

AQUARIUM

Aquariums are getting more and more popular, this guide will go through some of the basics of what is involved in setting up and maintaining a freshwater aquarium.

Fun Fact: It has been scientifically proven that watching an aquarium reduces stress in people!

SETTING UP AN AQUARIUM

Common Misconception: People generally think that larger aquariums require more work. In reality they require about the same amount of maintenance as a smaller aquarium and actually have more stable water conditions.

PICKING THE RIGHT LOCATION

- Areas to avoid:
 - Near windows: direct sunlight will cause faster algae growth
 - Near heaters & cooling ducts: temperature fluctuations cause stress in fish
 - High traffic areas: if the tanks gets bumped a lot this can also cause stress

STEPS FOR SETTING UP

- Unpack, check for cracks, and rinse thoroughly, never use detergents or commercial cleansers, even trace amounts left over are very harmful to fish.
- Place tank in bottom frame if supplied, this will help distribute the weight evenly.
- Place aquarium on recommended stand: these stands are designed to take the weight of a full aquarium. Manufacturer's warranty is void if not placed on a recommended stand.

Fun Fact: Aquariums weigh about 10 lbs per gallon when fully filled!

- Add gravel, plants, decorations.(rinse first – except live plants)
- **Rule for gravel:** 1 lb per gallon will give about an inch of cover. Double this if live plants are present, this will give a better foundation for their roots. Good, hardy live plants: java fern, hygrophila polysperma, vallisneria spiralis, anubias, swords. Recommend fertilizer.
- Set up and position filter and heater but do not plug in. Give these a rinse as well.

- Gently fill aquarium with luke warm water (use a plate to break the force of the water). Do not use hot or cold water as this may cause the aquarium to crack. Make sure the aquarium does not leak.
- Condition water (AquaPlus or Paradise Step 1, Cycle or Paradise Step 2)
- Position canopy. Plug in heater (the heater must be submerged for at least ½ an hour before plugging it in to avoid it cracking), filter (prime filter with water), and lights.
- The water will be cloudy in a new aquarium but should go away in a week or so. Use of a water clarifier and/or polywool will help.

ADDING FISH

Common Misconception: The tank must sit without fish for a number of weeks to settle.

- Fish can be added as long as the **water has been dechlorinated** (using Aquaplus or Paradise Step 1) and is at the **correct temperature**.
- Stock the aquarium **slowly** (number of fish added will depend on size).
 - General rule for adding fish is **20% of the maximum capacity** at a time. For example if you have a 10 gallon tank you should add 2 inch of fish at a time.
 - Leave at least a week in between adding fish.

Floating procedure: Float bag in tank for 10mins, add a couple cups of tank water to the bag and float another 10mins, add a couple more cups of aquarium water to the bag and float another 10mins, then net out the fish and release into the tank, discard bagged water. Add a dose of Aquaplus or Paradise Step 1, they contain stress relieving reagents.

