

Montana Hunting Fishing Adventures
Fishing Guide School
870 Sleeping Child
Road Hamilton, MT
59840
(406)360-7238



I hereby certify that this catalog is correct in content and policy

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James W. Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light gray rectangular background.

Catalog Volume 1
January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2024

Mission

The purpose of Montana Hunting Fishing Adventures (MHFA) Fishing Guide School is to provide maximum instruction in the art of guided fishing to allow the student to start their own fishing guide service.

School

MHFA Fishing Guide School is a nonaccredited private, for-profit school. The school curriculum was approved by the Montana Board of Outfitters on March 6th, 2015 and has been in operation since then, providing instruction for fishing guides.

Facilities

We are located on 2 acres 3 miles south of Hamilton, MT. Our buildings include a 2000 square foot main office and owner's residence that houses the main classroom, as well as a 1500 square foot work area and equipment storage facility. A 1000 square foot Fly Shop (Bitterroot Fly Company) located at 808 N. Main #2 Darby, Montana 59829 that houses the base for the guiding activities. The public waters of Montana provide the on-the-water training, which includes the Bitterroot River, Blackfoot River, and Clark Fork River.

Governing Body

James Mitchell - Owner, School President, Director, and Instructor

School Administrators and Faculty

James Mitchell: Owner and lead instructor. James started guiding anglers in 2001 and was taught by his father whom started the outfitting business in 1969. Over the years he improved and perfected his technique.

Admission Requirements

MHFA Fishing Guide School is open to everyone. You must be 18 years of age to obtain the license to become a guide in Montana. Every student must complete an enrollment application prior to attending a course. A maximum of two students are accepted for each class.

Deposit: An established fee of 50% of the course tuition fee is required to schedule the course. (Deposit is not required of students using veteran's benefits. Instead, a certificate of current eligibility will be required)

School Calendar

The school observes all federal holidays, and also includes the day after Thanksgiving and the day after Christmas.

Reservations are accepted starting January 1 of the year the student will attend. Course terms are very stringent and are 8 days in length.

Spring course 1 - Starts the second Monday in March, runs 8 days

Spring course 2 - Starts the first Monday in May, runs 8 days

Fall course - Starts the first Monday in October, runs 8 days

Tuition and Fees

8 DAY FISHING GUIDE COURSE - 78 HOURS.

This course consists of First Aid/CPR training, fly casting instruction, streamside ecology and entomology, Knot tying (Western/Tenkara), Float/Wade fishing safety and techniques, Boat operation and safety, Meal planning and food safety, River etiquette, Fly tying basics, Self-marketing and resume building. **Not included in the course are personal items such as sun screen, raingear, sunglasses etc. A Montana State fishing license is required for the days on the water.**

The tuition for the 8-day course is \$4,255.00. Cost of lodging and meals, if needed, is \$2500.00. A 50% deposit is required with your completed registration to schedule your class. Deposits will not be refunded if the student cancels within 30 days of the first day of class or fails to show for the registered course. **[Deposit is not required of students using veteran's benefits, but a current Certificate of Eligibility (COE) will be required.]**

Refund Policy

The deposit will be refunded if canceled 30 days prior to the first day of the scheduled course. If you are unable to make the registered course and make arrangements more than 30 days prior to the first day of class, you will be allowed to attend a later course if available. Refunds will be returned within 40 days.

Refund Policy for Students Using VA Education Benefits

In accordance with federal statute, students using VA education benefits who are withdrawn or dismissed from the school will have the applicable remainder of the program cost refunded according to the refund table below.

% OF PROGRAM COMPLETED AT TIME OF WITHDRAWAL OR ENROLLMENT TERMINATION	REFUND
10% of program completed	90% Refunded
20% of program completed	80% Refunded
30% of program completed	70% Refunded
40% of program completed	60% Refunded
50% of program completed	50% Refunded
60% of program completed	40% Refunded
70% of program completed	30% Refunded
80% of program completed	20% Refunded
90% of program completed	10% Refunded

Proof of Issue/Program Information Acknowledgement

As required by 38 U.S. Code § 3676, MHFA Fishing Guide School will provide a copy of program outline, tuition/program costs, and school policies to students upon enrollment. All students are required to complete a Proof of Issue form and each form will be kept in student's file.

Standards of Progress and Grading

MHFA Fishing Guide School does not use a traditional grading system, instead uses daily evaluations and progress. All work will be graded on a 0 to 4 system, meaning 0 is fail and 4 is exceptional.

