the origin of everything this program does.

As Joe grew older, he crawled to the stream. Every morning, on his belly through the dew-soaked grass. He had learned that walking upright spooked every fish. 'When I walked up to the stream, the fish went everywhere. So I finally learned to stay low.' He watched a single trout for days from behind a stone, watching its mouth open and close, watching where it fed, watching what it ate. This is where Observation Before Action came from - wet grass, a stone, and patience.

At nine, Joe caught his first fly-caught trout by accident. A Trico hatch was going off on Spring Creek. He had only his father's size 10 wet flies - all wrong for a Trico hatch. He put one on and it floated. A nine-inch trout grabbed it. 'The trout committed suicide.' That accident taught him that presentation and timing often matter more than having the exact right fly.

"I was on my bicycle with the fly rod across the handlebars, three peanut butter sandwiches in my pocket. Thompson Run was my classroom. What we caught and what we shot is what we ate. That is just the way it was." - Joe Humphreys

At around age 10, observing trout feeding on tiny orange freshwater shrimp at Thompson Run, he tied an imitation from his mother's sewing thread and caught a 14-inch trout. "Now I knew they took the fly underneath as well as on top. This is called nymphing." He pedaled home and had his mother photograph the fish. He had independently discovered subsurface fly fishing.

“Fishing was the catalyst that moved me from the depths of despair into a whole new life.” - Joe Humphreys

Joe's Athletic Career

Joe lettered in both boxing and wrestling at Penn State in the same season - an extraordinary achievement. He later coached wrestling and was inducted into the United States Wrestling Hall of Fame. He taught physical education courses including advanced ice skating, racquetball, weightlifting, personal defense, judo, and bowling.

This background directly shapes how he teaches fly fishing. In wrestling, you win through positioning, tactical setup, and explosive execution at the decisive moment. In boxing, you punch from correct stance with body weight behind it at the exact moment of vulnerability. Joe brought this mindset to casting: the setup matters, the positioning matters, and the timing of execution matters more than the beauty of the motion.

Joe's Conservation Legacy: Saving Spring Creek

Joe's greatest conservation achievement: in the early 1970s, he founded Spring Creek Trout Unlimited with five friends, and engineered the diversion of Thompson Spring around the contaminated Duck Pond stormwater basin. Highway construction in the 1960s had pushed toxic runoff into the spring that fed Spring Creek. Water temperatures hit the 80s and 90s. Wild trout disappeared from a stream Joe had fished since age 6.

“Seeing its demise was heartbreaking. I couldn't stand it. I said: what can I do myself? What can one man do?” They punched through a concrete wall with jackhammers, installed a pipe, dug a new channel, and diverted the clean spring water around the contamination. Spring Creek came back. Today it is one of the premier limestone streams in the eastern United States.

The fight took decades - the dike eroded and spring water leaked back toward the pond - until the reconstruction was finally completed in 2022. “It starts right here. It starts at home.” This story must be told in every multi-day program.

George Harvey: Joe's Mentor

Joe's greatest influence and closest fishing companion was George Harvey - often called “the dean of fly fishing” - who built the first accredited fly fishing course in the United States at Penn State and created the tuck cast. “He had more insights than anybody in the United States or the world,” Joe said. “I learned so much from him.” When Harvey retired in 1970, Joe succeeded him in teaching the program for 19 years.

The relationship did not begin warmly. For years, whenever Joe encountered Harvey on the stream, Harvey refused to share anything. ‘He wanted to catch fish - get lost, kid, basically.’ When Harvey was preparing to retire from Penn State in 1970, he looked around and saw in Joe the only person fit to carry the program. He then taught Joe everything: the tuck cast, leader construction, the full night game. Harvey brought Joe to Penn State. Those years of silence were their own kind of instruction - Harvey was observing before acting.

2.2 Observation Before Action: The Thompson Run Lesson

The central story of The Joe Humphreys' Fly Fishing Stream School is not the orange shrimp catching a fish. It is the observation that preceded it. Joe found the shrimp because he stopped, waded in, grabbed vegetation, and looked at what was in the water. He did not assume. He observed.

Teach your students the same discipline. Before picking up the rod on any day of the program, students sit at the stream and watch for at least 15 minutes. They write in their journals. They

identify insects, water features, feeding fish. Only after they can articulate what the stream is telling them do they cast.

