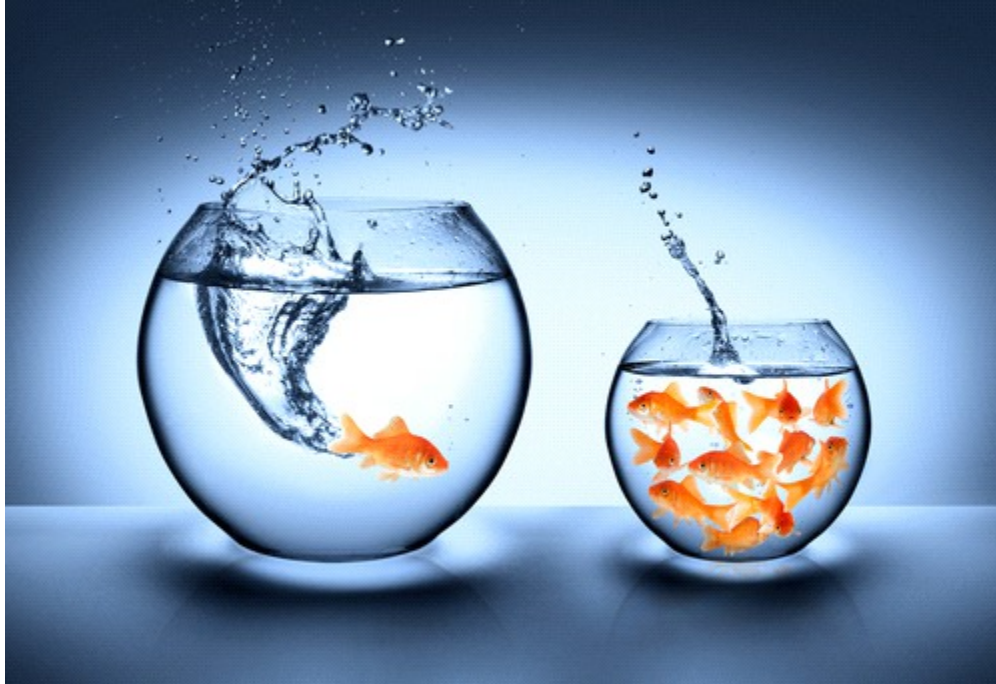


# A Beginner's Guide to Fish Tanks

*Learn How to Pick the Best  
Aquarium, Set It Up and  
Maintain It for a Thriving Aqua  
Environment Right in Your  
Home or Office.*



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## **Table of Contents**

<u><a href="#">What Kind of Fish Do You Want to Raise?</a></u> .....	<u><a href="#">3</a></u>
<u><a href="#">Choosing the Right Aquarium</a></u> .....	<u><a href="#">7</a></u>
<u><a href="#">Lighting and Heating Systems for the Fish Tank</a></u> .....	<u><a href="#">11</a></u>
<u><a href="#">Filtering the Water for Freshness</a></u> .....	<u><a href="#">14</a></u>
<u><a href="#">Preparing the Water for Your Fish</a></u> .....	<u><a href="#">17</a></u>
<u><a href="#">Choosing the Most Viable Candidates for Your Fish Tank</a></u> .....	<u><a href="#">20</a></u>
<u><a href="#">How to Introduce the Fish to Their New Tank</a></u> .....	<u><a href="#">24</a></u>
<u><a href="#">Looking for Signs of Distress Over Time</a></u> .....	<u><a href="#">27</a></u>
<u><a href="#">Feeding and Caring for Your Fish</a></u> .....	<u><a href="#">31</a></u>

## What Kind of Fish Do You Want to Raise?



More and more men, women and children are becoming avid enthusiasts of raising fish on their own. Not only do fish tanks make a beautiful addition to any room, but they actually provide health benefits to some people.

People who suffer from high stress or high blood pressure, increased anxiety, or depression find that having a fish tank is the equivalent to engaging in some much-needed stress relief.

From adults with Alzheimer's to children with a hyperactivity disorder, or an adult who just feels overwhelmed and stressed out, a fish tank can bring a piece of calm into their lives.

Fish tanks can sometimes emit a soothing sound of the flow of water, depending on your setup. They can also be quiet if you prefer it that way. The sounds of water stirring can be very relaxing.

Most fish tanks have a lighting system that is also comforting. So you could lay there with the lights turned off, or down, and bask in the beauty of a gorgeous fish tank glow, complete with incredible specimens of tropical or marine life

swimming around.

Many people raise fish not to use the benefit of stress relief, but to simply enjoy a part of nature that we, as humans, don't often get to see on dry land. The underwater world is amazing and teeming with life that we are in awe of consistently.

There are two different types of fish you can start with – freshwater and saltwater. Saltwater is considered the marine variety and Freshwater is the tropical version.

## **Freshwater Fish for Your Tank**

You have the ability to mix and match the fish in your tank. You don't have to pick just one. But in some cases, a single species can wreak havoc on the entire tank's inhabitants.

For example, Betta fish are popular with beginners, but they're also known as fighting fish. You have to know which species are compatible so that you don't wake up the next day and see one fish in your tank with 3 other missing or floating.

You want to choose strong fish that do well with beginners before you eventually upgrade to more fragile types. Some fish demand more attention and care than others, so start out by going easy on yourself.

Aside from Bettas, you might consider:

- Barbs
- Catfish
- Cichlids
- Danios
- Goldfish
- Gouramis
- Guppies
- Rainbowfish
- Tetras

...and more. Your online or local pet store can help you decide based on what you want to see in your aquarium – in addition to the level of care and attention

they require.

