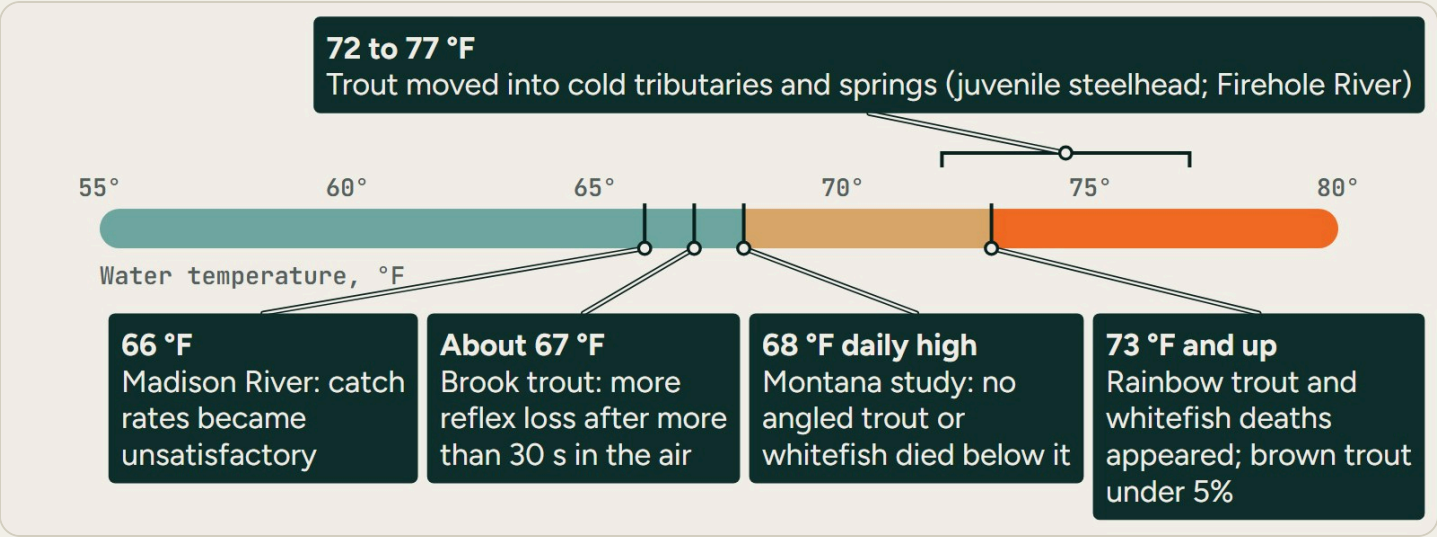
IS IT TOO WARM TO FISH FOR TROUT?

It can be. Check the water temperature, not the air. In one study on two Montana rivers, no rainbow trout, brown trout or mountain whitefish died after catch and release while the day's highest water temperature stayed below 68 °F. At 73 °F and above, rainbow trout and whitefish began to die.



The marks come from different studies, fish and rivers; the guide says which. Illustration: Fly Findr

FIND THE NUMBER

Thermometer	Carry a stream thermometer. Hold it in flowing water, below the surface, until the number stops moving.
Water page	If the stretch's gauge reports water temperature, a Water temp card shows it. Most don't yet.
Twice	Read it when you arrive and again in the afternoon. On summer days the warmest hours were late afternoon to evening.

WHEN IT IS WARM

68 °F daily high	Stop fishing for rainbow trout and whitefish, or fish early and stop before the water peaks.
Evening	Not safer for rainbow trout: in the Montana study, those caught in hot water in the evening died more often than morning fish.
Land fast	Use tackle strong enough to finish the fight quickly.
About 67 °F and up	Unhook and release the fish in the water. If you must lift one, a few seconds.
Brown trout	Died least in the Montana study (under 5%). Lower risk, not no risk: keep handling short.
Cold spots	Trout crowded at cold tributary mouths and springs are stressed. Catch fewer, or leave them.

What the studies don't settle. No single number fits every river and every fish: the risk rises as water warms. The Montana study tested rainbow trout, brown trout and whitefish, with cool nights for the fish to recover; cutthroat and brook trout, and rivers that stay warm all night, were not tested in it. Whether 30 to 60 seconds out of the water kills trout is contested; shorter is safer.