CALIBRATE YOURSELF: Instructor Exercise: Before your first session, spend 15 minutes alone at your stream. Sit with a notebook. Identify five things: insects, water features, fish positions, feeding activity, light patterns. When students arrive, you will recognize what they are seeing because you have trained your own eye first.

2.3 The Athletic Mindset: Casting Is Delivery

Joe's wrestling and boxing background shapes how he teaches casting. In both sports, form follows function. The goal is not a beautiful technique - it is a decisive result. The same applies to the cast: the goal is not a pretty loop. The goal is the fly in the right place.

"Wrestling and fly fishing? They're both physical sports. Secondly, the technique is so important. There's technique and smarts involved. You have to have great fly control so that the fly will float perfectly, drag-free." - Joe Humphreys

When teaching students, use athletic language:

Setup the drift (positioning): position yourself so the fly will drift naturally into the feeding zone

Control the line (footwork): rod position and line management are constant, responsive adjustments

Decisive hookset (explosive execution): set the hook with sharp wrist acceleration - like throwing a punch

Students who are athletes will understand this immediately. They already know that film study, tactical positioning, and explosive execution win games. Tell them: fly fishing is the same.

2.4 Casting to Catch - Not to Impress

Every technique Joe teaches exists for one purpose: to put the fly in the right place with minimal drag. Not because it looks better. Not because it is easier. Because it catches fish.

When teaching, always explain the why before the how:

Why use the short stroke? Tighter loops, less wind resistance, works in brush

Why use the bow-and-arrow? Accurate delivery in spaces where a full backcast is impossible

Why use the tuck cast? Gets the nymph to the bottom where 80 percent of feeding happens

Why use the Downer-Upper cast? Fires a fly straight down into a plunge pool directly below

2.5 Getting to the Bottom: The Depth Imperative

If observation is the foundation, depth is the currency of nymph fishing. Get the fly to the bottom. Keep it there. This is where trout feed.

The self-test: can you consistently get a fly to bounce the bottom in a three-foot run? Can you feel the tick of the nymph on rocks? If not, practice until you can do it with your eyes closed. That is what tight-line nymphing requires. Your sense of touch becomes your eyes.

INSTRUCTOR PREP: Before teaching nymphing depth to students, fish 30 minutes on your teaching stream and consciously practice bottom contact. Note which weight and leader length gets you there. That is what you will set up for your students.

2.6 The Look Up Moment: Teaching the Whole Environment

One of the most important teaching habits in The Joe Humphreys' Fly Fishing Stream School is the Look Up moment. Joe practices it on every day on the water: at some natural pause, he stops, turns to his companions, and says: "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."

He points to a red-wing blackbird. Clouds moving over a ridge. Sunlight on a wet log. The sound of a distant riffle. "Those are cherished moments. The good Lord has given us such a beautiful place to fish. When you don't take time to recognize and appreciate it - you're missing part of the game."

"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

As an instructor, you are responsible for creating this moment every day of any multi-day program. The student who can stop mid-session and genuinely notice the world around the stream - that student is learning something that no casting clinic can teach.

Section 3: Teaching Each Cast

3.1 The Short Stroke Cast

Why It Exists

Joe developed the short stroke from necessity - fishing brushy Pennsylvania limestone streams where traditional 10-to-2 casting was impossible. Shorter arc = faster rod tip = tighter loop = more accuracy and less wind resistance.

Key Mechanics

Grip: thumb on top of handle, not wrapped around side

Pick-up: smooth lift, accelerate to abrupt stop

Thumb squeeze at back stop - the key to loading the rod

Forward stroke: crisp acceleration to abrupt stop at 11 o'clock - the rod stops right between your eyes

Second thumb squeeze on forward stop

Follow-through: rod tip drops low to water

Common Student Errors

Casting too long an arc - remind them: shorter is better

No thumb squeeze - the loop goes wide and sloppy

Too much power in one direction - forward and back strokes should be balanced

Live the Stream Connection

Show students the opening sequence where Joe casts in tight brush - "Cast in a Thicket." This is the motivation for the short stroke made visual.

3.2 The Tuck Cast

Why It Exists

To put a nymph on the stream bottom quickly and keep it there. Joe's great contribution to subsurface fly fishing.

