

## Is It Just Luck?

Successfully catching fish requires a combination of both skill and luck. Webster's defines luck as "the chance happening of fortunate or adverse events." Luck has always had an association with fishing. How many times have you heard the phrase "good luck", before going fishing, or "Did you have any luck?" Anglers hear these questions all the time. Is the simple act of catching a fish just luck? Right place, right time, right bait, and there just happens to be a fish in the area that takes the bait.

Most of us have experienced this scenario at one time or another. You take a beginner fishing and they end up being the one who catches the most or biggest fish during the trip. To make ourselves feel better we write it off as "beginner's luck". Alternatively, two anglers, equally skilled using the same bait, fishing the same school of fish, but one catches a five-pounder while the other catches a two-pounder. In such a situation, it would be hard to believe that luck was not involved.

A man once told me the reason why he never got into fishing was that it was mostly about luck. He got more satisfaction from activities that required skill. There is no doubt that consistently catching fish requires a certain amount of skill. Varying degrees of skill are necessary depending on how you are fishing and what species of fish you are attempting to catch. For example, one could argue that trying to catch tarpon with fly tackle requires more skill than using live bait.

Fishing, like any sport, has variables that we can control. Knowing where and when to go, what bait to use, and how to present the bait all help to improve our chances of success. Unfortunately, the one variable that we cannot control is the one that defines our success. We can be doing everything right, fishing in an area where there are fish, but we cannot make them bite. The bite is only the beginning in a chain of events for which we have little control. The fish has to be hooked, and stay hooked until the point where they are within reach.

In some ways skill and luck is each a result of the other. Improvements in skill can come from luck. On one particular trip, a friend, who had never caught or fished for sheepshead before, caught his first fish. He then proceeded to catch at least a dozen more within an hour. With each catch, his skill level was improving. He was becoming more aware of the technique, from exactly where his bait needed to be to how the bite felt.

While it is debatable as to what percent of fishing is skill and what percent is luck, most anglers would agree that the percentage leans more towards skill. Luck has and always will be a part of fishing. However, an angler's skill creates situations where luck has a better chance of happening. In fishing, as with many other things in life, skill is what lets luck happen.

