



Q: What size tank do I need for tropical fish?

A: A tropical fish tank should be 3 gallons or larger to support your fish nicely. Space and money may be limitations to how big of an aquarium you get, but larger ones are easier to maintain in the long run. The general rule is one inch of adult fish per gallon of water, so a smaller tank may only be able to hold a few very small fish. Larger tanks can hold many smaller fish, or a few large fish. There are a number of things to look at regarding the size of the tank, you have to consider how many fish and plants and decorations you are adding to it, how often you are performing partial water changes and the number of daily feedings.

Q: What about feeding and maintenance?

A: When feeding it is best to feed your fish small amounts of flake or pelleted food a couple times a day. Pet owners sometimes tend to overfeed, unfortunately to the detriment of their pet. Tropical fish have certain needs such as a constant room temperature between 71°F and 84°F that does not regularly have large fluctuations. Observe the condition of the fish and the water temperature daily. Monitor your water chemistry weekly, perform scheduled maintenance. Keep the aquarium water clean and water parameters healthy by faithfully performing a 25% water change every 2 to 4 weeks, and not overfeeding. Often people think just because they have a large tank they are not required to perform necessary monthly maintenance; so untrue. Be responsible and you will have many years of enjoyment with your fish.

Q: Where should I set up my aquarium?

A: Pick a location away from direct sunlight, heat, or air conditioning. Direct sunlight can cause unwanted algae growth that can cover your rocks and decorations. Placement of the aquarium away from heating and air conditioning vents is also important, because it is easier to maintain proper aquarium temperature when the surrounding air temperature is relatively stable. Place your new aquarium where you will be able to see and appreciate the beauty of it.

Q: How long after setting up the aquarium should I wait before adding fish?

A: Allow the aquarium's water to stabilize to room temperature before adding fish. You will reduce the stress on the new fish by doing so. Usually one to two days will be sufficient to enable the aquarium to achieve room temperature. Also have your aquarium store test your water to be sure the water is safe to add fish. In fact, most



aquarium specialty dealers will test your water as a service to ensure a balanced environment before adding fish. It is our strongest recommendation that you follow their advice; their expertise will provide you with invaluable information and assistance along the way.

Q: What kind of fish can I have?

A: Begin by talking to your pet store people about which fish are best suited for your aquarium size, which fish are compatible with each other, and how many would be appropriate for your aquarium. Inform them that you have just set up a new aquarium so they can recommend hardy fish. Select fish that are healthy and active. Be sure that the fish are eating and acting normally. Check for ragged fins that can be caused by bacteria and white spots caused by parasites. Always choose healthy looking fish.

Avoid difficult species or those with special feeding requirements until you have gained enough experience and confidence. Some good choices for first fish include zebra danios, white clouds, swordtails, platys, mollies, and guppies. If possible, purchase tank-raised fish because they are more likely to adapt quickly to the aquarium and their new surroundings. They will also be less stressed and more apt to be eating than non-captive raised fish. Bring your fish home directly from the store; you do not want them to be in the bag any longer than necessary.

Q: How many fish can I have?

A: General recommendation is one inch of fish per gallon of aquarium. Add only a few recommended fish at first, gradually introducing more over the next 4-6 weeks. One to two fish in the beginning that are each approximately 1-2 inches long is a good guide to follow. Remember to choose only fish that are active and healthy. Take special care not to overcrowd your aquarium. Fewer, healthier fish are better than an overcrowded, stressed population.

Q: What is the best way to add new fish to my aquarium?

A: Follow the procedure below, step-by-step.

1. Without opening the bag containing your new fish, float it on the aquarium's water surface, so the temperatures equalize for 15-20 minutes.
2. Next, take the bag with fish and pour the water with fish into a fish net, pouring it over a bowl or bucket, so you can discard the water; do not add the water



from the bag to your new aquarium to prevent possibly transferring harmful parasites or bacteria from the stores water.

3. Gently submerge the net with your new fish into the aquarium and allow the fish to swim out into the fish tank.
4. It is recommended to keep your aquarium light off for a few hours, as a dark aquarium is less stressful to your fish. Be sure to provide hiding places, this also helps alleviate stress.

Q: How often should I feed my fish?