Key Mechanics

Overpowered forward stroke - load the rod more than you think

ABRUPT HIGH stop - rod tip at 12 o'clock or higher

DO NOT follow through - the abrupt stop is everything

The rod flexes downward, kicking the nymph under the leader

Nymph enters the water nearly vertically - sinks fast

Instructor Drill

Stand at the student's side. Hold your hand at the correct stop height (12 o'clock, above their head). Have them practice the stop until they consistently reach your hand. This tactile cue teaches the feel of the high stop faster than any verbal instruction.

Joe's own teaching approach on the casting drill: 'I would take my hand and put my hand on the student's casting hand, and we would drill until they got the feel of it. Not just tell them - drill, until they had it.' Physical contact with the cast - hand on hand - transfers the feeling of rod load and stop in a way no verbal description can. Use this with any student who is not yet getting the tuck stop.

Success Indicator

The indicator ticks - a brief pause or slight dip. That is the nymph touching bottom. Call it out every time you see it: "That's depth! That's where you want to be."

3.3 The Bow-and-Arrow Cast

Why It Exists

To deliver a fly accurately in tight spaces where a full backcast is impossible. Joe fished tunnels of rhododendron and hemlock on small mountain streams - the only way to reach wild trout was to cast with no backcast at all.

Key Mechanics

Pinch the fly between thumb and forefinger - ALWAYS hold above the hook bend, never the point

Extend the rod toward the target while pulling the line back with your rod hand

Load the rod fully - feel significant tension

Aim at the target

Release the fly smoothly - do not throw it, release it

Rod tip follows toward the target

Safety Protocol - Non-Negotiable

SAFETY: ALWAYS hold the fly above the hook bend. The thumb and forefinger grip the shank or bend, never the point. If a student loads the bow-and-arrow with their fingers near the hook point, stop the session immediately and re-demonstrate correct grip.

3.4 The Downer-Upper Cast

Why It Exists

To drive a nymph straight down into a plunge pool or deep eddy directly below the angler.

Key Mechanics

Same overpowered stroke as the tuck cast

Sharp DOWNWARD stop - push the thumb toward the ground at rod stop

Nymph fires nearly straight down into the water column

Use when standing on a rock or bank directly above the target

3.5 The Roll Cast

Why It Exists

When a full backcast is blocked by trees or brush directly behind the angler.

Key Mechanics

Raise the rod slowly to the 2 o'clock position - DO NOT rush

Allow a D-loop of fly line to form behind the rod tip

Drive the rod forward with authority - abrupt stop at 10 o'clock

The line rolls forward and unfurls on the water

Section 4: Teaching Nymphing

4.1 The Depth Principle

80 percent of trout feeding happens subsurface. Most beginning anglers fish too shallow. Before any nymphing session, state clearly: "The goal today is not to cast. The goal today is to get the fly to the bottom."

4.2 Rigging the Nymphing Setup

Fly line to butt section (20-30 lb monofilament, 3-4 feet)

Butt to tapered leader (9 feet)

Leader to tippet (3X-6X based on conditions)

Strike indicator set at 1.5 x water depth above the fly (in 2 feet of water, set it 3 feet above the fly)

Split shot 8-10 inches above the fly - NOT directly on the fly

4.3 Strike Detection

Watch the indicator: pause, twitch, sideways movement = potential strike

When you see anything odd - set the hook. Immediately.

“THAT’S A STRIKE - SET!” - call it out when you see a student miss one

The hookset: sharp upward wrist acceleration, not a slow pull

Joe Humphreys’ instruction on the hookset: “When the indicator moves, you do not gradually tighten the line. You set the hook with decisive wrist acceleration - like throwing a punch.”

Section 5: Conservation Teaching

5.1 The Spring Creek Story - Required Teaching

Every multi-day program must include the Spring Creek conservation story. It is the most powerful example in The Joe Humphreys’ Fly Fishing Stream School of what one person - and a small group - can accomplish for a piece of water.

The story: contamination from highway construction entered Spring Creek through the Duck Pond. Water temperatures climbed to the 80s and 90s. Wild trout disappeared. Joe founded Spring Creek Trout Unlimited, engineered the diversion of Thompson Spring around the Duck Pond, and brought the stream back to health.

Key quote: “What can I do myself? What can one man do?” And then: “It starts right here. It starts at home.”

