

## Fishbanks preparation for Students

Citation: Harley, A. G., & Clark, W. C. (2025). *Fishbanks preparation for students* (Course Library for Sustainable Development Course, p. 1). Harvard University.

This document draws on what we learned from our colleague Dr. Michaela Thompson, a true master of Fishbanks teaching.

Working through the preparation materials listed in the course syllabus “Readings” for the Fishbanks class is essential for the success of the simulation. Please make time to view the video, do the readings, and practice the game as a solo fisher\* before class.

In particular, before class, familiarize yourself with the Fishbanks game by playing one or more sessions by yourself. Please don’t neglect this step; the simulation, while not terribly complex, has specific steps, and you (and your teammates) will be at a severe disadvantage if you show up to class without taking the time to become familiar with them. As you login to Fishbanks for your practice solo session, the following steps will help avoid confusion:

- The first thing you will see is a screen “Waiting for other players”; you should click through and not wait for others as you are playing solo.
- Once playing, each round will start with a Buy/Sell box on the left; you should just click through when playing solo because there is no other fisher fleet to buy from;
- After each round, recheck the dashboard to see how your bank account, fleet, and fishery is doing.

As we play Fishbanks in class, the teaching staff sets the pace at which each simulated year’s decisions must be completed: you’ll need to decide quickly about whether to change the size of your boat fleet (by ordering new ones or auctioning existing ones) and where to place the boats you have (in nearshore waters or offshore). Finally, our plan is to run the simulation only once, for the duration of the class. Thus, as in the real world, no ‘do-overs’ will be possible, so you need to build a strategy that will sustain your fishing operation throughout the game. You will play in teams of 2–3 as assigned by the teaching staff. A prize will be awarded to the winning team, defined as the team with highest (positive) net worth at the end of the game. An additional prize will be awarded to the team that contributes the most to collective efforts to avoid a tragedy of the commons for the entire fishery. This “collaboration” prize will be selected by vote, with one vote per team, after we end the simulation.

We encourage you to get in touch with your teammate(s) ahead of time to devise a strategy for the game. (This will work best if you get in touch after playing the game solo). Further, you might consider reaching out to other teams to explore possible collaborative strategies for management of the fishery. But it’s up to you to weigh the benefits and drawbacks of potential strategies of collaboration and profit maximization (recall there are exciting prizes available in both categories). Each team of students should choose one teammate (ideally the teammate with the most reliable and fastest Wi-fi connectivity) to be the official “Captain” and enter the decisions about fleet. We have found that its much more satisfying to run the game from a desktop or laptop computer, rather than from a tablet or smartphone.

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\* We use the term “fisher” to include all people involved in fishing.