

Full Time RVing: The Definitive Guide to Treating Your Tank

As a full time RVer, it's vital that you properly maintain your RV waste water systems to avoid and prevent problems. It's always better and typically requires less energy and time to avoid a problem than to have to deal with it later. There's quite a bit of misinformation out there regarding the best ways to treat your tank while living in it full-time, so we've developed this easy-to-follow guide that will teach you how to effectively treat your black tank and gray tank as a full-time RVer. **Our recommendations in this guide are based on 40-gallon tanks; for RVers with smaller or larger tanks, adjust our recommendations according to your tank size.**

Full-Time Black Water Tanks

As a full time RVer, the two most likely issues in your holding tanks are: odors and waste accumulation. There are two types of products for black tanks that will take care of both of these issues in one treatment: bacteria and enzyme treatments and zinc and enzyme treatments. Bacteria and enzyme treatments (like [Unique RV Digest-It](#)) are always our first suggestion because they get out ahead of clogs and odors before they have a chance to develop.

We always recommend rinsing for at least 30 minutes every 3-5 dumps to be sure the tank has been thoroughly rinsed on a regular basis. When you start rinsing, you might see clear water coming out after a few minutes, but keep rinsing because often there will be a second wave of waste that comes out. Use the procedural steps to the right to treat your black tank when full-time RVing.

Procedure

1. After dumping your black tank, use a rinser wand or back-flusher to thoroughly rinse the tank; run the back-flusher or rinser wand until only clear, fresh water is coming out of your discharge hose.

Note: Perform a short rinse after every dump, but every 3-5 dumps, rinse for 30 minutes or more even if you see clear water coming out only a few minutes into the flush.

2. **Close your black tank valve.**
3. Add several inches of water to your toilet bowl.
4. Shake the [RV Digest-It](#) bottle (if using liquid) thoroughly before each use.

Note: Bacteria in liquid settle to the bottom over time, and to ensure that the correct amount of bacteria is added, the product needs to be well mixed before each treatment.

5. Pour 2 ounces (or one drop-in/scoop of powder) of RV Digest-It into your toilet bowl.
6. Flush your toilet.
7. Add several inches of water to your toilet bowl, and get back to your day.
8. Repeat these steps each time you dump your tank, whether you are on hook-up or not.



Full-Time Gray Water Tanks

Everyone has differing ideas on how to properly treat a gray water holding tank. For full-time RVers, the method you ultimately choose is your decision, and it should be based on how you routinely camp. What follows are our gray tank treatment recommendations when using [Unique RV Digest-It](#) and full-time camping.

Gray Valve Open on Hook-Up

RV full-timers who camp on sewer hook-up should keep the gray valve open. We know this sounds counter to when we always say leave your black valve closed, but your gray tank should be treated differently when on hook-up. Leaving your gray valve open will allow gray water to immediately drain to the sewer, helping to keep sensors free of oil and grease and working properly. Sensors cannot become coated with the greasy film and misread when the valve is open because the water will never get high enough to reach them. There are still some treatment processes to consider regardless of hook-up status (described on pages 3-4).

P-Trap in the Sewer Hose

A p-trap is just a dip in the sewer discharge hose so that there is always a small amount of water in the line to block sewer gases from wafting back through the hose and into your RV. These gases can be dangerous to your health as they contain methane, so consider getting the tools you need to always have a p-trap in the line.

Important: In some states, you are required by law to keep your discharge hose off the ground and failing to do so is punishable by hefty fines, so please make sure you are aware of all local laws and regulations and collect the tools you need to comply. Best practice is to always keep your hose and p-trap off the ground.

No Solid Waste in the Gray Tank

The majority of the waste going down your sink, shower, or dishwasher drains should be liquid, so clogs shouldn't be a concern. It's important to never let food waste or any other type of solid waste into your gray tank. Even large amounts of liquid grease can cause lots of problems, so strive to limit the amount of grease and food solids that go into your gray tank. Here are some ways you can prevent those things from reaching your gray tank:

- Wiping your dishes well before washing
- Using a sink strainer
- Using paper plates (skip the washing altogether)

Treat Gray Tank with RV Digest-It

If you are a full-time boondocker, treating your gray tank can relieve tank headaches before they ever develop. [RV Digest-It](#) uses bacteria to treat the tank, which means antibacterial soaps will kill the bacteria, so wash your dishes and hands with [Dawn Ultra](#) dish soap because it has great grease-fighting power and won't harm the bacteria. RV Digest-It will begin to break down any solids that do make it into the tank and will help control the foul odors that can develop in a gray tank.

Important: Only consistently use tank treatments in your gray tank when dry camping/boondocking where you must keep your valve closed. Using it on hook-up with the valve open would be a waste of product and money.