## **Saltwater Fish for Your Aquarium**

Saltwater fish are more exotic looking to some people. You can have a variety of species in this type of tank, too – you just have to make sure your fish are compatible with one another.

Some that you might try, which are good for beginners are:

- Angelfish
- Blenny
- Clownfish
- Damselfish
- Dottyback
- Eels
- Gobies

Some fish enthusiasts immediately want to go out and buy a shark for their new tank, but as a beginner, you should know that sharks require a bit more advanced knowledge and care, not to mention size for growth.

## **Pros and Cons of Freshwater Versus Saltwater Tanks**

As a beginner, you may have certain priorities about what's important to you in raising fish. Maybe it's the cost, or the level of care you have to provide. When it comes to freshwater aquariums, you might prefer these for convenience and cost.

Freshwater aquariums are often cheaper to buy and maintain over time. The water can be simple tap water and you can grab supplies easily both locally and online.

Saltwater tanks can cost more to get going – especially if you want to have a luxurious replica of the underwater ocean world. You also have to do a lot of work to get the water perfectly balanced for your first fish.

But if this is your newfound hobby and you're dedicated, it might all be worth it to see the unique fish species you can coexist with in your saltwater tank. You're basically replicating an eco system for a living animal, whereas with a freshwater tank, you're just giving your fish a habitat to reside in.

For children, a freshwater aquarium is definitely easier for them to handle – and more suitable to their needs. Adults have the ability to take it up a notch and go with a saltwater tank because they can handle the level of care (and the increased cost) of raising these fish.

In many cases, a saltwater tank is going to take up more room in your home, not because of the tank itself, but due to the filtering system and other accessories. Technically, you could grab a small fishbowl and set it on your desk or coffee table and have a freshwater tank ready to go in an instant.

There is no right or wrong answer about what type of fish you should start with. If you're nervous about the care and cost, go with freshwater first and as you build confidence in caring for fish, consider the possibility of starting a saltwater tank in the future.

## Choosing the Right Aquarium



Whenever we start thinking about a fish aquarium, we're instantly concerned with the fish. Will they have enough room to grow? Room to swim? But that isn't the only concern you should have when you start shopping for a fish tank.

You have to make sure that the aquarium fits *your* space, too. It needs to be stylish enough, the right size, and made of a material that you enjoy. Yes, you want it to be a safe, nurturing habitat for your fish, but not at the cost of giving up too much of your own dwelling (or cash in your wallet).

## **What Size Tank Should You Get?**

We touched on the types of fish you might want to bring home – freshwater or saltwater. You will need to research each fish species that you plan to invest in (either immediately or in the future) and try to buy a tank fitting for their growth and exploration.

They need ample water for other reasons, too. The more water your tank has in it, the slower your tank will experience a toxic atmosphere, giving you more time for caring for the habitat.

You have to consider where it will be going inside your home. If you bought a tank 8 feet long and realized that it wouldn't fit in the living room, where you wanted it, you might think it was okay to place on a screened porch.

Fish tanks need electricity, so you have to map out a space where you'll have the availability of a plug for the filter, lights, heating and other necessary items.

You have to take the temperature of the living space into consideration, because all fish will have different needs when it comes to how hot or cold the water is kept.

Ideally, the aquarium will be somewhere that you can see it often enough to enjoy it! You don't want it to be stored in a room people rarely visit because then you've wasted the chance to get to enjoy these incredible living beings.

Another reason it should be kept in a frequently visited space is because it's easy to forget about the care taking of fish. They aren't making noise – they're simply swimming silently – so they can't alert you if they need their tank cleaned or if you forgot to feed them.

You don't want a loud, rowdy spot for your fish tank, either. If people are always screaming at the TV during football season in the den, then try to avoid that space because fish can get disturbed and suffer health consequences from the distress.

So choose a size that meshes well with your living space. And don't buy an aquarium that seems to look like it will fit well on a fragile desk – because you have to consider what the tank will weigh once you add all of the water and fish and accessory items to it. This is especially true if you're planning a huge aquarium that might compromise your floor.

Depending on the type of tank and fish that you get, you might need more or less space for accessory items. Make sure you research what add-ons you need so that the space you choose has ample room for the additional items.

## **Which Aquarium Shape Is Right for Your Space?**

Size is one thing – but aquarium shapes are different too. You have many stylish options when it comes to choosing an aquarium for your home. Some of them help the fish tank fit snugly into a corner space, like the triangle or radius triangle shape.

You can also choose:

- Rectangular
- Square
- Circle or half circle (cylinder)
- Bowed front with a flat back
- L-shaped
- Bullnose (also known as bullet-shaped)
- Wavy-shaped
- Bubble

There are more – it gets very specific when it comes to your tank design options. And of course, you always have the opportunity to have a custom tank created for your abode, although as a beginner, that may not be what you want to invest in.

If your goal is to use the aquarium as an attention-grabber, then you can invest in a tank that's unique and part of the décor, such as a coffee table aquarium.

## **Construction of Your Aquarium**

When it comes to making sure the aquarium is built to last, you might want to avoid taking the do it yourself route. You'll find many plans online that teach people how to craft their own fish tank.

If you're a master at creating projects like this, then you might give it a try – otherwise, go with a pre-made aquarium that a professional manufacturer has put together for you.



There are glass aquariums that are the most popular. They're sturdy, even though they're made of glass – and they won't get scratched up easily, which is easy to do during the tank cleaning process.

They're not as pricey as their lightweight counterpart, acrylic aquariums. These types of tanks are also strong, but they can get scratched up. This might bother you if you want a clean, perfect view of your fish.