“This was my treasure. This was my life. And I saw it going. I don’t know how I can do this - but I’m going to change this somehow.” - Joe Humphreys, on Spring Creek

The lesson is not about Joe’s accomplishment. It is about proximity and ownership. The students in your program live near a stream. That stream needs them.

5.2 Brook Trout as Bio-Indicators

Brook trout are the most direct, living measure of stream health that students can observe. Their presence means clean water. Their absence means the stream has been degraded.

Joe: “Brook trout serve as fabulous bio-indicators for our mountain streams. In many of the same streams where brook trout live, we get our drinking water. They are an early detector of poor water quality.”

Teaching application: if brook trout are present in your teaching stream, make a point of having students observe and handle them carefully before release. Connect their beauty directly to the clean water that sustains them. If brook trout are absent, ask why - and what would need to change for them to return.

5.3 The Green Drake Hatch

The green drake mayfly - one of the largest in North America - emerges once a year from the finest limestone streams. Joe calls it the “Memorial Day Classic.” Its presence is a conservation indicator: like brook trout, green drakes require very clean water.

Teach students that the green drake hatch is a gift from the stream. It only happens where someone has been taking care of the water.

5.4 The Look Up Moment as Conservation

The Look Up moment is not separate from conservation education - it IS conservation education. The angler who notices the red-wing blackbird, who feels the cold spring water, who listens to the riffle around the bend - that angler becomes a steward. You cannot protect what you do not love. And you cannot love what you do not notice.

"We need to be stewards of the stream. You don't have to pick the fish up out of the water and wave it around. Keep it in the water. We have to work on water quality." - Joe Humphreys

Section 6: Teaching Different Age Groups

Ages 6-10: The Minnow Tier

This group needs energy, celebration, and instant success. Keep sessions short (20-30 minute active segments). Celebrate every small win loudly. Focus on the short stroke and roll cast only. Keep knot tying to the Davy Knot on large paracord.

Use Echo Gecko 3-4 weight rods - perfectly scaled for small hands

Hula hoops at 20 and 25 feet only - success within easy reach

At the stream: let them discover insects first, before any casting

Their version of the orange shrimp story: "What if you could figure out what the fish was eating?"

LOOK UP: ask them what animal sounds they can hear. Kids this age are often more perceptive than adults.

Ages 11-13: The Brook Trout Tier

This group has attention span and coordination for more technical work. Introduce the tuck cast, the full nymphing leader setup, and the bow-and-arrow cast. Fly tying becomes genuinely engaging at this age.

Connect casting mechanics to sports they know: "The thumb squeeze is like snapping your wrist in basketball"

Let them build and rig their own leaders - ownership of the rig increases attention

The orange shrimp story resonates: ask them what they would have tied

Journal prompts should ask for reasoning, not just description

Ages 14-17: The Brown Trout Tier

This group can handle all techniques and begin thinking tactically. Introduce the Downer-Upper cast, the night game concept, and conservation in depth. Fly tying at this level should produce fishable flies.

Give them tactical scenarios: "You see a fish rising at the far edge of that eddy - what do you do first?"

Night game concepts resonate strongly at this age - big fish, darkness, sensory challenge

Ask them to teach the Davy knot to a younger student - teaching accelerates learning

The quest for the 20-pound brown: "What is the thing in your life that you won't stop pursuing?"

Students from Urban and Underrepresented Communities

For many students in The Joe Humphreys' Fly Fishing Stream School, this will be their first experience standing in a cold-water stream, watching wild fish, or being in a natural environment with focused purpose. Do not assume familiarity with any aspect of the outdoors. Do not make students feel behind. Move more slowly through the observation phase and give more time to simply experiencing the stream before teaching technique.

Joe Humphreys working with urban youth in Live the Stream: he watches a girl catch her first trout and hears her say: "My first trout! Oh my gosh - this is just amazing. I'm in a whole another space." His response: "I understand these kids. I understand where they're coming from." Because he was that kid, pedaling his bicycle to the stream when school wasn't working.

These students often become the most passionate conservationists. They come to the stream without preconception. Everything is new. Use that.

Section 7: Therapeutic Value of Fly Fishing

Joe Humphreys has volunteered for years with Project Healing Waters, a national program using fly fishing to rehabilitate injured and psychologically wounded veterans. A veteran participant describes it: "Fly fishing is the greatest therapy in the world. I can get out of a bad state of mind and reel myself back in."

