



Wet Pets N Critters

Basic Saltwater Aquarium Guide

Starting a marine (saltwater) aquarium can be exciting and rewarding. While it's a bit more involved than a freshwater tank, with the right equipment and care, you can create a beautiful, thriving marine environment.

Tank Size & Setup

- **Tank Size:**
 - Start with a **30-gallon tank or larger**—bigger tanks are more stable and forgiving for beginners.
- **Filtration:**
 - A **high-quality filter** is essential. We recommend a **hang-on-back filter**, **canister filter**, or **sump system** (available at Wet Pets N Critters).
 - Consider adding a **protein skimmer** for improved water quality.
- **Water Movement:**
 - Use **powerheads or wave makers** to ensure proper circulation.
- **Substrate:**
 - Use **live sand** or **aragonite sand** to help buffer pH and create a natural environment.
- **Live Rock:**
 - **Live rock** serves as natural biological filtration and provides habitat for beneficial bacteria and marine life.

Lighting

- **Fish-Only Tanks:** Basic **LED lighting** is sufficient.
- **Reef Tanks (with corals):** A **high-quality reef LED light** that provides proper PAR and spectrum is essential.

Water

- Use **reverse osmosis (RO) water** with **marine salt mix** (available at Wet Pets N Critters).
- **Salinity:** 1.020–1.025 specific gravity (test with a hydrometer or refractometer).

- **Temperature:** 76–80°F (use a **reliable heater and thermometer**).
- **pH:** 8.1–8.4
- **Ammonia/Nitrite:** 0 ppm
- **Nitrate:** Under 20 ppm (lower for reef tanks)

Cycling Your Tank

We recommend **cycling your tank using hardy fish (such as damselfish or clownfish) and live rock**.

Steps:

1. Set up your tank with live rock, substrate, heater, and filter.
2. Add **hardy fish** to begin the cycle (ask our staff for suggestions).
3. Allow the tank to cycle for **4–6 weeks**. Test water regularly.
4. Once ammonia and nitrite levels are **0 ppm**, your tank is cycled and ready for more fish.

Note: Live rock helps establish beneficial bacteria that break down waste products and stabilize your tank.

Fish Selection

Start with **hardy beginner fish**, such as:

- Clownfish
- Damselfish
- Gobies
- Blennies

Avoid delicate species like tangs, mandarins, or anemones until you gain experience.

Equipment Checklist (Available at Wet Pets N Critters)

- Aquarium (30 gallons or larger)
- Filter (hang-on-back, canister, or sump)
- Protein skimmer (recommended)
- Heater and thermometer
- Powerheads or wave makers
- Marine salt mix
- Reverse osmosis (RO) water
- Hydrometer or refractometer
- Substrate (live sand or aragonite)
- Live rock
- Marine-safe test kits (ammonia, nitrite, nitrate, pH, salinity)
- Algae magnet or scraper

Maintenance

- **Daily:** Check temperature, top off evaporated water with RO water.
- **Weekly:** Test water, clean glass, and check equipment.
- **Biweekly:** Partial water change (10–15%).
- **Monthly:** Clean filter media and protein skimmer.