Some fish owners prefer acrylic because of the shaping possibilities. When you form glass, it can skew the view of the fish inside the tank. Acrylic is more pliable for the shaping process.

Acrylic also has the potential to become discolored over time, so unless you know for a fact that you'll be upgrading your aquarium, you can expect it to possibly become yellowish in hue.

Take your time shopping for the best aquarium for your home. Take into consideration temperature, weight, and space that you can give your fish – and make sure this is in line with the types of fresh or saltwater fish you plan to get.

Don't let the salesperson at a pet store talk you into *too much tank*, either. Sometimes they (or an online seller) will try to up the ante of your purchase.

You want enough tank to create a comfortable living space for your new pets, but not an exorbitant amount that's unnecessary (in both size and cost). That's why it pays to be informed before you start shopping and ordering the tank and accessories.

## **Lighting and Heating Systems for the Fish Tank**

For your fish to thrive and live a long, healthy life, your aquarium will need to be fitted with a light and heating system. There are decisions to be made aesthetically, but you also have to determine exact amounts of light and heat so that you don't disturb the fish.

### **How Much Light for Your Tank?**

Lighting isn't just about what *you* find beautiful. It's about what your fish need, too. Wattage is typically 2-8 watts per gallon, depending on if it's a freshwater or saltwater tank.

Lighting can help your fish thrive in their tank. Living plants in the habitat need it

for survival – for the photosynthesis process. This is where they get their food from, so if you have living plants or coral, this will be important.

It also helps the beautiful coloring of the fish species that you choose (not to mention some of the plants and accessories) show up in the aquarium.

Fish can also be lit according to your décor, or due to what types of fish they are. Some fish tanks have black lights because the fish glow so the owner wants them to show up.

You might want to go the cheapest route, which is fluorescent lighting. Most people go with a T-5 high output (HO) system. You'll find these readily sold in pet stores all over your city, as well as online where you buy your salt or freshwater fish.

Compact fluorescent lighting is slightly better. You get more light generated because there are more tubes. You won't spend a lot of money lighting your tank with this option.

There's also high intensity metal halide lighting and LED options for more advanced fish enthusiasts. If you want to use metal halide systems, you can – they're more costly and are suitable for more advanced tanks like reef aquariums. They're great for big tanks because they're so powerful.

The LED systems are popular now, too, but you have to look for systems that encourage the photosynthesis process if that's important for your habitat and its inhabitants.

There are also special lighting systems like the lunar options that help generate a certain kind of light for the night owls in the fish tank who are active during your regular sleeping hours.

## **What Kind of Heating System Should Your Tank Have?**

Whether you plan to go with a saltwater or freshwater aquarium, you'll want to invest in a heating system for your fish. You need up to 5 watts of heating element per gallon of water in the tank.

Before you think of a heater to buy, consider a thermostat. You'll need this to figure out how hot (or cold) your aquarium water is each day and how you need to adjust it if it requires manual maintenance.

It's important that you choose the right size heater. Getting "too much" heater can make your fish sick. Even a few degrees colder or hotter can cause your fish to suffer, so the heating system needs to be the right size – as well as durable and reliable.

You always want to have an additional heater on hand. If your current one breaks, this will prevent a rapid temperature drop because you'll have a heater ready on standby.

Take into consideration the temperature in your home, as well as the position of the aquarium. If your aquarium is placed near an air conditioning vent, then your tank may need more heat, and vice versa.

There are chillers you can buy if your fish need colder water than what your aquarium is registering.

Look for a heating system that's not only the right size, but one made of the right construction. You don't want one that will break or corrode. It should be submersible under water, preferably – although some are designed to work outside of the actual fish tank.

You can find heaters for your fish aquarium that range from simple to complex systems. Some have built in memory chips, safety guards, and all sorts of perks for the beginner to be in awe of. You simply have to select one that's right for your new fish!

## **Filtering the Water for Freshness**

With a stagnant pool of water, even in an aquarium, there can be a build up of waste material that sickens, and eventually kills your fish. You can't be changing the water manually every day – that would be too cumbersome for you and too stressful on your fish.

Instead, it's best to provide a filter system for your fish, and there are a couple of ways you can filter the water in your tank. We'll take a look at both, and you can implement both – or choose one, depending on what fish and habitat you set up.

In a natural environment, your fish would be swimming in a water source that usually had movement and ecological elements that naturally filter the water for its inhabitants.

Not only is the fish excrement considered waste, but the food that goes uneaten becomes toxic to the environment, too.

### **Manufactured Filtering Systems for Aquariums**

For any size fish tank, you need to have a system in place to filter the water.

Filters are used for aerating the water, but they also help take care of things in the water that can harm your fish.

Besides uneaten food particles floating in the water, there will be fish waste as well. Ammonia can reach levels in the water that will kill off your fish and since your fish breathe the water, it has to be safe enough for them to use.

Plus, having a good filter system in place means less time you have to spend cleaning the tank. There are several categories for manufactured filtering systems and the one that you use will depend on the size of aquarium that you have, the type of fish in the tank and how much money you want to invest in the filtering system.

One category of filters is the under-gravel filters. This style of filter is placed at the bottom of the aquarium and covered with gravel. These are fairly inexpensive.

When you're ready to put one in, you shouldn't place this filter against the bottom of the tank. Instead, the filter should go on top of several layers of gravel and then be covered with a single layer.

The filter operates by allowing the water to travel through in order to filter it. There are a couple of types that you can buy. One has cartridges that you'll change out as needed, but some owners use this system as a biological filter.

