

Fishery Basics — Fishing Gear

Gear Types

All types of fishing gear, regardless of how it might be used, are designed to lure and capture fish. Fishing gears are defined as tools used to capture marine/aquatic resources, whereas how the gear is used is the **fishing method**. Additionally, a single type of gear may also be used in multiple ways. Different target **species** require different fishing gear to effectively catch the target species.

Fishing gears fall under two general categories, active gear and passive gear. Active gears are designed to chase and capture target species, while passive gears generally sit in one place allowing the target species to approach the capture device. The [United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\)](#) further classifies fishing gear into 11 categories primarily based on how the gear are fished, we have provided detailed information about each category [See Fishing Gear](#). To browse a partial list of fishing methods and marine zones where they might be used [click here](#).

Grappling & Wounding Gears

[Grappling and wounding gears](#) are an extension of the fisherman's arm. These gears include:

- [Clamps](#)
- [Tongs](#)
- [Spears](#)
- [Harpoons](#)

Typically these types of gear are used to capture solitary fish swimming near the surface. However, some are used to capture **benthic** species like Mussels and other types of **shellfish**. Although the use of these gears has been banned in some countries, because the target fish may be injured and never captured, **fisheries** utilizing these gears do exist.

Some of the simplest tools are the hand rakes, for shoreline Calms, Oysters, and seaweed. Long-handled rakes, shovels, tongs, and hoes as well as short-handled “irons,” knives, and tines are used to **harvest** Sea Urchins, Abalone, Mussels, seaweed, sponges, and Conch throughout the U.S. Hand tongs attached to ropes have been used both historically and presently to [collect Oysters from boats in the Chesapeake Bay](#).

Spearing is one of the oldest methods of fishing that uses a tool. A harpoon refers to a device with one point and a short shaft, which is often used to catch large and valuable species like Swordfish and Tuna. Whereas, a spear has 2-3 prongs and a longer shaft and are often used in



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nearshore waters. A [harpoon Swordfish fishery](#) operates in the Southern California Bight between June and November, when the water conditions are calm enough to fish with harpoons.

References

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Additional Resources

FAO – [The Use of Technical Measures in Responsible Fisheries: Regulation Of Fishing Gear](#)

Marine Conservation Society – [Fishing Methods](#)