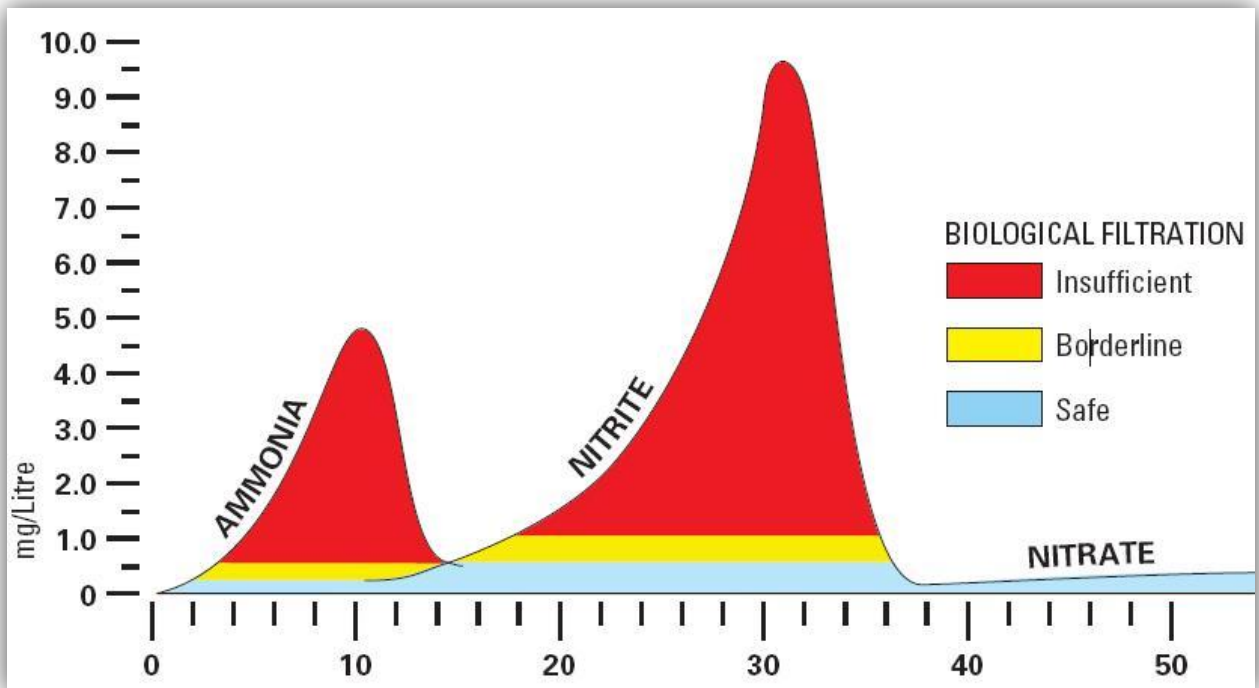
NITROGEN CYCLE

The nitrogen cycle will happen in any new set up as soon as fish and/or live plants are added to the tank. This is how the nitrogen cycle is explained:

- Fish waste and dead plant matter break down into ammonia (most toxic).
- Beneficial bacteria (*Nitrosomonas bacteria*) break down ammonia into nitrite (less toxic).
 - This takes 10-12 days if no water treatment is added. The bacteria need time to reproduce and form a colony.
- Beneficial bacteria (*Nitrobacter bacteria*) break down nitrite to nitrate (least toxic).
 - This takes 30 days if no water treatment is added, again time is needed to reproduce and form a colony.
- Nitrate is relatively harmless to fish (at light to moderate concentrations: 50ppm or lower) and can be absorbed by live plants. Paradise Algae Reducer or Nutrafin Waste

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Control can be added to help break down waste and dead plant matter into ammonia so that the tank stays cleaner. Doing monthly water changes will also help get rid of Nitrate.



- Cycle or Paradise BioStarter need to be added to a new aquarium to prevent ammonia and nitrite from reaching dangerous levels. Adding a double dose to a brand new aquarium is recommended and is not harmful to fish.
- If a treatment is not added the ammonia and nitrite spikes are very toxic and can lead to fish death. By adding Cycle or Paradise BioStarter the ammonia and nitrite levels will remain in the “safe” zone.
- **Paradise Express** is a great choice for cycling tanks. It is live bacteria as opposed to dormant bacteria and will cycle a tank in a few days as opposed to a month or more. When using Paradise Express it is important to test the water everyday so that you can see the ammonia and nitrite spikes and know when the cycle is over (ammonia and nitrite will read 0).

MAINTENANCE

Aquarium maintenance requires very little work as long as it's performed regularly.

- Water test weekly for the first 6 weeks (ammonia, nitrite, and pH most important), then test monthly after that.

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DAILY

- Remove any debris regularly (dead plants, etc).
- Check general health of fish; general behavior, any marks on them.
- Check all equipment is working properly (heater and filter).
- Check temperature.
- Wipe down algae.

MONTHLY

- 25-30% water change. Gravel vacuuming will both clean the gravel and remove tank water.
- Always use AquaPlus or Paradise Step 1, and Cycle or Paradise Step 2 during water changes. The water added should be as close to the tank temperature as possible and treated before putting it in the tank.
- Algae scrubbing.
- Filter maintenance.
 - Replace any media that needs replacing.
 - Clean out impeller.

FILTER TYPES

INTERNAL FILTER

- Good for smaller aquariums (up to 57 gallons), reptile/amphibian tanks that are semi-aquatic.
- Can be placed in many positions and hidden from sight.
- Can be used as a supplemental filter in larger tanks, water polishing.
- Some people don't like the sound of falling water from clip-on filters.
- If this is the only filter the tank can go right up against a wall.
- Restarts if there is a power outage.



CLIP-ON FILTER

- Hangs on back side of tank, must be filled with water before starting.
- For small to medium/large tanks (up to 110 gallons).



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- More versatile for filter media.
- Possibility of a motor burnout if the power goes out.

CANISTER FILTER

- Sits underneath tank.
- Best cleaning ability.
- For larger aquariums (but best choice even for smaller aquariums).
- Most versatile for filter media.
- Largest surface area of filtration.
- Restarts if there is a power outage.



FILTER MEDIA

Each type of filter will contain mechanical, chemical, and biological media.

MECHANICAL

- **Sponge:** will remove debris from the tank, must be cleaned minimum monthly to avoid clogging up, replace if it becomes torn and clogged or every 3 months. Also acts as a location for beneficial bacteria to grow.



