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**Salmon**: With distinct black spots on tail and back.

**Coho Salmon**
- There are small, irregular spots only on the upper half of the tail, and the gums at the base of the teeth are white.

**Pink Salmon**
- There are large, oblong spots on the back and the entire tail.

**Salmon**
- The anal fin has 13 or more rays.

**Rainbow Trout and Steelhead**
- There are small dark spots scattered over the entire fish, including the tail, with slight to pronounced rainbow coloring. (no teeth on tongue)

**Chinook Salmon**
- There are small, irregular spots on the entire tail, and the gums at the base of the teeth are black.

**Trout**: (Note: Rainbow, cutthroat, and golden trout have been reclassified as salmon species, but these identification characteristics still apply.) The body is light-colored with dark spots.

**Coho Salmon**
- There are small, irregular spots only on the upper half of the tail, and the gums at the base of the teeth are white.

**Chinook Salmon**
- There are small, irregular spots on the entire tail, and the gums at the base of the teeth are black.

**Golden Trout**
- The spots are mostly in the tail.

**Atlantic Salmon**
- The spots are small, x-shaped, with no halos, and absent from the tail.

**Salmon**: With no distinct black spots on tail and back.

**Male**

**Female**

**Chum Salmon**
- If caught during spawning time, the fish is an olive green color with purple bars.

**Male**

**Female**

**Male**

**Female**

**Male**

**Female**

**Dolly Varden or Bull Trout**
- The spots on the body are orange (sometimes crimson) to cream colored with no blue halo.

**Lake Trout**
- The body has irregular white or gray spots.

**Brown Trout**
- The spots are large, black or red, often with a pale halo surrounding them, and missing from the tail.

**Atlantic Salmon**
- The spots are small, x-shaped, with no halos, and absent from the tail.

**Char**: The body is dark-colored with light spots.

**Brook Trout**
- There are conspicuous wavy "worm trail" markings on the back and dorsal fin, with white leading edges on the lower fins, and crimson spots surrounded by a blue halo.

**Lake Trout**
- The body has irregular white or gray spots.

**Brown Trout**
- The spots are large, black or red, often with a pale halo surrounding them, and missing from the tail.

**Atlantic Salmon**
- The spots are small, x-shaped, with no halos, and absent from the tail.

**Char**: The body is dark-colored with light spots.

**Male**

**Female**

**Brook Trout**
- There are conspicuous wavy "worm trail" markings on the back and dorsal fin, with white leading edges on the lower fins, and crimson spots surrounded by a blue halo.

**Lake Trout**
- The body has irregular white or gray spots.

**Dolly Varden or Bull Trout**
- The spots on the body are orange (sometimes crimson) to cream colored with no blue halo.
One of the most important things for anglers to learn is to correctly identify the fish he or she has caught. That’s not as easy to do as it sounds, especially here in Washington where we have such a variety of fish.

If you are a stream fisherman, the challenge becomes even tougher. We have resident and sea–run varieties of several trout species, many of which closely resemble the different salmon species, particularly during the critical smolt state. Color alone is often an unreliable characteristic.

In spite of the built–in difficulties, this is a skill you must learn. Many of the management regulations are species specific, and what is appropriate and legal for one species, may not be for another, similar–looking species. It is your responsibility to understand the regulations and to identify the fish the regulations apply to. Besides that, being able to identify the fish you catch will make your fishing experience even more enjoyable.

This guide is intended to provide a simple step–by–step key to help you identify the trout or salmon you have caught. Practice common sense techniques when handling the fish while you determine what kind it is. If in doubt, let it go.