Another type of manufactured filtering system is the canister filter. These range in size as well as expense and can be used for either fresh or saltwater tanks. They use hydraulic motors to keep the water aerated and clean. The kind of flow rate that you'll get depends on the size model that you purchase.

One of the most common styles of filtering systems is the power filter. The reason behind the popularity is because these filters employ a range of filtration including chemical as well as biological.

They are among the easiest filtering systems to set up. You can get power filters for inside or outside the tank, but if you get one for inside the tank, they should only be used with tanks that are smaller.

For aquarium enthusiasts who have smaller tanks of 10 gallons or less, the corner filters are popular and easy to use. These are air driven filters that won't harm young fish.

This is an inexpensive filtering system and contains different filtering layers that make it suitable for fresh or saltwater fish tanks. Air driven filters promote bacteria that helps keep the tank clean.

## **Biological Filters That Help Clean Your Tank**

After you've set up your fish tank, you can move the fish into their new home. But an unexpected guest moves in right along with the fish. Unfriendly bacteria begins to build up in the water at the same time that you add the fish.

The water in the tank can still look completely clear and yet have toxic levels of ammonia, which - if not cleared up - can kill your fish. Nitrates can also rise. Even low levels of nitrate in a tank will start to show up in the form of algae growth. That's because too much nitrate is a breeding ground for algae.

While using plants in the tank can help somewhat with the nitrate values, plants alone can't get the nitrate down to a healthy level. That's why you want to use biological filters. Biological filters help clean your tank and give your fish a healthy and happy world to live in.

Biological filters are the good bacteria that help keep the tank stable. There are two different kinds of bacteria that will allow the water to remain safe for your fish. One of these types of bacteria is known as an ammonia eating bacteria. The second one is known as a nitrate eating bacteria. You need both of these because the two balance each other out.

Even after the addition of the bacteria, you still want to make sure that you test the levels of ammonia and nitrate in the water on a regular basis. It only takes a few hours for your fish to get into distress and you don't want that.

You can get these helpful bacteria a number of ways. What most people do is use aquarium gravel or they take water that already has the bacteria in it and add that to the new tank. You can also purchase this bacteria online - just go to the pet category and look for 'fish bacteria for aquariums.'

Besides having the bacteria in the water, you have to make sure that you have an area in the tank that the bacteria can flourish. Otherwise, it won't be able to clean the tank because there won't be enough of it. You can do this by making sure that you have plants in the tank. You can also use filters designed for bacterial growth.

Many filters are available that offer this benefit, just make sure you look for ones that state they promote bacteria for biological filtering. One of the filters that you can get that's well-liked for promoting bacteria is the wet/dry filter.

These systems do tend to be among the priciest and they can be a bit trying with the set up for beginners, but they offer the best housing area for bacteria growth. By using bio balls in these filtering systems, they help in the colonization of good bacteria.

# Preparing the Water for Your Fish

The most important aspect of setting up a fish tank is getting the water right. There are many factors that go into creating an environment where your fish can live long and healthy lives.

You have to have water that's the right temperature and has the correct pH level. While it's not that complicated to set up the water, it does require a little bit of effort. Getting the water set up is different for a saltwater versus a freshwater tank because of the salt needed in the water for the saltwater tank.

## Water In a Freshwater Aquarium

If you're setting up a new tank from an old tank and still have clean water from the old tank, you can test that water level and transfer it over. But, if like some aquarium owners, you're starting from scratch, you'll more than likely want to fill the tank from the kitchen faucet. That seems like a quick and easy way to get the tank set up.

But what you might not know is that water straight from the faucet into the fish tank can kill your fish once you add them to the water. You can't just put water in the tank and let it sit for a few hours until it reaches the right temperature to add fish. First, you have to make sure that the water from the faucet is safe for your fish.

Since almost every home, the exception being those homes using a well water system, uses water that's treated at a water plant, you will have to fix the water's safety first.

What's okay for a human to have - the chlorine in the water - is deadly for your fish. So you have to make sure that the tap water you're going to put into the tank doesn't have a level of chlorine in it that can wipe out all of your fish.

Some fish owners advise that you can let tap water in a tank sit out all night and that will take care of all the chlorine. Don't follow this advice. The amount of time it takes chlorine to evaporate from water depends on the level of chlorine in the water system as well as the temperature of the water. What works for one tank may not necessarily work for yours and you don't want to risk the lives of your fish.

The best and safest way to prepare the water for the fish is to use a dechlorinator. This method is also the fastest way to remove any chlorine from your fish aquarium.

You can find drops at pet stores and online that say it's used to treat water or to regulate water for fish aquariums but what you want to look for are the products

that specifically state it's for use as a dechlorinator.

If you don't want to use a dechlorinator, you can use activated carbon. Activated carbon is simply charcoal that's been treated and is capable of absorbing the chlorine from the water. It does this by letting the chlorine travel through the charcoal.

After you've used the dechlorinator or set up the tank with the activated carbon, you want to test the balance of the water by using a test kit to make sure that it's safe for you to add the fish.

## **Water in a Saltwater Aquarium**

Setting up the water for your saltwater aquarium isn't difficult, but it does take some mixing to get the salt balanced in the water. If you've never owned a saltwater tank before, you need to know that you can't simply mix table salt and get good results for the aquarium. The reason that you can't do this is because you can't get the correct mixture of elements in natural salt water by attempting to mix element compounds.

Saltwater fish have to have water that has the same trace elements and they need the same levels of those elements that they have and need in their original environment. That's why you have to use the right salt that won't change the healthy parameters of the water in the tank like some salts can.