Full-Time RVing on Sewer Hook-up

When camping on sewer hook-up, you need to know the correct ways to use your tank valves because there is a slight variation in how you would use them while dry camping or boondocking.

Black Tanks

Let us reiterate again the importance of keeping your black water valve closed even if you are on sewer hook-up. Keeping the black valve open is a recipe for pyramid plugs and other problems that are easily avoided by just closing the valve when not actively dumping a full tank. This means that whether or not you are on sewer hook-up, treating your black tank with a good bacteria and enzyme tank treatment (like [Unique RV Digest-It](#)) is necessary to break down waste and control odors. This type of treatment is the best way to combat clogs, odors, and misreading sensors all at the same time.

Guide: [Why It's Crucial to Keep Your RV Black Water Valve Closed](#)

Gray Tanks

When on sewer hook-up, it is actually better to keep your gray valve open. When your valve is closed, you are adding soapy, greasy water to the tank every time you use the shower or sinks. Each time, the overall water level slowly rises, which means that floating grease and soap have plenty of opportunity to cling to tank walls and sensors. Leaving your valve open on hook-up allows greasy water to immediately flow into the sewer, foiling the chance for that grime to stick to sensors. Built-up grease can still be present in the drain lines and on the tank floor even while leaving the valve open, which is why we highly recommend performing a simple, once-a-week procedure to remove that buildup and prevent odors.

Remember, tank odors can also come from a discharge line that doesn't have a p-trap in it; you may just have sewer gases invading because you don't have a p-trap instead of odor-causing grease and grime. You may also need to perform a deep cleaning on your gray and/or black tanks; built-up waste that isn't cleaned out with regular deep cleaning can also cause odors.

Procedure

1. Keep your gray tank valve open during the week, and use normally.
2. Once per week, close your gray valve and fill your kitchen sink with warm water.
3. Shake the [RV Digest-It](#) bottle very well, and pour 2 oz of it into the sink.

Note: Bacteria in liquid settle to the bottom over time, and to ensure that the correct amount of bacteria is added, the product needs to be well mixed before each treatment.

4. Release the water so it drains into your gray tank.
5. Use your tank normally until it reaches capacity.
6. When it's full, open your valve and dump your tank.
7. Leave the valve open for a week and then repeat this process regularly.



Full-Time RVing while Dry Camping/Boondocking

If you are dry camping or boondocking full time and don't have any-time access to sewer hook-up, it's crucial that you use a waste treatment product in both tanks to control odors, prevent clogs, and keep your sensors in proper working order.

Black Tanks

Using a high-quality bacteria and enzyme treatment product in your black tank is extra important when boondocking full time because you want the solid waste in the black tank to be as liquified as possible to make dumping easy and hold as much waste as possible before dumping. We understand that boondockers tend to conserve water and not allow as much in either tank so they can go longer without dumping wastewater tanks and refilling freshwater tanks, but avoiding clogs is probably a better goal than a prolonged dumping timeline. This is especially important when camping in high heat to control heightened odors and clogs. Using more water and a good bacteria treatment product (like [Unique RV Digest-It](#)) will help combat all potential issues whether the heat is high or just right.

Gray/Galley Tanks

Not to beat a dead horse, but as we've said before, being on sewer hook-up means you don't need to always have treatment products to your gray/galley tanks, but it is crucial when boondocking. As the overall water level slowly rises in the gray tank, floating grease and soap get extended chances to cling to the sensors, potentially leading to misreads. The most effective routine things you can do for your gray tank while full-time dry camping/boondocking are:

- Treat the tank with [RV Digest-It](#) after every dump
- Wash your dishes and hands with non-antibacterial soap (like [Dawn Ultra](#))

As we mentioned earlier, RV Digest-It and antibacterial soaps do not mix well. Antibacterial soaps will kill the bacteria you add with RV Digest-it, so carefully consider which soaps to buy to make sure it will not negate the breakdown power of the bacteria. We recommend Dawn Ultra because it does not harm the bacteria and it is one of the best grease-cutting soaps out there, meaning every time this soap goes down your drains, it will help break up grease in the pipes and in the tank.

Procedure

1. Dump your gray/galley tank like normal.
2. Fill your kitchen sink with warm water.
3. Pour 2 oz of [RV Digest-It](#) into the sink.
4. Drain the sink water.
5. Repeat regularly once per week, after every dump, or when you smell tank odors.

Note: Regular deep cleanings (every 5-10 dumps for full-timers) will help keep tank odors at bay.

Note

[The Unique Method](#) is a 50/50 process for proper care of RV holding tanks: 50 percent the right products and 50 percent the right care habits. Full-time RVers will get just as many benefits out of using this method on a regular basis as weekend warriors will.