A: Feed your fish twice a day. A few pellets or flakes per fish is sufficient, do not overfeed as it can affect the health of your fish and aquarium water quality. The fish should eat all the food in 2-3 minutes. Overfeeding your aquarium is one of the most common mistakes made in aquarium ownership and is a major cause of fish loss. Overfeeding results in the accumulation of waste due to uneaten, leftover fish food plus increased amounts of waste produced by the fish eating more than they need. It is easy to want to feed extra since your fish always appear hungry and seem happy to see you, especially when it is feeding time. Keep in mind that your fish will always become excited when they see you coming towards the tank with food. Do not be fooled by their ability to look hungry, as this is typically only a conditioned feeding response when you approach the tank.

Q: Why is there excessive bubbles on water surface?

A: Bubbles are caused in the aquarium due to surface tension. The natural properties of the water, or rather the impurities in the water, will increase surface tension. The impurities in water come about due to overfeeding, improper filter maintenance and infrequent water changes.

Recommendation: Perform a 25% partial water change by siphoning water from the gravel with a gravel vacuum cleaner. Refill with fresh water that has been treated with a water conditioner. Tank maintenance and correct feeding of your fish are very essential to maintaining a healthy environment in the aquarium. Also, have your aquarium water checked by the local pet shop and treat the water depending on what the testing indicates.



Q: Why is my aquarium's water turning green?

A: Unwanted algae results from overfeeding or too much light. Reduce the amount of fish food you are feeding your fish, overfeeding means more waste and unwanted algae may result. Also, reduce the amount of light your tank is getting. If you have your lights on eight hours per day, lower the length of time down to six or less. If the

tank is getting direct sunlight from a window put up a blackout curtain to minimize the amount of light getting to your aquarium. If possible, move your aquarium to another location away from direct window light.

To rid your aquarium of algae, perform a partial water change using a gravel siphon that allows you to get down into the gravel. Perform a 20%-25% water change every two weeks to lower the level of fish waste that algae utilize as a nutrient source. Lastly, try adding some live aquarium plants. Live aquarium plants can help "lock up" nutrients in your aquarium that algae need as a fuel source in order to grow.

Q: Why is my aquarium's water foamy?

A: If your aquarium is newly set-up, it may be from the tap water conditioner you used. Some water conditioners contain aloe or a thickening agent that can cause foam to form at the aquarium's surface. Wait a couple days and the foam will disappear. If your aquarium has been set up a couple weeks it is time for you to do a partial water change.

Q: How often should I clean my aquarium?

A: Ideally, you should change 20% - 25% of the aquarium's water every 3 to 4 weeks, depending on the number of fish and amount of daily feedings, by performing a partial water change using a gravel vacuum siphon. A gravel vacuum will enable you to remove fish waste and other detritus that have accumulated in the gravel. Be sure to use a tap water conditioner when refilling the tank to remove chlorine, chloramines and ammonia from your tap water that can be harmful to your fish. It is recommended to fill an unused bucket with freshwater the night before performing a water change to allow the water to achieve room temperature. Use this for your water change.



Q: How should I clean the outside of my aquarium?

A: Use a soft micro fiber cloth with warm water only—NEVER USE CHEMICALS TO CLEAN THE TANK. Soaps and detergents can damage plastic tanks. The overspray when using a glass cleaner can be drawn into the filter and harm your fish. Avoid using any used rags or sponges that have been used for cleaning that may contain harmful chemicals; these can be scratch and damage your tank.

Q: How often should I do a water change?

A: Perform a 25% water change every 3 to 4 weeks (more frequently if necessary, depending on the number of fish and number of daily feedings). Use a gravel vacuum siphon to thoroughly remove any uneaten food and waste buildup.

At the same time, replace your filter cartridge every 2 to 3 weeks. Filter pads can be rinsed once or twice before changing. As carbon gets older, it becomes less efficient in removing discolorations and odors.

Q: Heater or No Heater for Your Fish?

A: One of the most important considerations in maintaining a healthy aquarium and stable environment is your aquarium's water temperature. A steady water temperature is necessary so your fish are not stressed and susceptible to disease. If you find the aquarium's water temperature is fluctuating daily by more than a couple of degrees you should consider adding an aquarium heater and thermometer.

Fish cannot regulate their body temperature; they have to rely on the temperature of the water in their tank. So what water temperature is best for your pet? The safe temperature zone should always be determined by the type of fish you have. Goldfish do better in cooler water, while cichlids and most other tropical fish require higher temperatures. Although tropical fish can survive in water ranging from 65°F to 84°F, most tropical fish do best when kept in temperatures around 74°F to 80°F. Goldfish tend to do better when their aquarium water temperature is between 65°F and 72°F.