It's best not to buy just any salt that claims it's for saltwater tanks. You have to use a specific sea salt and you want to look for the salt that promises it gives the fish the same ocean-like environment that they would have if they actually lived in the ocean.

When you're shopping for the brand of sea salt, you'll also need to make sure that it doesn't contain any nitrates or phosphates. That's not good news for the fish. When you get the right sea salt, it adds the values to the water that you'll need to monitor. Too much or too little and your fish can't survive.

The water has to reach a certain salinity level and the best way to check if the water has reached that point is to test it with a salinity refractometer. You'll use this tool to monitor the water through the life of the fish.

Or you can purchase a hydrometer, which you can use to test for the amount of salt and gravity. These tools can let owners see what range the levels need to reach in order to be safe.

Once you've gotten the sea salt that you need for your tank, you'll need to add it. The directions for how much of the salt per how many gallons of water will be on the packaging.

After the sea salt and water have been mixed, you need to wait a day before you check the water. Twenty-four hours after you've put the water and sea salt into the aquarium, it's time to test the gravity.

You'll want to aim for a reading on your meter of no less than 1.021, but you don't want it to be any higher than 1.026. When the gravity levels are within range, you have to make sure that the temperature of the water is within the right parameters.

What you're waiting for before you fill the aquarium with fish is for both the water and the temperature to stabilize and for both to fall within range. This will give you the best possible chance for success with your new aquarium.

## Choosing the Most Viable Candidates for Your Fish Tank



Having a tank full of beautiful fish is something many beginning aquarium owners dream of. So they'll often pick out fish according to which of the species look the best as they move about the water.

But there are some things that you should know about the fish before you choose which ones to put in the aquarium. You should know that not all fish belong together.

Some freshwater fish can't live in the same environment with other freshwater fish. The same is also true for certain kinds of saltwater fish. There are several



reasons for this.

Certain types of fish need a higher temperature for the water than others do. Grouping the higher temperature fish together with fish needing lower water temperatures can impact the health of one or both species and could even be fatal to some.

Different fish types need different requirements in the chemistry of the water, too - so you'll have to be aware of that. That's why your first step when looking for fish to complete your aquarium is to find fish that can exist in compatible water conditions.

Your second step when looking for fish is to find ones that are not aggressive toward other fish. While almost all fish can be territorial at times, some fish will take defending their area to extreme levels.

They'll even go so far as to bite chunks off of other fish that they see as invading their space. Look for fish that can live peacefully together so that you can keep all of them alive.

The third step you'll want to take when choosing fish for your tank is to look carefully at the size of the fish. Make sure that you know how big the fish will get when it's fully grown. Fish that are a lot larger than other fish in the tank tend to turn the smaller ones into dinner.

You want to look for ease-of-care fish - unless you have the time to devote to the kind of fish that will take more care. The fourth step that you'll need to consider when buying fish is what their social circle is like. Not all fish are loners. Some species of fish don't do as well in a tank unless they're in a school with others of their kind.

## **Look at How the Fish Swim**

This can offer a major clue as to whether or not the fish is healthy. When you look at fish that you're thinking of buying, pay attention to the way that the fish are swimming.

Healthy fish are active in the water and they're aware of their surroundings. They're not swimming listlessly around. Fish that swim randomly in tight, close circles looping over and over is a sign that the fish is not healthy.

When fish behave that way, it's a sign that the fish is in distress. Fish will also sometimes swim along the bottom of the tank checking out their environment and looking for food. But they won't stay there.

Any fish that remains on the bottom of the tank for long periods of time is not healthy - especially if it ignores bumps from other fish. People often assume that

a fish that floats is deceased, but a floating fish can be a sign that the fish is struggling to swim because something is wrong with its health.

Some new aquarium enthusiasts assume that something can be wrong with the water balance and that's why a fish will float. That can be an issue, but if the water balance were off, it would affect all of the fish eventually and not just one.

## **Look at How the Fish Breathe**

Fish will show symptoms that something is wrong by the way that they breathe. A fish could breathe easily and steadily in rhythm. If you see a fish straining to breathe in or one that's breathing in and out rapidly, that can be a warning sign that the fish isn't healthy.

It's true that not all fish will breathe at the same pace, but by observing a fish before you buy it, you can tell if it's having problems in that area. Sometimes, you'll see a fish head to the top of the water to breathe.

He may do that repeatedly. This is not a sign that the fish is ill in any way, so don't use that as your defining criteria. One of the things that you can look for as defining criteria on whether a fish is breathing well or not is by checking out how the gills look.

Diseased fish will show signs of ill healthy because their gills will show a lack of the proper amount of oxygen. This sign becomes noticeable because the gills will change colors to reflect the deficiency. Gills are part of the fish's respiratory system and will clue you in pretty quickly if something's not right with the fish.

## **Look at How the Fish Eat**

Healthy fish will eat. There are two reasons that a fish will sometimes refrain from eating. The first reason is because the fish is sick. The second reason is if the fish is carrying eggs.

If you see fish that show no interest in food, that can be a clue. When you're at the seller, what you can do is ask to see the reaction of the fish by having the seller drop a tiny bit of food into the water.

A healthy fish will swim to investigate and will at times even take a nibble even if it's not hungry. An unhealthy fish won't have any interest in the food. By watching the fish, you can tell the ones that aren't eating.

If you see this, look closely at the fish abdomen. It should be sleek and in the shape that the fish normally retains for its species. If the abdomen of the fish is protruding, that can be a sign that something is wrong with that fish.

## **Look at the Fins and the Color of the Fish**

If there's something going on inside the fish, it will eventually show up on the outside of the fish. When a fish doesn't feel well, you might notice that its color doesn't look as eye-catching as it should.

