



# South Sound Fly Fishers

## Mentorship Program Guide



Mentoring members in a fly-fishing club can be a rewarding experience. As a mentor, often you will be the first & lasting impression of our club. Your role will be to help with the basics of our sport, share your knowledge, and consistently foster a welcoming and supportive environment.

### **The SSFF Mentorship Program minimum commitment:**

1. Any SSFF club member is eligible to sign up for the mentorship program, regardless of how long they have been a member. The SSFF Mentorship Chair will be responsible for matching a participant to a mentor. Mentors will be assigned based on availability and requested skills to learn.
2. The mentorship program will start off as a **three-month program**. Mentors will meet with the participant at least **once a month for the first three months in the program**, to provide lessons or outings based on their individual interests or skills assessment. Mentorship can continue longer than three months depending on the Mentorship Program wait list and availability of the mentor. Mentors can elect to have more than one participant (student) assigned at a time, or choose to only mentor during preferred months out of the year. Participants can take part in club sponsored mentorship events for as long as they desire.
3. Mentors are expected to communicate and invite participants to SSFF Mentorship events or outings:
  - a. Inform the participant about the **SSFF Mentorship ‘Google Group’** and help put them in contact with our Webmaster if help is needed to join the online email group.
  - b. The SSFF Mentorship and Outings Chair will be responsible for planning at least **one Mentorship group lesson or outing per month**. Lessons will be based on our SSFF Fly-Fishing 101 curriculum or may include any other requested topic, and may take place on Zoom. Mentors are not expected to be at these monthly group events, but are asked to help teach at least 1 lesson a year based on if their schedule and area of expertise allows.

- c. The SSFF Mentorship Chair will coordinate with our Casting Instructors and Gold Level Casting Skills members to facilitate a **Mentorship casting clinic at least once per quarter.**
  - d. Communicate and invite participant to any other scheduled or pop-up SSFF club activities.
4. Mentors may be asked to help facilitate mentorship lessons with more than two people present, if participant indicates on the SSFF Mentorship Program sign up form that they prefer no 1-1 mentorship situations. Female members, other mentors, or members of the SSFF BOD will also be available to help in these situations.

Here are some key points for mentoring new members effectively:

### 1. Build a Relationship

- **Be approachable:** Make sure new members feel comfortable asking questions and learning from you. Share your fly-fishing journey.
- **Get to know them:** Understand their experience level, whether they are complete beginners or have some fishing background.

### 2. Provide Basic Knowledge

- **Introduce Equipment:** Walk them through the essentials like rods, reels, lines, and flies. Show them how to assemble and care for the gear.
- **Teach Basic Casting:** Help them develop proper casting techniques. Focus on fundamentals like the Pick Up & Lay Down or Roll Cast before moving on to more advanced techniques.
- **Explain Fly Selection:** Introduce the concept of matching the hatch. Discuss different types of flies (dry, nymph, streamer) and when to use them.
- **Basic Knot Tying:** Teach them key knots such as the improved clinch knot, surgeons knot, non-slip loop knot, and nail knot. Knots are a fundamental part of fly fishing, and practice makes perfect.

### 3. Show Them the Water

- **Scout Locations:** Take new members to local spots where they can catch fish but also experience diverse conditions (e.g., fast water, slow pools, shallow vs. deep, salt water and tides).
- **Teach Reading Water:** Explain how to identify good fishing areas, such as riffles, runs, and eddies. This can greatly improve their understanding of how fish behave and where they're likely to be.

#### 4. Patience and Safety

- **Encourage Patience:** Fly fishing can be slow and methodical. Emphasize that catching fish is just part of the experience—enjoying nature and learning are key.
- **Teach Safety:** Discuss important safety measures, like wearing a life jacket when necessary, use of wading staff, hook injuries, staying hydrated, and respecting wildlife and the environment.

#### 5. Encourage Practice and Progression

- **Keep Learning:** Encourage them to continue learning, whether it's through reading, watching videos, FFI webpage, or practicing on their own.
- **Join Group Outings:** Invite them to participate in club events, like group outings or casting clinics, to gain more hands-on experience and learn from other members.
- **Celebrate Progress:** Offer positive feedback on their progress, no matter how small. This helps build confidence and keeps them motivated.

#### 6. Promote Club Engagement

- **Introduce Other Members:** Introduce them to other experienced members of the club who can offer advice, share stories, and potentially become long-term mentors.
- **Get Involved in Club Activities:** Encourage them to attend meetings, workshops, or conservation events to feel a part of the fly-fishing community.

#### 7. Have Fun!

- **Share Stories:** Talk about your own experiences, both successful and not-so-successful, to make learning enjoyable and relatable.
- **Respect Their Pace:** Some new members might be more focused on the technical aspects, while others might just enjoy the tranquility of the sport. Adapt your mentoring style to suit their interests.

Mentoring is about guiding new members while fostering a positive, inclusive atmosphere. It's not just about teaching how to fish but also about helping them fall in love with the sport and community.