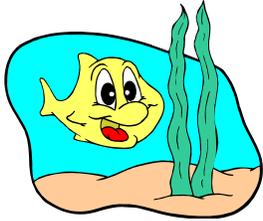


KIDS GUIDE

TO KEEPING AN AQUARIUM

Keeping a fish tank can be a lot of fun!



You can pick out all kinds of great decorations and colors for your tank. You can get fish shaped like silver coins, or that look like rockets with stripes, and even catfish that have a suction cup for a mouth!

You can choose from all sorts of colors and shapes and sizes. (But no big fish with little fish unless you want to see that little fish become dinner!) Before you go get that first shark (no Jaws thank you!) or guppy, you need to set up your tank using the right parts so your fish will be happy.

Tank and Hood:

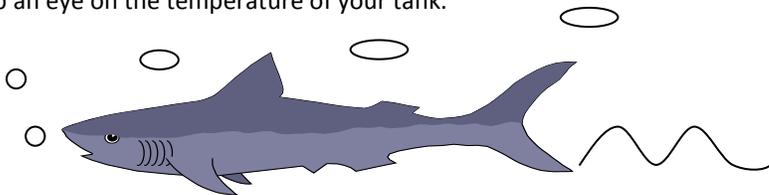
Of course you'll need a tank. The best size to start with is at least a ten-gallon or more. The larger tanks stay cleaner longer and you can keep more fish in them. You will also need a top to go on the tank so the fish can't jump out. The best thing for this is a hood. The hood will cover the whole tank and has a light built into it. Fish need light just like you do to stay healthy. If you keep them in the dark all the time they will never know when to wake up!

Filter and Gravel:

Next get a filter that is easy to use and clean. Ask us about the filter we think is the best. Most filters now sit on the back of the tank on the outside. Inside the filter is a pad or two that can help keep the water clean. Gravel is important to have at the bottom. You can choose any color you like (or choose two or more colors if you want, the fish don't mind!). Gravel is where for good bacteria live in your tank. Bacteria are little creatures you can't see but are very important. They help break down the waste, the bad stuff, that the fish give off into the water.

Heater:

For most freshwater fish except goldfish, a heater is needed. You may have heard the words "tropical fish". What this means is that these fish come from a warm part of the world and so need to be kept in warm water. After being set, a heater will go on and off to keep the temperature of the tank the same at all times. Fish need to have the tank at a certain temperature or they will get sick. At this time you should get a thermometer to keep an eye on the temperature of your tank.



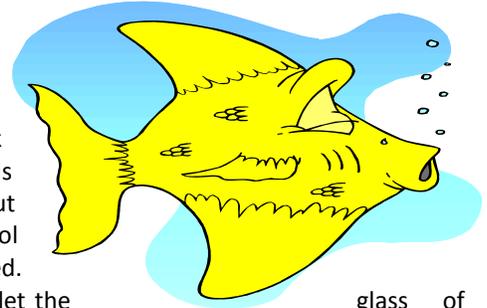
Conditioner and Test Kit:

A water conditioner must be added before fish are put in your tank. This removes chlorine that can kill fish. It also helps your new fish get used to your tank. When fish are moved from one of our tanks to your tank they lose their invisible body coat. This coat protects them from diseases and keeps them healthy. A good water conditioner will help them produce a new coat quickly. At this point, you should also buy a pH kit to test and control the pH of the water. Testing the water is simple and you can follow the kit's instructions.

Setting Up Your Tank:

Pick a place for your tank that is strong and level. Water weighs eight pounds per gallon so your tank will be heavy. A fish tank stand is the best thing to put your tank on, and we have stands available here at our store. Rinse the gravel in a bucket to get out the dust and put it in the tank. Fill the tank with water that feels cool to your touch. Put the thermometer on or in the tank as needed.

Place the heater in the tank but **DON'T PLUG IT IN!** You have to let the heater become the same temperature as the tank water before you plug your heater in. This will take about 10-15 minutes. Some heaters you can see where to set it to and some you may have to adjust. Follow the directions given on the heater. You want the water to be 76 to 80 degrees.



glass of

Getting the Tank Ready:



is at 7.0 before adding fish.

Set up your filter and get it running. At this point you can add the water conditioner to the tank. Just read the directions on how much to add on the bottle. At this point check the pH of your tank. Think of pH like the habitat, or environment, of the tank. A pH that is correct will not stress the fish, but a pH that is wrong can cause trouble. If you took a fish from the Amazon rain forest and placed it in a lake in Alaska the fish would not live. Think of pH in this way. On the test kit the pH is measured from around 6.0 (acidic) to 8.0 (basic or alkaline). Most freshwater fish like it right in the middle at 7.0 (neutral). If you take a fish from 7.0 water and put it in 7.5 water, the fish will feel like it's gone from the rain forest to Alaska. Test and change your pH as needed so it

Adding the Fish:

It is best to have your tank set up for a day or two before adding the first fish. Make sure the temperature is staying between 76 to 80 degrees, and the pH is 7.0. We will be glad here at our store to double-check your pH for you. Just bring in a small sample of your tank water in a clean jar or small plastic bag. Then you can pick out fish! You can start with about four inches worth of fish per ten gallons of water. You don't want to rush and get too many at once. They will produce too much waste for the new tank. We will be glad to show you what kinds of fish would be good in your tank. You can then choose the ones you like best!

