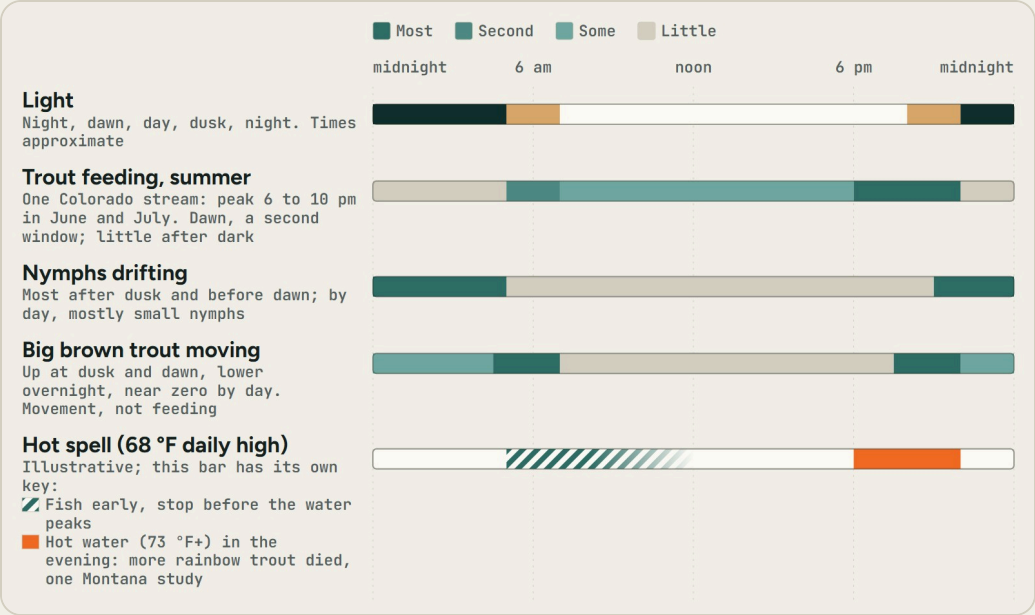
WHAT IS THE BEST TIME OF DAY AND YEAR TO FISH FOR TROUT?

No single hour or month is best for every river. In summer studies, stream trout fed mostly in daylight and twilight; in one Colorado stream, feeding peaked from 6 to 10 pm in June and July. The evening is often a good window, and dawn a second. When the daily high reaches 68 °F, stop fishing for rainbow trout and whitefish, or fish early and stop before the water peaks. Through the year, follow the water temperature and the hatch chart, not the calendar.



One summer day, drawn from several studies of different trout and rivers; times approximate. The guide says which study is which. Illustration: Fly Findr

ON THE DAY

Summer evening	Often a good window. Fish until the light goes: young salmon in a lab caught drifting food well down to dusk light, far less after dark.
Dawn	A second window: feeding peaked at twilight in some studies. Large brown trout moved most at dusk and dawn (movement, not feeding).
Hot spell	When the daily high reaches 68 °F, stop fishing for rainbow trout and whitefish, or fish early and stop before the water peaks. Read it on arrival and again in the afternoon. The evening was not safer for rainbow trout.
Hatches	Caddis: mostly at night in the studies. Midges have no single hour.

THROUGH THE YEAR

Spring	Salmonflies hatched earlier in warmer water. Rainbow and cutthroat trout spawn after the snowmelt peak: don't wade on bare gravel.
Summer	Catch rates fell as water warmed. Read the water temperature.
Autumn	Blue-winged olives and October caddis. Brown trout spawn from about mid-October: keep off the redds.
Winter	Trout keep feeding, more slowly. Fish deep, slow pools, slowly. Midges are the key hatch.

What the studies don't settle. One best hour for every river: the daily peak differs between studies. No study has found that the moon or clouds change how many trout anglers catch, and none was found that tested the barometer against trout catch. Hatch months move with region, elevation and water temperature; check the hatch chart on your water's page.