Each day a student receives a grade (0-4) from the instructor. At the end of the program all daily grades are added up to determine final grade. In order for a student to successfully pass the program and receive a certificate of completion, the total must be 18 or higher.

Grading System

18 or higher = PASS

17 or less = FAIL

Prior Credit

MHFA Fishing Guide School will evaluate all previous postsecondary education and training, including military experience, for students using VA education benefits. Upon completion of the evaluation process, the school will determine if credit can be awarded. If credit is awarded, the school will reduce program length and cost proportionately, notify the student of the evaluation, and maintain all credit evaluation records. If credit is not awarded, documentation showing that an evaluation was conducted will be kept in student files.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend and participate in all daily classes and ensure they are on time for class each morning. Daily attendance and tardiness are tracked and monitored. If students are late due to adverse weather, arrangements will be made available for the student to make up any work.

Unexcused Absences - Due to the nature of the program and short length, no unexcused absences are allowed. If a student fails to show for one day, that student's enrollment will be terminated.

Excused Absences – One excused absence is allowed and, if taken, the student must contact the school director to arrange make-up work. If more than one excused absence is needed, the student will be required to withdraw from the program and re-enroll in a future class. In addition, the instructor must be notified and approve the excused absence before it can be taken.

Tardies – Three tardies equal one unexcused absence. Therefore, if a student is late to class more than three times and considered tardies by the instructor, the student will be dismissed from the program.

Leave of Absence Policy

MHFA Fishing Guide School does not allow leaves of absence beyond the one allowed excused absence. If a student needs to miss more than 1 day of class, they will be required to withdraw from the program and enroll in a future class.

Student Records and Transcripts

MHFA Fishing Guide School will maintain student records for a minimum of 3 years. Records for every student will include, but not limited to, attendance, progress reports/evaluations, grades, prior credit evaluation and supporting documents, proof of issue form, any conduct related documentation, and a copy of their certificate of completion. At any point, students may contact the school to request copies of their certificates or any documents within their folder.

Student Conduct Policy

The student conduct policy outlines major categories of behavior and states disciplinary actions that may occur as a result of student misconduct.

Bad conduct will not be tolerated at MHFA Fishing Guide School. The use of foul language, and constant interruptions will not be tolerated at this school and the offending students will be dismissed from the program. The use of cell phones (if any service is available) will only be allowed during student breaks and not during classroom hours.

Drugs and Alcohol

Drugs and alcohol are not permitted. Students are not to consume or possess any alcohol or controlled substance unless they have a prescription. Any violation may be grounds for termination from the program.

The following levels of disciplinary actions will be followed when students violate school rules:

Level 1 - Verbal Warning/Reprimand

The instructor will tell the student not to engage in inappropriate behavior and give the student a reminder of the school rules.

Level 2 - Dismissal

If a conduct-related violation occurs, the instructor has the discretion and authority to terminate a student's enrollment.

The MHFA Fishing Guide School reserves the rights to evaluate conduct related violations on a case-by-case scenario to determine what specific action is appropriate. All conduct related violations or infractions will be documented and kept in student's file.

Reinstatement Policy

If a student is dismissed from a program due to standards of progress, attendance, or conduct, the student will be required to contact the owner for readmission approval. MHFA Fishing Guide has sole discretion for determining if a student who was previously terminated can be re-enrolled.

Graduation

Upon successful completion of all course objectives, every student will receive a certificate of completion with the title of the course completed from Montana Hunting Fishing Adventures.

Program Outline

Arrival Day

5:00 pm

Arrive at Montana Hunting & Fishing Adventures Home Base in Hamilton, MT.

7:00 pm

Dinner, meet the instructors, distribute course curriculum, discuss course expectations.

Day One

(the first full day will be spent in the classroom)

8:00 am - 8:30 am Introduction to Course & Orientation

8:30 am - 12:00 pm

First Aid/CPR training (online)

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Lunch

1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Continuation of first aid/CPR training and certification.

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Requirements for guiding, Insurance, paperwork, and forms familiarization of Montana Board of Outfitters regulations, FWP regulations, and client safety.

6:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Knot tying and equipment set up Western/Tenkara meal planning for the following day. accommodating client dietary needs.

Day Two

(Walk and Wade)

8:00 am - 8:30 am

Travel to include discussion with instructions on driving, passenger comfort, and safety.

8:30 am – 12:00 pm

Field Study and Practical Application- (Bitterroot River East Fork) walk and wade stream basics, client safety, fly selection, and identification.

