



Creatures Pet Store

Good Aquarium Practices

Fish keeping is a hobby, and hobbies are activities that you should look forward to doing. This hobby is creating an aquatic environment indoors on a miniature level. You will be the primary care giver of the aquatic life forms within your creation; therefore it is your responsibility to learn how to do it properly. If you need assistance Creature's staff are here to help, we want you to be successful and once you know the basics fish keeping you will see why this is a very rewarding hobby. Like anything you want to keep in good order you will need to spend some time on it.

Regular Maintenance

1. Test your aquarium water

- a. Test your water weekly on a start up tank and monthly thereafter and always before a water change.
 - i. Fresh water: Check at least the Temp, PH, Nitrates (NO₃), Ammonia (NH₃, NH₄), and Nitrites (NO₂). Additional tests such as
 - ii. Salt water: The same basic fresh water tests, but add Phosphate (PO₄), Calcium (Ca) and Magnesium (Mg),
 - iii. For more detailed information on testing, and water parameters [click here](#).
- b. Use a quality liquid test kit, or the strips if your prefer.
- c. Keep a log book, a single test gives you a snap shot, a log book tells a story.
 - i. You should log the date, the test results, and which tank if you have more than 1.

2. Water Changes

- a. An aquarium is a closed system, removing and adding water will reduce nitrates which in turn will reduce algae and stress on your fish. Furthermore the new water will increase the PH buffering ability to your tank, and help stabilize the PH. Failure to perform water changes will result in toxic levels of nitrates and a potential PH crash. A PH crash usually results in a huge die off of aquatic life, all nitrifying bacteria cease operations, ammonia will spike, aquatic life dies.
- b. Regularly, perform 10-25% water changes 1 x weekly, and no less than 25% 2 x monthly on fresh water tanks and salt water tanks with out skimmers reduce the build up of nitrates and other dissolved solids.
- c. Gravel vacuum, this process can be incorporated with the water change.
- d. Most fish can handle elevated nitrate levels if they have been accustomed to the levels over along periods of time, however ignoring regular water changes will result in disaster at some point. Furthermore adding a new fish from a tank with low nitrates to one with high nitrate conditions will stress and/or even kill the new fish.
- e. Always use water conditioner when adding tap water to your tank, and allow the tank's temperature to stabilize before performing additional water changes.
- f. Acclimating fish as indicated below is still not a long enough time allow the fish to become accustomed to high nitrates. If adding new fish and time will not permit a water change then dose your tank with Seachem's Prime water conditioner, this helps to detoxify nitrates temporarily. Perform a water change after adding the fish ASAP, and then every 2 days if nitrates are elevated, until brought under control.

- g. Salt water tanks with skimmers, and deep sand beds or denitrifying media, do not require near as many water changes, however test the water as above and keep a log book.
- h. Obtain the right equipment to make the water changing process easy and enjoyable. A quality gravel vacuum and or siphon plus buckets are good for up to about a 30 – 40 gallon tank, bigger tanks you should consider a siphon kit that uses tap water to suck out tank water and drains right in the sink (no buckets to lift/spill).

3. Add with each water change:

- a. Water conditioner with tap water to remove chloramines, chlorine, Ammonia etc.
- b. Cycle / Stability to invigorate the bio filter and reduce disease causing bacteria.
- c. If using Nutrafin/Fluval's Cycle, add Waste control, to reduce organic waste that results in elevated ammonia, nitrates, and phosphates. (especially densely stocked tanks, gold fish and cichlid tanks) Stability already contains this type of bacteria.

4. Clean your filter monthly or as needed.

- a. Clean your filter when you perform a water change or gravel vacuum. Always clean reusable filter foams, media in the water you removed from the tank. Tap water has chlorine which will kill off beneficial bacteria from your filter media. You do not want to sanitize your filter media, just remove the debris and rinse it. You can also fill your sink, add conditioner and rinse your filter foams/media in the conditioned water.
- b. Change your activated carbon monthly. Never leave in place longer than 4 weeks it is better to remove all together than leave old carbon in.

5. Change you fluorescent planted tank bulbs annually.

- a. Plants require certain color of light, and fluorescent tubes change their light color spectrum over time.
- b. If your plants are not doing so well, try new lights.