This applies beyond veterans. Any young person carrying difficulty - family stress, academic frustration, personal loss - will find in the stream a place that demands only presence. The fly fishing cast requires full attention: hands, eyes, timing, current reading, fly selection. There is no room left for rumination.

As an instructor, you do not need to be a therapist. You need to be someone who holds the space safely and lets the stream do its work. Trust the water.

INSTRUCTOR AWARENESS: Joe was a struggling student who found direction through fishing. Some of the students in your program are in the same place he was. The Joe Humphreys' Fly Fishing Stream School may be the thing that turns their life around - the way *Just Fishing* turned his. Take that seriously.

Section 8: The Night Game - What Instructors Need to Know

Night fishing is introduced in the Week-Long Summer Camp as an aspirational concept - not a beginners' activity. Instructors should be fully briefed on what it involves before discussing it with students.

Two night fishing insights from Joe that instructors should know before teaching this section:

"Sculpins - I call them the strawberry shortcake of the trout world." Joe says this every time he talks about big browns at night. Sculpins are nocturnal. Large brown trout know exactly when and where they move. A sculpin pattern swung slowly through a pool tail-out after dark is one of the most reliable big-fish methods Joe uses.

The sulfur hatch trap: if the green drake hatch is on but sulfurs have been hatching for three or four weeks prior, the larger fish may still be conditioned to sulfurs. Joe nymphs with sulfur patterns after dark while others fish green drakes. 'Other guys are not catching and they're saying - what is he doing? That is the reason. Those fish are conditioned to the sulfurs. That is what they are looking for.' Watch the conditioning, not just the current hatch.

Why Big Trout Feed at Night

Large brown trout are largely nocturnal. Reduced predation pressure at night, combined with darkness that provides cover and comfort, causes them to move into shallow water and feed aggressively on large food sources: big stonefly patterns, large streamers, significant wet flies.

What Night Fishing Requires

Complete knowledge of the stream in daylight - terrain, depth, obstructions

The ability to cast accurately without sight - the cast must be felt, not watched

Large flies that "move water" - the fish detect them by feel and sound

Strike detection through feel and line tension - no indicator is visible

Heightened sound awareness - the riffle, the bank, the overhanging branch heard, not seen

Joe's State Record Brown Trout

The full story should be told to advanced students as a lesson in persistence. Joe stalked a single large trout for three years - going night after night to the same pool. His wife sang at him for it. Finally, at one in the morning, the fish took. He fought it for twenty minutes with no net. The warden measured it: 16 pounds, 34 inches. Pennsylvania's fly-caught record.

Joe first heard the fish two years before he caught it - a tremendous explosion on a long pool on Fishing Creek, Pennsylvania. He thought it sounded like a deer jumping off the bank. Then stone quiet. No deer runs back out of the water. He knew it was a fish.

He worked that pool for two full seasons in the dark of the moon, from a fallen tree he thought the fish lived near, down to the pool tail. Nothing. George Harvey suggested: try the riffle above the pool. Crayfish are nocturnal. Sculpins are nocturnal. Stone fly activity peaks at night. 'Why don't you try the riff?' George said.

The night before Joe caught the record, Lefty Kreh - then writing for the Baltimore Sun - asked Joe if he could get him a night fishing story. That night on Spruce Creek, Joe took a six-pound brown. Lefty was thrilled. Good story. Joe was pleased.

The very next night, Joe's teaching colleague called - tired of television. They went to Fishing Creek. Joe worked a long run, took an 18-inch fish. His buddy said: 'Isn't it time to go home?' Joe said: 'Let me just go to the top one more time.'

He threw a pair of George Harvey's big night flies under a hemlock bough on the far bank. They drifted into a little backwater and began to swing. They stopped.

"It sounded like somebody rolled a washtub over. I put the hammer to that fish. I had no net - and that wouldn't have landed that fish anyhow. I've never seen a fish this big. I said: I think I've got a record. The warden measured it: sixteen pounds, thirty-four inches." - Joe Humphreys

Safety Requirements for Any Night Fishing

NIGHT SAFETY: These requirements are non-negotiable for any supervised night fishing session. 1) Only on streams fully known in daylight. 2) Buddy system - no student alone. 3) Wading staff mandatory. 4) Instructor-to-student ratio 1:3 maximum. 5) Phone with light available - use only in emergency. 6) Headlamp allowed only during transition, not during active fishing. 7) Students: ages 14+ only, with written parent/guardian consent on file.