When you're choosing fish, you might want to know a little about the species you're looking for before you actually go to the seller. That way, you'll know how vibrant the colors should be. Fading vibrancy in the color is the fish's way of telling its owner that it's not feeling well.

Another way that a fish will let you know when he doesn't feel right is he'll keep his fins pulled tight against his body. When a fish pulls his fins against his body, this is known as clamping. Look for fish that are swimming with fins spread out in the water.

## **Look at the Skin and Eyes of the Fish**

Fish that are unhealthy will show signs of sores or white spots on their skin. You may see open sores or even bloody areas. If you notice a fish that looks like it has small cotton balls on it, that's a sign of a fungus and it is contagious.

You don't want to bring a fish with any kind of fungus home to infect the rest of the fish. You also want to look for signs of fish velvet disease. This disease causes the fish to itch and you can tell if it has this by observing it. Fish with this disease will look for ways to scratch their skin. You'll see them scratching against objects in the tank.

The eyes of the fish can also be a clear sign to let you know how the fish's health is. The eyes should be clear without any kind of discoloration or cloudiness in them.

## **Avoiding Unhealthy Fish Buys**

One of the best ways to avoid buying unhealthy fish is by getting your fish from a reputable seller. Check out the seller's reputation and how long he or she's been in business.

Ask questions to see if this person sounds knowledgeable about fish. There is a difference between someone who genuinely cares about fish and someone who is just in the business to sell them.

Sellers that care about the fish will keep the tanks clean and won't engage in tank stuffing - where they have too many fish in one aquarium. Good sellers will look out for and will maintain the health of their fish.

When you walk into the shop, you should notice that the area is clean and well kept. There should be a guarantee on the health of their fish.

## **How to Introduce the Fish to Their New Tank**

Bringing the fish home and putting them into the aquarium can be pretty exciting for someone who is setting up a tank. But for the fish, there's not so much excitement as there is stress.

Moving from the home it's always known into a brand new environment is one of the big causes of stress for a fish. If you don't properly introduce the fish to the tank it can result in harm to the fish.

There are some steps that you can take so that your fish makes the transition safely and with as much ease as possible.

First, remember that if you're going to be adding fish to your new tank where you already have some fish in there, make sure the fish can all get along. Being put into a new environment and then bullied by the other fish on top of that will really stress the new fish out.

Secondly, make sure that before you add the new fish that you have the right size aquarium for that particular fish.

Third, even if you just checked the values of the water, check it again before the fish goes in. To make the transition as easy as possible for the fish, the water should have as close to possible the same levels as the home where the fish was purchased.

Understand that while it's fun for aquarium owners to observe fish in their new home, this is a cause of stress for the fish, especially new fish. When a fish feels stressed or threatened, the first instinct it has is to find a place to get away from what's stressing it.

That's why fish like to dart behind aquarium decoration. They like to be as much out of sight as possible and yet still be able to observe their environment. So make sure that you have appropriate sized decorations for your fish to be able to hide behind.

If you're adding a new fish into an aquarium where there's already fish, make sure that the other fish have no reason to want to munch on the new fish. Whenever anything is added to an aquarium, fish will always check it out. So

make sure that the existing fish have full tummies before you add a new fish.

Some new aquarium owners like to bring attention to their aquariums by have bright lights near the tank so that they and everyone else can get a clear view of the fish.

In their natural habitat, fish don't have all that much light. They prefer a much more subdued environment. So for the time being, refrain from highlighting the fish with overhead or nearby lighting. If you have a lighted aquarium, don't use that light either until the fish has a chance to get used to his new home.

When you bring a fish home from the place where you've purchased it, you'll usually receive the fish in a sturdy plastic bag of some sort. You can't simply take that bag home and free the fish into the tank.

This causes the fish to go into stress and makes him feel threatened and unsafe. Instead, what you want to do is when you arrive home with the fish, put the bag, still firmly closed, down into the very top of the aquarium.

You want to make sure that the bag is secure and no water from the aquarium is leaking into the bag. Allow the bag to sit in the water. The purpose for this is two-fold.

First, any fish you do have in there, can investigate the bag, but cannot get to the new fish. You can observe any aggressive behavior such as other fish butting at the bag.

If you see that happening, that means the other fish are trying to make sure the new guy knows this is their territory and they're attempting to set up who's boss.

Secondly, this lets you watch for signs of stress in the new fish to see how he's reacting to being in the new aquarium.

You want to allow the new fish to stay in this store bag for at least fifteen minutes. Set a timer so you can check on the fish every few minutes. If you check on him and he seems to be doing fine, showing no obvious signs of stress, then after fifteen minutes, you want to put some of the water already in the aquarium into the bag with the new fish. Don't use any more water than about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a cup. Close the bag again and give it another fifteen minutes.

The purpose for this is to see how the fish reacts to the aquarium water. If there's something in the level of the water chemistry, you should see the fish react to that. If the temperature is not suitable for the fish, you should see the fish react to that as well. Wait until fifteen minutes.

If you notice that the fish is still swimming about and acting normal, then you want to open up the bag again and you want to add another  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of water.

Close the bag again.

Set the timer and repeat the steps of watching the fish for signs of distress. The point of adding the water is to add a little of aquarium water at a time to get the fish used to the water. You'll continue adding the water from the aquarium. The purpose for this is so that eventually, the makeup of the water that was in the bag is going to be more of a mixture of the aquarium water than of the water that the fish was brought home in.