12:00 pm - 12:30 pm

Instruction in proper streamside meal presentation walk & wade.

12:30 pm - 1:00 pm

Lunch

1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Streamside ecology and entomology

3:00 pm - 5:00 pm

special considerations for walk and wade clients, playing fish/netting strategies
Casting instruction Western/Tenkara

5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Travel followed with classroom, special considerations for walk and wade clients,
playing fish/netting strategies.
Meal planning for the following day

Day Three

(Lake Float)

8:00 am - 8:30 am

Introduction to Rafts and Trailers safety and pre-trip inspection

8:30 am - 10:00 am

Travel to include discussion with instructions on trailer towing and safety)

10:00 am - 10:30 am

Boat and angler prep, launch, and boat ramp etiquette.

10:30 am - 12:00 pm

Field Study and Practical Application - Stillwater tactics, basic boat handling, and rowing techniques, boat safety, and watercraft operation.

12:00 pm - 12:30 pm

Instruction in proper streamside meal presentation float trip lake.

12:30 pm - 1:00 pm

Lunch

1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

How to read the water and get your client into fish.

3:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Western/Tenkara fishing techniques

5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Travel followed with classroom, how to plan and prepare for multi-day travel trips.

Meal planning for the following day

Day Four

(River Float)

8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Travel and field study with practical application - (upper Bitterroot River) freestone river navigation, boat safety, watercraft operation, and river etiquette.

12:00 pm - 12:30 pm

Instruction in proper streamside meal presentation float trip river.

12:30 pm - 1:00 pm

Lunch

1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Watercraft operation and field repair, scenic float trips, and nature viewing.

5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Travel followed with classroom, safety/survival, wildlife awareness, first aid/CPR review, etiquette, and accommodating special needs.

Meal planning for the following day.

Day Five

(River Float)

8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Travel, field study, and practical application - (Bitterroot River large freestone) advanced field repair, advanced rowing techniques, advanced casting techniques

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Lunch on the river

1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Reading larger rivers.

5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Travel followed with classroom, fly tying; streamers, dry flies, nymphs, and still-water flies. Meal planning for the following day

Day Six

(River Float)

8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Travel and field study with practical application - (West Fork of the Bitterroot River) tailwater ecology and entomology, fish habitat identification.

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Lunch on the river

1:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Continued practical application, playing fish/netting strategies.

5:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Travel followed with classroom, networking in the industry, developing and maintaining a customer base, finding jobs and meeting employment expectations, Meal planning for the following day.

Day Seven

(River Float Exam)

Field testing and Practical Application Exams- (Blackfoot River) Final Testing and Critical Evaluation of boat operation and maneuvering, fly casting techniques, becoming a guide.

8:00 am - 10:00 am

Travel (discuss what are your concerns or insecurities, what you feel are your weak points, and what needs improvement with instruction to remedy).

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Field testing and practical application exam

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Lunch on the river

1:00 pm - 5:30 pm

Continue testing and practical application exam; mock medical emergency response drill,

5:30 pm - 7:30 pm

Travel discussion on what are your concerns or insecurities, and what you feel are your weak points. recap the practical application exam with instructions to remedy any weak points.

Day Eight

(Classroom)

8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Review of Montana Board of Outfitters license requirements and regulations and complete the paperwork, and documentation required for guiding. Prepare a professional resume,

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Lunch

1:00 pm – 4:30 pm

Recap class, discuss guide and client relations, and how to market yourself as a professional. Award diplomas to successful graduates, and departure.

**Top-level graduates may be given the opportunity to continue their education and gain valuable on-the-job training guiding with Montana Hunting and Fishing Adventures. **

Additional Resource Readings

- Montana State fishing regulations
- Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Statutes
- Statutes and rules relating to outfitters and guides issued by the Montana Board of Outfitters
- International Federation of Fly Fishers CCI Study pack that includes: "Observations on Teaching Fly Casting" booklet, "The Essentials of Fly Casting" booklet and the casting instructor DVD
- Orvis Vest Pocket Guide to Leaders, Knots & Tippetts
- Pocket Guide to Western Hatches by Dave Hughes
- The Orvis Streamside Guide to Trout Foods and Their Imitations by Tom Rosenbauer
- Orvis Fly-Tying Guide by Tom Rosenbauer
- Guide's Guide Augmented Book (The A to Z on becoming and perfecting the art of professional river running. Includes information on trip tips, company policies, first aid kits, and food planning guides.) by William McGinnis