

How to set up a Child's First Tank

Live fish make a great first pet!

They are easy to care for, quiet, and fun to watch.

They don't have to be a lot of work for Mum and Dad either. Follow these 6 simple steps, and the entire family will get hours of pleasure from your new pets.

6 Steps to Success

1. Choose the right fish
2. Select your equipment
3. Cycle your tank
4. Unpack and release your fish
5. Easy weekly and monthly maintenance
6. Daily tasks

1. Choose the right fish

There are a wide range of hardy freshwater fish that are easy to look after.

If you have decided on a cold water tank, then Goldfish are ideal. Fish such as Comets, Fantails and Shubunkins are all suited to these tanks, and very easy to care for.

Tropical species such as Danios, Barbs, Mollies, Guppies and Platys also make good first fish. These fish require warm water all year around, so you will need to purchase a heater when you select your equipment.

To help you choose the right fish, visit the Aquarium Industries website (aquariumindustries.com.au) and download the free Care Sheets available there.

Also decide on the right location for your tank before you start. Keep your fish tank out of draughts, and away from direct sunlight.

2. Select your equipment

The choice of equipment depends on the type of fish that you have chosen. Your retailer can help you with your selection. A good reference point is that you will require:

- Tank
- Tank stand if required
- Gravel, and a Gravel Vacuum
- Air pump
- Filter (if not built in to your tank)
- Heater (if you have chosen tropical fish)



- Lights if required
- Thermometer
- Food
- Water conditioner
- Good water test kits (pH, Ammonia, GH, Nitrites and Nitrates)
- A net
- You may also want some plants—and your child will have fun selecting some ornaments too

3. Cycle your tank

Once you have assembled your tank, and filled it with water, you will need to exercise some patience! New tanks need to run for a while before you can start to add some fish. This allows “good” bacteria to get started in your tank, making a healthy environment for the fish when they are introduced.

Operating a filled tank with no fish in it is called “cycling” your tank. Ideally, you will need to cycle your tank for at least 1 week before adding any fish. After the first week, take a sample of your water back to your pet retailer, and have them test it for you. If conditions are right, you can start to add fish! Your retailer can give you the best advice about how many to add, depending on the size of your tank.

Add a small number of fish to your tank at first, and only feed them every second day for a while. Add more fish slowly over the next 4—5 weeks. (Your pet store can provide you with information about how many fish can fit into your tank.)

Aquarium Industries has a great Care Sheet which talks about setting up and cycling your tanks in more detail. It is called “Setting up a Freshwater Aquarium” and can be found on our website.

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4. Unpacking and releasing your fish

- Before you bring your fish home, do one final test of the water to ensure that it is suitable for your new pets.
- Bring your fish straight home from the pet store. Don't leave them in the car for long, especially on a hot day.
- Once home, assemble your net and a bucket, before opening the fish bag. While you are assembling your equipment, float the unopened bag for 2—5 minutes (not longer) in your tank to equalize the temperatures.
- Cut the bag open, and pour the contents of the bag through the net into the bucket. Do not put the water from the bag into your tank!
- Carefully release the fish from the net into your tank, and discard the waste water appropriately.

5. Easy weekly and monthly maintenance

You can care for your fish in just a few minutes every week, by following a few easy steps on a regular basis. Like any other living creature (including us!) fish like to be in the right environment. If their environment becomes unsuitable, then they may become stressed or sick. So a small amount of preventative maintenance on a regular basis, will result in a happy tank and even happier fish.

Once a month:

- Perform a 25% water change. Don't forget to add Water Conditioner when you top the water up again.
- Test the GH (General Hardness) of the water. Add Conditioning Salts if necessary. (This is not normal salt, rock salt or pool salt. You will be able to buy proper Aquarium Salts from the pet store where you purchased your tank and fish.)

Once every two weeks:

- Test pH
- Test Ammonia, Nitrites and Nitrates if you want to be extra sure of tank health.

Once a week:

- Remove any algae from the tanks
- Use your Gravel Vacuum to remove any waste materials from the bottom of the tank.

6. Easy Daily Tasks

Your child will have so much fun feeding their pets every day. Be sure to supervise smaller children to ensure they don't overfeed their new friends (overfeeding pollutes the water and is potentially harmful.) While feeding, you can also perform a few quick visual checks to make sure that everything in your tank is working correctly.

- Feed 2 or 3 small feeds a day. Feed no more than your fish can eat in 5 minutes, and quickly remove any uneaten food. Feed a variety of foods to ensure good health, including Frozen Food as the occasional treat.
- Visually check that your filters, airstones, lights etc are working.
- Check water temperature, and ensure that your heater is functioning.
- If one of your fish has died, remove it immediately. Help care for our environment, and dispose of dead fish appropriately. Do not dump them into the sewerage or stormwater.

It's that easy! Start your new tank today, and within a short while you will have a wonderful new addition to your home. Have fun with your new pets.

The above is intended as a guide only, and we recommend that you speak to your pet store or aquarium store to find out more information. You will also find more information on the Aquarium Industries website www.aquariumindustries.com.au.