When you've added water so that the bag can no longer hold any more from the aquarium, it's time to free the fish into the tank. Don't pour the fish out into the aquarium. If you do that, you'll be adding that bit of water from the store into your tank and you don't want to do that.

Instead, gently catch the fish using your fish net and quickly place him into the tank. Throughout the remainder of the day, you're going to want to check up on the new fish to make sure that they're adjusting to the tank and aren't showing any signs that they're not doing well in their new home.

## **Looking for Signs of Distress Over Time**



Like humans, fish can and do often live in an environment that's not the best that it could be for them. When fish have to live in ways that aren't optimal for them, you'll start to notice signs of distress over time.

Fish that are in distress will, just like humans, begin to show that distress in their actions as well as in their overall health. The distress will put its body under strain and that strain begins to take a toll.

If the fish remain under distress, severe illness or even death could occur. Getting rid of whatever it is that causes distress to your fish will result in you having a healthier aquarium and your fish having a long and happy life.

When a fish is under distress, they will begin to behave differently than they normally have behaved in the past.

## **Distress Behaviors in Fish**

Normally, when all is well in your fish's life, he will swim leisurely around and happily along in the water. One of the signs that you need to be aware of that show your fish is experiencing distress is by the way he swims.

When something is wrong, the fish's leisurely swimming pattern will change and the change may be abrupt. You may notice that he's swimming along fine and then all of a sudden, he's swimming in a weird way. Weird swimming behavior will manifest itself by the fish swimming in circles. You may see that he's swimming erratically in a repeat pattern.

Other signs of distress that show up in your fish's swimming actions is that your fish will repeatedly hit the sides or the bottom of the aquarium. Just like humans, the fish is trying to escape whatever it is that's causing him distress. Hitting the sides or the bottom of the aquarium is normal behavior for a fish once in awhile, but it is not if it's a repetitious pattern.

Another distress behavior to watch for is if the fish suddenly begins to dart about in a frenzied manner.

The opposite of the frenzied, busy way of swimming is a very sluggish manner of swimming. The fish will show signs of disinterest in moving and will appear to almost be going with the flow of the water. So look for very fast, frenzied swimming in circles or barely swimming at all as clues for distress behavior.

## **Appetite Changes**

When humans fall under distress or become ill, many of them will turn away from food and that's a natural reaction to distress. Fish follow that same behavioral pattern. When a fish is under distress, you'll notice appetite changes.

At first, the appetite changes won't seem very concerning. You may see the fish swim forward when you put the food into the aquarium and notice that he takes a nibble, but then he'll seemingly lose interest and swim away. That's a sign he's

off his food.

Another sign that shows up in appetite changes is that the fish will actually taste the food but will not swallow it. If you watch, you'll see the food leave his mouth again when he opens it. That's a sign that he may be hungry but may be unable to eat because of whatever is distressing him.

Fish that show absolutely no interest when you put food into the aquarium are under distress. When the distress is severe, the fish will not even join the others to check out the food.

He'll have a certain apathy toward eating and other activities that he once enjoyed. Any time you see a loner fish when it's feeding time, pay close attention to that fish and watch him for clues to his distress.

## **Spending More Time at the Surface**

Distress in a fish will also show up in the fish when he begins to spend most of his time at the surface of the water. Fish instinctively head to the surface as a sign of distress. Since fish will sometimes go to the surface just to go, you'll have to learn to differentiate between what's normal surface behavior for your fish and what's not.

It's not normal for your fish to remain at the surface of the water for long periods of time. It is not normal for him to breathe heavily while he's at the surface. Some fish species are more aggressive than others and instinctively try to jump out of the aquarium.

That's simply their nature. But if you know your fish species is not aggressive and doesn't usually try to jump out of the tank, that's a sign that something is causing him distress.

Both hanging out for long periods at the surface and trying to get out of the aquarium are signs that the fish is struggling to get what he needs from the environment that he's in. If you start to notice fish hanging around at the surface of the water, you need to check the levels in the tank as soon as possible.

## **Other Distress Behaviors to Be Aware Of**

When a fish doesn't feel well or his environment isn't the best it should be for him, he's going to let you know by changing his swimming behavior. When he's ill, you'll also notice that his overall behaviors start to change. From his swimming to his eating, to his every day actions, he'll change.

Fish under distress want to hide. So they'll look for the darkest corner of the aquarium and they'll stay there. They'll back in and can't be coaxed out, often not



even to eat. They'll also dart into the leaves of the plants or hide in the centers of any coral decorations and they won't come out.

On their bodies, fish that have an abdomen area that looks hollowed out is a sign of distress as is keeping their fins close to their body. They don't feel their best so they're trying to close off.

When you do notice changes in your fish, check his skin. Look for patchy areas or areas on his skin that are white. These white spots can be a sign that he has Ich and this is caused by distress to the fish. Having sores or other noticeable areas on the body that aren't normal are signs of distress caused by parasites or fungus.

## **The Main Causes of Distress in Fish**

After noticing signs of distress in your fish, you want to take immediate action to make him feel better. The first thing you should do is to check the environment of the water.

Make sure that ammonia level hasn't gone too high. Check the temperature to see if the water is too cold or too warm. For aquariums that are saltwater, check the salt to water balance. If there are no problems with your water conditions, move on to the second cause.

The second cause of distress in fish is other fish. Like humans, fish don't always play nicely with others. If a fish is being picked on by other fish in the aquarium, he'll hide and he won't want to come out to eat with the more aggressive fish.

Signs that a fish is being picked on by other fish include damage to his fins, body or his tail caused by other fish biting him. If you see that the fish is being bullied by territorial or fish that are more dominant, you may have to take the fish in distress out of that aquarium.

