

Setting Up A New Aquarium

CHOOSING A LOCATION

A good location is essential to the health of the aquarium and its inhabitants. Avoid any close sources of noise and vibration (TV, Stereo, Utilities etc.) which can cause stress to the fishes. Direct sunlight should also be avoided; this can cause unsightly algal blooms and may affect the aquarium's temperature. Also avoid any areas where there may be a large amount of activity or sudden changes (doorways for instance). Finally, make sure the location has power points nearby and enough room to carry out routine maintenance on the aquarium.

INSTALLING THE AQUARIUM

Firstly, make sure the area where the aquarium is to be situated is level and strong enough to support the weight of the aquarium. If the floor is raised (such as raised floorboards), find out where the supporting joists are, and situate the aquarium's stand or cabinet on these. If the aquarium has a glass base which is unsupported, place a layer of polystyrene or suitable foam between the aquarium and its stand or cabinet. This protective layer will prevent pressure gathering on a single point of the base, which can cause cracking. Finally, make sure the aquarium is lined up parallel to the wall and placed correctly on the stand; also make sure there is plenty of room for plugs and pipe work to be fitted behind or around the aquarium.

ADDING WATER AND SUBSTRATE

The substrate (gravel) for your aquarium will need a good wash to remove dust before it is put into position. It is best to do this a small amount at a time in a new and unused clean container under running tap water. Once all the gravel has been washed it can be placed in a roughly even layer across the base of the aquarium. The aquarium can then be filled with tap water (some fish keepers may prefer to use other sources of water) until it is around three quarters full. This new water will need to be treated before it is safe for fishes. Although any dangerous chlorine in the water may naturally dissipate after 24 hours, most tap water sources also contain harmful components such as chloramines or heavy metals. These can be easily removed through the addition of de-chlorinating liquid such as Stresscoat or Aquaplus which should also be used whenever water changes are carried out.

CHECKING AND INSTALLING EQUIPMENT

The filters, heaters, lighting and any other equipment should be installed following the manufacturer's instructions. Heaters should be situated at a 45° angle (heater element facing down), set to around 24-26°C (74-79°F) and in an area of gentle water flow. Remember to never turn the heater on when it is out of water, this will quickly cause the glass casing to crack. Make sure all the equipment is working correctly; some filters may make a noise for a few hours whilst any air is expelled.

PREPARING FOR FISH

Plants can be placed in the aquarium almost immediately, although it may be best to wait 24 hours until the water is a little warmer. Fish should only be added once the aquarium has become stabilised and the filters have had a chance to start working biologically. To help the filter become established, a bacterial starter can be added to the aquarium such as Stresszyme or Cycle. Over the next few days the water in the aquarium may become a little cloudy, this is a common occurrence and may be from dust remaining in the gravel or a bacterial bloom, and should clear in a few days. After around a week, the aquarium will be ready for a few fish.

PURCHASING THE FIRST FISH

To begin with it is very important that you only purchase a few fish. If the aquarium is overloaded with waste matter from a large number of fish, the filters, which have not yet had time to mature, will be unable to cope with the waste increase and the water will soon become polluted, causing possible disease and death to your fish. The best approach to purchasing your new fish is to ask a member of staff for advice, who will then be able to help you choose fish which will be suited to a new aquarium and compatible with any other species you wish to keep.

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