There are a number of easy to use, inexpensive aquarium thermometers to choose from that will help you monitor the water temperature of your fish tank. Choose one that best suits your aquarium shape and size, such as a Digital Thermometer (stick on), Stainless Steel Thermometer (hang-on tank); Plastic Thermometer (suction cup) or Floating Glass Thermometer (includes suction cup also); all will enable you to monitor water temperature.



Which size heater should you use? For desktop aquariums 5 watts per gallon is recommended, so a 3-gallon aquarium will require a 15-watt heater in order to keep the tank at a steady temperature. Go with a reputable aquarium heater manufacturer such as Aqueon that has been in the heater business for decades. You do not want to purchase a low cost, inferior heater that can malfunction, harming your fish.

Tropical Fish

Tropical fish are most healthy in the range of 74 °F to 80°F. Some tropical fish may need to be kept cooler, while some may need a warmer temperature. Check with your local aquarium store or online for the temperature requirements that best suit your fish.

Betta Fish

If you own a Betta fish, you might be wondering if you need an aquarium heater. The answer is yes, Bettas are tropical fish that prefer warm water ideally between 74 °F to 80°F.

Coldwater Fish

There are several different species of fish that qualify as cold-water fish and tend to do better in colder water temperatures. Zebra Danios and White Clouds are two popular coldwater fish; also goldfish are included in this category. Many true coldwater fish cannot tolerate the warm water that we generally keep tropical fish in. A water temperature between 65°F and 72°F provides an optimum environment for these fish.

If your ambient room temperature remains constant and does not fluctuate, there is a good chance that you may not need to add an aquarium heater. Use an aquarium thermometer to monitor tank temperature. If you see that the water temperature is bouncing up and down then add a small heater to keep the temperature steady at the same, constant temperature.

Q: How does a power filter work?

A: Power filters are used to keep your aquarium's water crystal-clear and fish healthy, by purifying the aquarium's water, effectively removing organic pollutants including colors, odors, heavy metals, and toxic gases. Power filters function by drawing water through a filter cartridge that contains activated carbon to remove organics and solid



wastes and other debris, returning cleansed water back to the aquarium and your fish.

Q: Why does my aquarium water have a bad odor?

A: The first thing to do is test your water for ammonia and nitrite with an aquarium test kit. A smell is a sign of excess waste, usually from overcrowding or excess feeding and uneaten fish food. First, if you have too many fish and your tank is overcrowded, go ahead and remove some of your fish and place them in a different fish tank (be sure to acclimate them to the new aquarium). Then perform a 25% partial water change with a gravel vacuum, gently cleaning the gravel on the bottom of the tank. If the issue is due to over-feeding, please cut back on the amount of food you are feeding.

Q: How can I tell if my fish is sick?

A: If your fish shows signs of being sick, it is best to remove him from the aquarium and quarantine him by itself in another smaller quarantine fish tank with a filter. Treat the sick fish in the quarantine tank rather than medicating the main aquarium and potentially harming beneficial bacteria living there. Your sick fish should be treated with the appropriate medication to cure the infection, check with your pet store for medication recommendations. Signs of possible illness include:

1. Cloudy eyes
2. Open skin sores with reddened edges
3. Sunken body or stomach
4. Rapid or labored breathing
5. Refusal to eat
6. Paleness or discoloration of the skin
7. Fins clamped against body
8. Ragged and/or frayed fins
9. Excessive hiding
10. Erratic or disoriented swimming
11. White spots on skin or fins
12. Scratching against decorations or gravel
13. Red streaks in fins with discolorations around edges of fins



Q: How to Care for Your Fish Tank

A: To keep your aquarium looking spotless and your fish healthy it is recommended to siphon out 25% of the aquarium's water with a gravel vacuum every 2 to 3 weeks, depending on the number of fish you have and amount of daily feedings, also replace the filter cartridge.

- In some cases, you may have stubborn algae growing all over the tank and want to remove it. If your fish tank is constructed of impact-resistant plastic, the algae cannot be scraped or scrubbed off as damage to the tank may occur. Do not use soap, detergents or glass cleaners as they can leave residues and damage the tank. Do not use a sponge or scrubber as it can scratch the plastic. There are special scrubbers made for use on acrylic aquariums.
- If you have a glass tank, then use a magnetic glass scraper to remove algae.
- Do not place an aquarium in a dishwasher or extremely hot water, as damage to the tank may occur.

Removing Difficult Algae

How to remove stubborn algae growth. You will need to move your fish to another container, preferably a quarantine tank, or 5-gallon bucket that has never been used with soap or detergents.