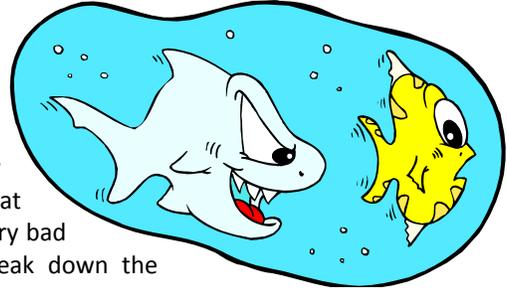


Taking Fish Home:

We will put the fish in bags for you to take home. When you get home float the bags on top of the tank for ten minutes. This will let the temperature of the water in the bag to become the same as the tank. After ten minutes, open the bags and let a little of your tank water into the bag. Wait 2-3 minutes and let a little more water into the bag from the tank. Do this one more time and then you can let the fish go. Congratulations! You now have a complete fish tank!

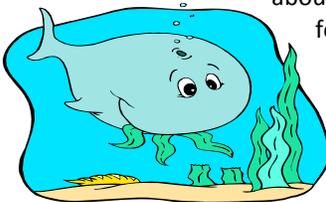
Adding More Fish:

You must wait a month before adding more fish. During this time the good bacteria will start to grow and live in your filter and gravel. They help break down the fish waste into things that are not so bad for the fish. One waste product, ammonia, is very bad for fish. When a tank is new, there are no bacteria to break down the ammonia. But the bacteria will start to grow and take care of the ammonia when you put your first fish in. If you add too many fish at once, the bacteria cannot keep up and the ammonia will get too high in your tank. A lot of ammonia in a tank can cause the fish to get sick or die. So this is why you wait a month before adding more fish. You can keep a total of one inch of fish per gallon. So a 20-gallon tank, for example, can have 20 inches of fish. You should never put too many fish in a tank. The bacteria cannot take care of more than one inch of fish per gallon. There just isn't enough space for them.



Taking Care of the Tank:

Now you have fish swimming in your tank and need to take care of them. This is very easy to do. First, only feed your fish once a day. They should only get 4-5 flakes per fish. This will seem like a little bit but think about how little their stomach is compared to yours! Some fish are pigs! Don't be fooled into thinking they are starving to death. They are not! And all the food that goes in them must come out in the water. If you feed too much, the ammonia will build up too quickly and the bacteria won't be able to keep up. You cannot starve a fish but it is very easy to overfeed. We will be glad to show you here at our store how much to feed.



Changing the Water:

Water changes are very important to keep a fish tank in good shape. You only need to change 10% of the water once a week. Check your pH everyday for the first week. You may find the pH has gone up or down. If you put fish from 7.0 water into 7.0 water then the fish will be okay. They will also be okay if the pH goes up or down while they are in the water. But they will not be happy living in the wrong pH. So you will need to change it back to 7.0.

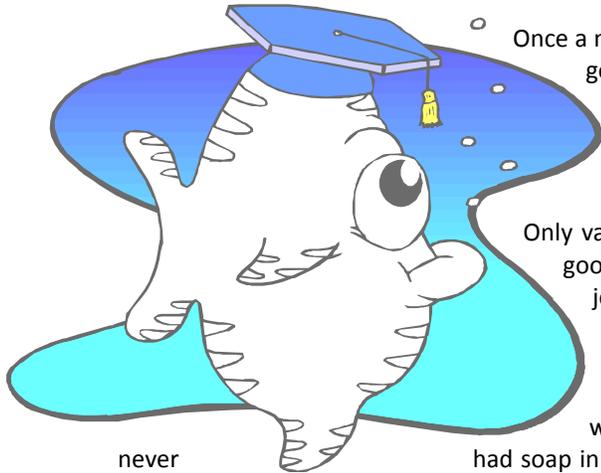
This is where you must be very careful! When there are no fish in the tank, you can change the pH in a few minutes. But when there are fish in the tank you must change it slowly over a period of 3 to 4 days. So add only a tiny bit of the chemical you need to control pH into your tank every 3 to 4 hours. This way the pH will be changed very slowly. As your tank gets older your pH will stay more at the correct pH of 7.0. Older tanks only need their pH checked once or twice a week at most.

New Water:

When you change the gallon of water, add a few drops of water conditioner to the new water before it goes in the tank. Change the pH if needed to 7.0.

Make sure the new water is about the same temperature as the tank. Feel the tank water and then the tap water to get them close in temperature. Always add water that is at the right pH to help keep it correct. You can change the pH quickly in the bucket of new water because there are no fish in it.

Vacuuming the Gravel:



never
into your tank! Soap will kill fish!

Once a month, instead of changing 10% from the top of the tank, you will get to vacuum the gravel (but don't use the one in the closet!). You will need to get a special gravel vacuum. We will show you how to use the vacuum. This is needed to get any solid waste out of the gravel.

Only vacuum the gravel once a month. You don't want to disturb your good bacteria that live in the gravel too much or they won't do their job well! As you vacuum the gravel, you will be taking out water. Only take out about one-third of your tank and no more. You don't have to hit every part of the gravel every month anyway. The new water you put in should be the correct pH and have water conditioner added. And only use a new bucket that has had soap in it. You can get one at a hardware store. But never put any soap

Filter and Glass Cleaning:

Your filter will have pads, or cartridges, that will need to be changed or cleaned once a month. The charcoal in the pad or bag is only good for a month. Charcoal helps take bad stuff out of the water and keeps it looking clear. Ask us here at our store about how to keep your filter clean. We can also help you keep the glass clean of algae with special scrapers and other cleaning products. Algae is a type of plant. It cannot hurt fish, but it can grow quickly and needs to be cleaned off every now and then from the glass and decorations.

IN CONCLUSION:

You may lose fish sometimes, and then there will be times when you might end up with baby fish in the tank! Have fun with your tank. If you need any help or would like to learn more, we will be glad to help you. Keeping fish is really a great hobby. You are in control of your fish and their tank. Take good care of them!

