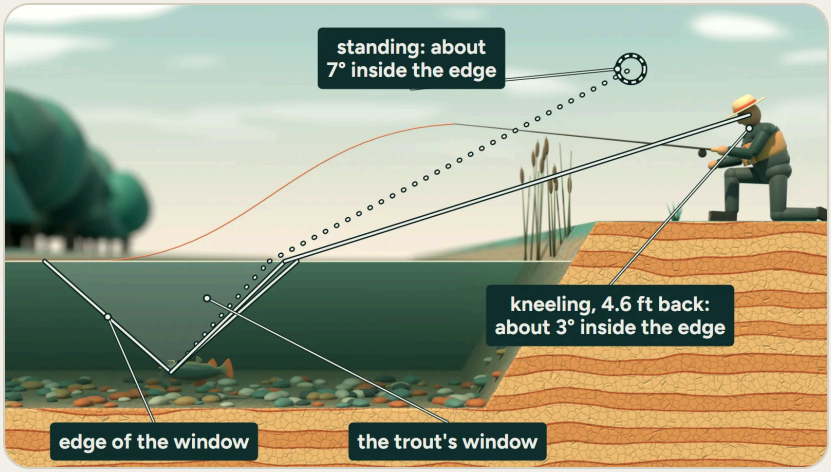
HOW DO I STAY OUT OF SIGHT OF TROUT?

Keep low, stay back from the edge, come at the fish from behind and downstream, and move quietly. That is what anglers do; no study has measured whether it keeps trout from noticing you. What is known is how the trout sees the world above the water.



A trout 3.8 ft deep looks up through its window, the pale cone, 97° wide on calm water. Dotted line: the standing angler's head appears about 7° inside the edge. Solid line: kneeling 4.6 ft farther back, about 3°. Nearer the edge, not hidden. Angles: Fly Findr's calculation for this drawn scene. Illustration: Fly Findr

WHAT IS KNOWN

The window	On calm water a trout sees the world above through a cone 97 degrees wide. Outside it, the surface shows a dim reflection of the water below.
Low is near the edge	Something low on the horizon sits near the dim edge of that circle. In the drawn scene (our calculation), kneeling farther back puts you nearer the edge, not out of the window.
Ripples	Waves widen the window, to about 122 degrees at a 16 degree wave slope. No study has tested whether ripple hides an angler.
Muddy water	In artificial stream channels, small wild rainbow trout at 30 NTU reacted to food from 45 percent of their distance at the ambient 4 to 6 NTU. Anglers were not tested.
Low light	In lab tanks, brown trout fed steadily down to 0.03 lux, fell off steeply below that, and took nothing in total darkness.
Where it looks	In a coho study, food was noticed first above and ahead. Nobody has measured a trout's blind zone.
Sound	One salmon study found sound from the air unlikely to reach the fish; sound through the riverbed could.

WHAT ANGLERS DO (NOT MEASURED)

	HABIT	WHAT THE STUDIES SAY
1	**Kneel or crouch, and keep back from the edge**	Optics only; not tested on trout
2	**Come at the fish from behind and downstream**	Blind zone never measured
3	**Keep the rod low and still while you get into position**	Movement may be easier to notice than shape (reasoning, not measured)
4	**Step softly, don't kick rocks, wade slowly**	Footsteps and wading never measured
5	**Don't count on ripple to hide you**	A calculation on idealized waves points the other way
6	**If a fish bolts, rest the spot and move on**	Disturbed trout hid for days in one remote, lightly fished river; on a heavily fished river they did not

flyfindr.co/learn/stay-out-of-sight

The full guide, the studies behind each point and what they don't settle. Sources: see the guide.

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