1. Unplug your filter, light, and heater (if used). Take existing water from the fish tank and fill the other container with enough water where your fish will be comfortable while you are cleaning the fish tank.
2. Net your fish out of the fish tank and place them in the other container. Be sure to use an air bubbler or power filter to keep sufficient water movement to provide oxygen to the fish.
3. Remove $\frac{1}{2}$ of the gravel and place it in a different container or bucket that has never been used with soap or detergents. After transferring the gravel, place the container to the side for now.

Cleaning Your Fish Tank

You can use one of two methods; the first method is to use vinegar and water or the second method, bleach and water if you want to give a dirty tank a good cleaning.

A. Vinegar and Water

Vinegar and water is a quick and efficient solution to remove difficult algae or mineral accumulation caused by hard water build up. White vinegar can be



used to clean your tank, filter, plastic plants, decorations, and heater tube using a 1:1 vinegar/water solution.

1. Scoop out and remove $\frac{1}{2}$ of the aquarium gravel, placing it in a different container or bucket that has never been used with soap or detergents.
2. Using the gravel vacuum, siphon out all of the water from the tank, emptying it completely. You can leave in the fish tank the remaining half of the aquarium gravel and plastic plants while you are performing the cleaning process.
3. Fill a spray bottle with $\frac{1}{2}$ white vinegar and $\frac{1}{2}$ water and shake. Take the spray bottle and spray the inside of the aquarium and decorations. Allow the solution to remain for 30 minutes.
4. Refill the fish tank with new water and add a tap water conditioner to remove chlorine and other chemicals.
5. Next, completely siphon the water out again with the gravel vacuum.
6. Rinse the gravel that has been removed and then replace it back into the tank, spreading evenly across the bottom of the tank.
7. Refill the fish tank with new water, leaving the water level approximately 3 inches from the top of the tank. Add a tap water conditioner to remove chlorine and other chemicals that can be harmful to your fish. Make sure the water temperature is the same as the original aquarium water.
8. From the other container holding your fish, fill a small plastic bag with water and gently net your fish, placing them in the plastic bag. You may need multiple plastic bags depending on the number of fish you have.
9. Acclimate your fish for 10 minutes, using the same procedure you followed initially when adding them.
10. Next top off your fish tank with the remaining water from the other container that held your fish during cleaning.
11. The fish tank is now ready for use.
12. Place filter and heater (if used) back on the tank and turn them on. If adding heater, wait 15 minutes before plugging in the heater so it can acclimate to the water temperature.
13. Release the fish, pouring bag with water gently into tank.



B. Bleach Solution – 9 Parts Water to 1 Part Bleach Ratio

Only use regular household bleach, do not use a bleach mixed with other detergents. The recommended solution is usually nine parts water to one part bleach.

1. Using a gravel vacuum, siphon the water from the tank, removing all the water from the tank completely.
2. Scoop out and remove $\frac{1}{2}$ of the aquarium gravel, placing it in a different container or bucket that has never been used with soap or detergents.
3. You can leave remaining gravel and plastic plants in the aquarium while you are performing cleaning process.
4. In a spray bottle, mix a solution of 9 parts water to 1 part bleach, a 9:1 water/bleach ratio. Be careful not to splash bleach onto surrounding areas, as bleach can be very corrosive.
5. Spray water/bleach solution on areas with algae and grime accumulation. Allow the solution to remain on these spots for 2 hours.
6. Completely fill tank with new tap water.
7. Again, using the gravel vacuum, siphon the water out entirely, pressing the vacuum into the gravel repeatedly.
8. Rinse the gravel in the bucket, then add it back to the tank, spreading it evenly across the bottom of the tank.
9. Refill the fish tank with tap water, leaving the water level 3 inches from the top of the tank; use a tap water conditioner to remove chemicals that can be harmful to your fish. Be sure the water temperature is as close to what you usually keep your fish.
10. From the other container holding your fish, fill a small plastic bag with the same water and gently net your fish, placing them in the plastic bag. You may need multiple plastic bags depending on the number of fish you have.
11. Float the plastic bag with water and fish on tank's surface for 10 minutes, following the same procedure when you first introduced them.
12. Next top off your fish tank with the remaining water from the other container that held your fish during cleaning.
13. Place filter and heater back on tank and plug into electrical outlet. If adding heater, wait 15 minutes before plugging it in so it can acclimate to tank's water temperature.
14. Release fish, pouring bag with water gently into tank.