Acclimation (Adding new Fish)

What is Acclimation?

- Whenever fish are moved from one tank into another, they need to be gradually acclimated to the new water conditions, regardless if the fish are from the pet store's tank, your buddies tank or even moving them from one tank in your house to another.
- Another time acclimation is required is when an aquariums water quality has become degraded, as in Old Tank Syndrome. The fish will need to be acclimated from poor water conditions to acceptable water conditions. The water quality needs to be corrected, but it must be done slowly. Never drastically change the water chemistry, but rather perform numerous water changes of about 25% of the tanks volume over a period of 7 to 10 days depending on how far off the water parameters are.

Before adding fish:

- If you do not perform regular weekly / bi-weekly water changes it is a good idea to perform a 25% water change before adding the fish to your tank. See water changes above...
- Boost your beneficial bacteria with Seachem's Stability, Nutrafin's Cycle or API quick start. These products add nitrifying bacteria to your aquarium. Adding fish will add to the bio-load, so it makes sense to add to the bio-filter.

- Add a stress reducing product, like Seachem's Stress Guard or Prime, Nuatrafina's cycle, or API's stress coat.
- Precautionary antibacterial product such as API's Melafix, an all natural herbal product with natural active ingredient, Melaleuca (Tea Tree extract).

Acclimating New Fish:

- There are many methods for acclimating fish, we will explore the Quick, Cupping and Drip methods.
- The quick method can be used for most tropical fish that coming from a well maintained aquarium and going into a well maintained aquarium.
- Sensitive fish and fish with very high or low PH requirements are best acclimated with the drip or cupping method.
- Use the drip/cupping methods for aquariums that do not have regular water changes, and read water changes above.
- High priced fish, why rush it.

Quick Method

1. Float the fish in the bag in the tank for up to 10 minutes, this will balance the temperatures or get them close. If your trip home was longer than ½ hour, then exchange the air in the bag 1st.
2. Carefully net the fish out of the container and put it into your tank, or place the net over a bucket and gently pour the water and fish through the net catching the fish.

Cupping Method

1. Float the fish in the bag in the tank for up to 10 minutes, this will start the temperature balance. If your trip home was longer than ½ hour, then exchange the air in the bag 1st.
2. Place the new fish and the bagged water into a suitable clean container that will hold about four times the amount of water that is in the fish bag. Food grade plastic containers may be used as long as they never had soap in them. A new one that was bleached and rinsed well with water treated with a conditioner (Prime, Aqua Plus, etc) will remove any trace chlorine bleach.
3. Every 3-5 minutes over a 30 minute period, take about 1 cup of water from the tank the fish will be going into and add this water into the container. This will slowly acclimate your new fish to your tank water. The water added from the tank to the container (each time) should be about 20 percent of the amount of water in the container from the fish bags.
4. Carefully net the fish out of the container and put it into your tank, or place the net over a bucket and gently pour the water and fish through the net catching the fish.

Drip Method

1. Same as step 1 above.
2. Same as step 2 above.
3. Make a siphon hose using fresh soft aquarium airline hose. Start a siphon from your fish tank to your new fish container.
4. Adjust siphon flow by tying a knot in the hose at the container end. Adjust knot tightness to achieve a fast drip. This will slowly acclimate your new fish to your tank water. CAUTION, set a timer and check back often to ensure you do not forget.

5. The water added from the tank to the container should be about 2-4 times the amount that was in the bag.
6. Carefully net the fish out of the container and put it into your tank, or place the net over a bucket and gently pour the water and fish through the net catching the fish.

And then

- Observe the new fish, you want to make sure they are not getting picked on by the existing inmates in the aquarium. Check back often over the next few hours/day. A few tricks when introducing a new fish that is getting picked on...
 - A small breeding tank or divider placed inside the main tank may be useful to introduce your new fish.
 - Introduce 2 or more new fish at once. This will spread the unwanted attention over numerous fish.
 - Another trick is to re-decorate your whole tank, effectively re-establishing everyone's territory.
- The careful introduction of a fish to your tank can make a world of difference in the survival rate of the new fish. Good luck.