CHEMICAL

- **Carbon:** removes impurities from water. Must be changed once a month usually right after a water change.
- **Opti-carb:** high quality carbon with organic absorption and ion exchange resin. Will remove protein matter, heavy metals, dissolved gasses that can cause odor and discoloration. Replace monthly. Not recommended if there are live plants in tank.



BIOLOGICAL

- **Bio Max:** used as a location for beneficial bacteria to grow. Change ½ every 6 months.



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OTHER MEDIA

- **Peat:** beneficial for plants, South American cichlids, tetras, gouramis, rasboras, killifish (fish originating from more acidic waters). It will lightly stain the water a tan color. It will also soften the water and acidify it very slowly which some fish prefer.
- **Ammonia remover:** used when there is an ammonia spike in the aquarium. Change monthly.
- **Phosphate remover:** will help control algae growth.
- **Polywool:** a finer mechanical filtration that will polish water (good for helping treat green water).
- **Zeo-carb:** ultra grade carbon and ammonia remover. Change monthly.
- **Nitrate remover:** will help control algae growth.

HEATERS

Fun Fact: Fish are cold blooded and maintain the same temperature as their environment.

- Size for 5 watts per gallon. Place in an area where there is good water movement but away from aerator and filter output, these have a tendency to knock the heater off the tank.
- Let the heater sit in the water for ½ an hour before turning it on to avoid cracking.
- Normal temperature for tropical fish is 78-80°F.

SUBMERSIBLE HEATERS

- Are generally smaller.
- Can be completely submerged.
- More accurate.
- Most have a pre-set temperature dial.

CLIP-ON (NON-SUBMERSIBLE) HEATERS

- Attaches to the side of the tank.
- Will have a water-line on them, the water should never be higher than this line.
- Most will have a dial to turn the temperature up or down.

LIGHTING

- Lights should be on **12 hours a day**, preferably with room lights turned on ½ hour before and ½ hour after turning aquarium lights on/off (this replicates more natural light conditions).

INCANDESCENT

- Cheaper to buy but less efficient, won't last as long as fluorescent bulbs.
- Get very hot and can raise the aquarium temperature especially in smaller tanks.
- Not as bright as fluorescent.
- Size for 1-3 Watts per gallon.



FLUORESCENT

- Much higher efficiency, brighter (cool running).
- Better for live plants.
- Will bring out colors better on fish, plants, ornaments, etc.
- To install: put both prongs into slot and turn 90°.

Power-Glo: Super bright (strong blue spectrum intensifying fish color)

Life-Glo: Full Spectrum (simulates mid-day sun, natural colors, good for plants)

Aqua-Glo: Fish color enhancing



OPTIONAL ACCESSORIES

- Powerheads: main purpose in freshwater tanks is to increase oxygen level by exciting the water surface; oxygen is more easily absorbed through moving water than still water. It also has a venturi valve, the pumped water pulls in air from a tube that is out of the water.



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- Air pumps: provide oxygenation and for decoration.
 - If the pump sits below the water level of the tank it is important to have a one way valve and drop loop. The one way valve prevents water from entering the pump in the case of a power outage. The drop loop prevents any drips along the tubing from entering the pump.



- Surface skimmer: will remove surface film and provides extra oxygenation.
 - Attaches to a filter.
 - Flow is adjustable.



FOOD TYPES

- Avoid over feeding, feed every second day while the aquarium is cycling (first 6 weeks), after that feed once a day (or every second day is still fine), at supper time, the amount the fish will eat in 2 minutes, remove any excess with a net.
- Do not feed fish the first day they are brought home.

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FLAKE AND PELLETS



- Used for herbivores.
- Flakes will float (best for small or baby fish).
- Pellets will float and sink depending on which variety (cleaner than flakes).
- Pellets are recommended for any automatic fish feeders.



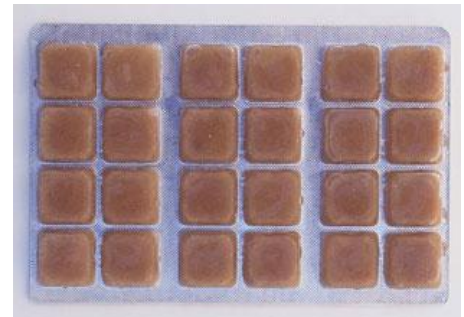
SINKING TABLETS AND WAFERS

- Used for bottom dwelling fish.
- Herbivores
- There are 2 kinds
 - For algae eaters
 - For catfish and other bottom dwellers



FROZEN

- Thaw out frozen food before feeding, it cannot be re-frozen.
- For carnivores & herbivores depending on the type of food.
- Not for fish like gars and piranha that will only eat live food.



LIVE FOOD & PREDATOR STICKS

- For carnivore fish.
- Recommended to offer what can be consumed in 1 day for live fish.
- It's a good idea to mix live and sticks for a more balanced diet.



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