Besides being picked on, fish also show signs of distress if there are too many fish in too small of an area, so make sure that you haven't overcrowded your fish. Follow the guidelines for your tank recommendation for the amount of fish to have in there.

Another cause of distress in fish is the wrong kind of food for that fish or food that's no longer fresh. Fish don't like bad food any more than humans do. Like humans, fish must have certain elements in their diet in order to remain healthy.

Don't buy the cheapest food for your fish unless you know for certain that it meets his nutritional needs.

If after you've gone through the checklist your fish is still showing signs of distress, you need to let your veterinarian know about the fish's behavior. He may

recommend that you quarantine the fish that are showing signs of distress to make sure those fish get treated with medication if necessary. Plus, quarantining fish if they are sick can help keep the rest of your fish healthy.

## Feeding and Caring for Your Fish



One of the biggest mistakes that get made with taking care of fish is in the area of feeding them. Most fish owners have no problem giving the fish plenty of food. The problem is that most fish owners actually end up giving the fish too *much* food.

You enjoy the fish - what could possibly be wrong with wanting to make sure they have an abundance of food? Overfeeding your fish can cause some major issues for them. Fish can't eat all of the food you give them when they're overfed. So what happens is the food that's not eaten will rot.

Rotting food then in turn clouds the water in the environment and it can also clog a filter. Rotted food particles cause the rapid growth of algae, which feeds on the rotted food.

Algae growth in turn affects the balance of the water. So you can see that overfeeding the fish can become an unhealthy cycle, not just because they'll eat

more than is healthy for them but because it can cause the water to become unsafe.

Just as humans will eat food when it's present even if they're not hungry, so will fish. It's fun to watch fish catch the little morsels of their food, but overeating is not healthy for the fish, just like it's not for humans. Plus, too much food contributing to the poor water conditions means that you have to clean the tank more often.

If you watch fish, it would seem that they are constantly scrounging for food. That's because they are. Fish will eat if the food is there. This isn't because they're greedy or gluttons. It's because they instinctively know to go after the food.

That's part of their natural makeup. But that instinct served them best when there was no fish owner to take care of them. With humans, we have all sorts of measuring tools we can use to measure out portion sizes and know when we've had the proper amount of food. With fish, it's a little different. You can't always control the amount of food that gets into the water.

Other fish are going to be vying for the food so sometimes a few of them are going to get more than the rest of them are. So how can you tell what's a good amount for the fish to get fed?

A human's stomach is about the size of his or her closed fist. A fish stomach can be measured by looking at the size of the fish's eye. The stomach of a fish is only slightly bigger than the size of its eye.

When you look at the eye, you can see that a fish doesn't have a very big stomach at all. The amount of food content a fish can hold in its stomach is not a lot. Fish have to be fed small amounts of food more often throughout the day rather than being fed a lot in one or two massive feedings.

You can tell that you're overfeeding your fish if you see food settling on the bottom of the aquarium and it stays there because the fish aren't eating it. You can tell that you're overfeeding your fish if all of the food is not gone quickly.

Most advice on feeding fish says to feed the fish about three times a day only as much food as they can eat within three minutes. But that really depends on the amount of fish that you have in your tank.

Rather than feeding the fish on a schedule that can contribute to a messier tank and unhealthy fish, feed the fish smaller amounts but feed them more often throughout the day.

It's better to feed the fish smaller amounts only what they can consume within the first 30 to 60 seconds. You may end up having to feed them six times a day or

more, but it's better for the fish and better for the tank.

Something else that you want to watch out for is what you're feeding the fish. In order to get all the nutrients that they need, you need to feed the fish the kind of food that has those nutrients and don't forget to switch up their food every so often. Fish like variety in their food supply.

When you're going to be home, it's a fairly simple process to feed and to take care of the fish. You feed them on schedule and test the water conditions on schedule. But when something happens to disrupt that schedule, you need to have a plan to take care of the fish.

If you're going to be away from home for a weekend or if you go off on a vacation, you want to be careful what plan you have for taking care of the fish.

Some people will say that you can simply add a fish block that will feed the fish and then you can take off. Food blocks can impact the water chemistry and are not the best to use. You don't want to not feed the fish because this can cause them stress.

If you plan on going away from home, find or hire someone that will come in and care for your fish. You can have the fish food already measured out and set aside for each feeding time for each day to eliminate any possibility of overfeeding.

More than needing to make sure that they're fed while you're gone, you want to make sure that they're being cared for. Having someone watch the fish means that the water temperature and levels can be maintained and you'll come home to healthy fish.

Becoming a fish owner is fun and exciting. Fish can provide endless hours of comfort and relaxation. You just have to make sure you learn the ropes about tank management so that you can enjoy these living beings to their fullest potential!

**Thank You So Much!**



I hope you have enjoyed reading this E-Book as much as I have loved writing it for you.  
I can't thank you enough for your continued support of [WhichFishTank.com](http://WhichFishTank.com) and everything that I do.

I appreciate each and every one of you for taking time out of your day or evening to read this E-book, and if you have an extra moment, I would love to hear what you think about it.

Please leave a comment at <http://www.whichfishtank.com/ContactUs.html>, or if you'd rather reach me in private, don't hesitate to send me an email.

I read each and every single comment and email, so don't be afraid to say hi! Lastly, if you haven't already, you can follow me on Twitter ([@Whichfishtank](#)), and also join in on the conversations going on right now on my [Facebook Fan Page](#).

Thank you again, and I wish you nothing less than success in your new Tropical or Marine fishkeeping hobby!

George P. Butler

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