Section 9: Before Every Session - Instructor Checklist

Before Camp / Program Begins

Required: Watched Live the Stream in full

Required: Read this entire guide

Required: Practiced all casts: short stroke, tuck, bow-and-arrow, Downer-Upper, roll cast

Required: Visited teaching stream: noted water features, depth, likely fish holding zones

Required: Reviewed all student handouts: Conservation, Aquatic Insect ID, Water Reading, Casting Reference, Knot Guide, Equipment Guide

Required: Prepared camp journals for students

Morning of Each Session

Arrive 30 minutes before students: observe the water, note what insects are active

Plan your Look Up moment: identify one thing you want to point out today

Confirm safety equipment is present: first aid kit, wading belts, wading staffs

Check the water temperature - if it is above 68°F, move to cooler/shaded water or cancel on-water time (trout are dangerously stressed in warm water)

During Each Session

Observation before casting - every day, no exceptions

Deliver the Look Up moment - every day

Circulate constantly while students are casting - correct early, praise specifically

When a student hooks a fish: let them fight it - step back unless safety requires intervention

When a student loses a fish: normalize it. "Joe Humphreys has lost more fish than you've ever seen."

At Session's End

Journal prompt - every session

Preview the next session - build anticipation

Conservation moment - one fact, one connection to what students observed that day

Section 10: Joe's Words - For When You Need Them

"I will continue to teach until I finally reach the bottom of that mountain." - Joe Humphreys

These quotes can be used throughout the program whenever a student needs encouragement, explanation, or inspiration.

"The secret to life is having something to look forward to. Fly fishing gives you that." - Joe Humphreys

"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

"What happens to people if they don't have proper instruction? Frustrations build. But when nothing succeeds like success - and you catch a fish - you're off and running. You never forget." - Joe Humphreys

"Fishing was the catalyst that moved me from the depths of despair into a whole new life." - Joe Humphreys

"Without clean water in which these fish live, we're in bad shape. You've got to take care of those streams. It starts right here. It starts at home." - Joe Humphreys

"To catch a brook trout in all its regal beauty - it's gold to me." - Joe Humphreys

"Every day on the stream is an adventure. And as a teacher, if I've passed some good things on - not just the how-to, but an appreciation of nature itself - that's what it's all about." - Joe Humphreys

"Sculpins - I call them the strawberry shortcake of the trout world." - Joe Humphreys

"I just got outfished by a busload of fifth graders. Nobody will ever have all the answers. It is always humbling." - Joe Humphreys

"I learned to crawl because when I walked up to the stream, the fish went everywhere. So I finally learned to stay low." - Joe Humphreys

"If I have helped somebody and given them something exciting to look forward to when they go on a trout stream - what greater rewards could you have?" - Joe Humphreys

"All my casting strokes are very short. So many people lock the wrist - but the 10-to-2 cast is for tournament casting. All my casting is wrist." - Joe Humphreys

"This was my treasure. This was my life. And I saw it going. I don't know how I can do this - but I'm going to change this somehow." - Joe Humphreys, on Spring Creek

"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

"Wrestling and fly fishing? They're both physical sports. Secondly, the technique is so important. There's technique and smarts involved. You have to have great fly control so that the fly will float perfectly, drag-free." - Joe Humphreys

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

"We care about slack because we care about tension. Our flies, leaders, and fly lines are impacted by current from the instant they hit the water until we remove them for the next cast." - Joe Humphreys

"We need to be stewards of the stream. You don't have to pick the fish up out of the water and wave it around. Keep it in the water. We have to work on water quality." - Joe Humphreys

"In a world few fly fishers see or experience, yet one that is most dynamic, is from twilight to dawn... The Night Game!! Its beauty is unsurpassed." - Joe Humphreys

"We never stop learning. The good Lord made it that way." - Joe Humphreys

Joe sees fly fishing instruction as an investment not just in a sport, but in the long-term health of the waters and the people who love them.

Young people are the future of fly fishing - and of the conservation work that keeps the streams worth fishing.

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