

Yellowstone Outfitters and Guide Academy

Curriculum for Guide School

Day 1 - Classroom work, drift boats, stillwater fishing

You will need a fly rod during mid morning for the casting clinic; we suggest your slowest action rod for feel. When we fish Merrell Lake, we recommend a 5 or 6 weight in a faster action. Sinking line is nice to have; we can lend you some if you need it.

Everyone will meet in the classroom after breakfast. We will cover Principles of Guiding, knots, entomology, drift boat handling, casting, and more. We will videotape your casting stroke and view it in the classroom, then do more work on casting on the lawn and the lake. We will work on our drift boat skills on Merrell Lake, then work on our lake fishing on the lake.

Days 2 through 6 - On the water

Right after breakfast, students will assemble the lunches for the day and load the vehicles. We will discuss our daily destination beforehand, so all students should know what equipment will be necessary and should be ready for an early start. Learning to organize yourself for different destinations is an important skill.

We will spend our days on different waters, wading some days and floating other days. Everything we learned on the first day will be revisited as we fish. Students will spend time fishing and also guiding other students and the instructors. Students will be responsible for preparing the lunches.

Students will learn entomology by turning over rocks and using our seine. We will identify insects using our books, and determine which patterns to use. Proper rigging is next, followed by casting and presentation. Hopefully we will get a chance to work on the hook set. We will do lots and lots of work on getting a good drift. When the students are guiding, they will rig their clients' rods, select or suggest patterns, position clients in the proper spots, help find fish, evaluate casting and fix faults, and much more. With the instructors' help, the students will bear the full responsibility that a regular guide would have. When instructors have input for the anglers, they will make their suggestions to the student that is "guiding" at the time, and that student will convey the information to the other student. The important lesson is learning how to be the leader on the water without becoming a taskmaster. The students will learn what it takes to create an enjoyable day on the water.

On days that we float, students will participate in all aspects, including doing almost all the rowing. We will start with checking the boat over before we leave the lodge in the morning. Necessary equipment will be verified, proper trailer safety is observed, and proper trailer towing techniques are covered. Students will learn how to back a boat down the boat ramp, launch it safely, ramp etiquette, and more. Once underway, the instructor will start with a short lesson, reiterating what we covered on the lake, and demonstrating the difference between moving and still water. Safe and proper anchoring techniques are covered. Students will row for the rest of the day. Two students are in each boat with one instructor, so a student gets to row for about half the day. Students will first learn how to get down the river without drowning anyone, and then we work hard on boat positioning. We also cover boat etiquette, release techniques while underway, dealing with wind, reading water, and more. When fishing, students will learn where fish hold in large rivers, pattern and rig selection, and techniques for achieving a good drift while floating.

Students can decide what activities they would most like to do after dinner. We will have a list of recommended videos for students to view in the evening in the classroom. Tying stations are provided, and we will provide instruction and tie patterns we can use the next day. Fishing Merrell Lake is available, as well as evening fishing on the Yellowstone River and Tom Miner Creek.