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lit of water. It's the same for fish tanks, if the heater failed in a big tank the water will cool slower than if the heater failed in a big tank.So trust me on this point, a bigger tank is an investment, it will make things easier in the long run. You will need a suitable stand for your tank. I would also recommend you invest in a good filter if possible. Check the section on equipment for further advice on stuff you will need. Test Your Water You may never have had to test your water before. It's something us fish keepers do on a regular basis. Once your tank is up and running these are thing you will need to test for on a regular basis, but right now I just want you to test the pH of your water. The pH will affect the range of fish you are able to keep. It is possible to alter your pH, but as a beginner I would not recommend it. It is far easier to pick fish suited to your waters natural pH.To test your water you can either do it yourself by buying a testing kit from an aquatics shop or most aquatic shops offer a water testing service. Most kits are easy to follow and come with full instructions. Do A Little Research On What Fish You Would Like Now you have your pH results you can start researching your fish. I recommend you have look through the different fish profiles, in particular look at their pH requirement and max size.There of course some fish beginners should not attempt to keep, these would include Discus, Red Tailed Catfish, Killifish, and Oscars. It is often a not a case of a particular fish being a bad choice, it's more a combination of fish being a bad choice.Most people start out with a some livebearer fish such as guppies and some tetra, normally neon tetra, both of these fish are colourful, cheap to buy and not aggressive. Click here, for my recommendations on what I think are good first freshwater fish.Many experts don't like the idea of a general mixed community aquarium and suggest instead you should only keep fish from the same part of the world together. The advantage of doing things this way is the aquarium inhabitants will have similar water requirements so no fish has to attempt to live in water which is out of their natural range. Buy The Necessary Equipment Now that you have some idea of the fish you would like to keep you can start buying your equipment. It helps to have a rough idea, so you not disappointed later when your tank and set and you find out you can't keep the fish you wanted to keep because your tank is too small.Check out the equipment section to help you work out what you need. Set Up Your Aquarium Each bit of equipment should come with instructions, read those instructions and follow them to the letter. Also try following the these tips:Do not position your aquarium near direct sunlight - direct sunlight increases algae growth.Make sure your aquarium is levelIf using placing air stones in the tank, attach them to aquarium floor with plastic suckers before putting the sand or gravel in.Wash gravel or sand in a bucket until the water runs clear.If using live plants, try planting them with the tank half full of water.Fill filter with water before turning on.If using bogwood, soak it in a bucket of water for 48 hours before adding to the aquarium - otherwise it will turn your water brown / orange.Add water conditioner to the water. Cycle Your Aquarium Cycling the aquarium makes it safe to add fish, if you don't cycle your aquarium you run the risk of a new tank syndrome outbreak. Click here for advice on how to cycle an aquariumIt will probably take around a month to cycle your aquarium, and then you will be ready to start adding some fish. Add A Few Fish I would suggest adding your most hardy fish first. While your tank is still new it will be at risk of new tank syndrome, so even through you have cycled the tank you still need to be really careful for the few months. For a tank of 60 litres I would start by adding 2 small fish.When you come back from the aquatic shop with your new fish, you should follow these steps to reduce the stress caused to your new pet.Turn off the tank lightsDo not untie the bag which is holding the fish.Float the bag in the aquarium for about 30 minutes, the aim of this is to partly let your new pet get used to their new surroundinga while in the safety of the bag and also to let the bag water reach the same temperature as the tank. This will reduce the shock the fish feels when they are let out.Let the fish out the bag.Keep the lights off for an hourTurn lights back on.Watch the fish Keep Testing Water Every time you add new fish you need to go through the same process of testing as when you cycled the aquarium. I will take around 2 weeks for the test results go back to normal. Once back to normal, you can add more fish. Aquarium Maintenance Aquariums require regular maintenance to keep them looking good and the fish healthy. When The Time Is Right Add A Few More Fish To add more follow the same process as the first time you added fish. If you like this site vote for it @ AquaRank New to tropical fish keeping? While tropical fish make beautiful pets and their vibrant aquariums make stunning additions to a home, tropical fish keeping for beginners can feel daunting. From prepping your tropical fish tank to ensuring you've done all the necessary steps to facilitate a healthy ecosystem, we know it can sometimes feel like there's a lot to remember. However, once you've ensured you have the right equipment and knowledge of their needs, looking after tropical fish is a rewarding and fun experience. So, to help you create the best habitat and keep your aquatic pets happy and healthy, here at Pond Planet, we've created a simple guide for you to refer to. Step 1: Do your research We know it's tough to resist, but there's a lot of preparation you need to do before you get to the exciting part of buying your tropical fish. Budget - You first need to agree on a budget, as there are many different price brackets involved in keeping fish. You can do it on a budget or go all out and get the most high-end equipment, so it's important to find a price point you're comfortable with and use that as a guide. Test your water - You need to test the PH of your water at home before you choose your fish. This is because the level of acidity in your tap water will determine the types of fish you will be able to keep. You can easily test the PH of your water at home using a simple water test kit. Research fish breeds - Once you know the PH of your water, you can start researching the ideal types of tropical fish for beginners that will be best suited to that water type. As you're just starting out, it's best to choose fish that are fun and easy to care for to begin with, and then you can move on to the more demanding breeds as you become a more experienced fish keeper. Step 2: Choose your tank The size of your tank will largely depend on the amount of space you have available, and also on your budget. Smaller tanks are often sold as ideal for beginners, however, if your space and budget allow, we would recommend getting a mid to large size tank. This is because larger tanks are more stable in terms of water chemistry and temperature, with changes happening more gradually meaning there is a lower risk of things going wrong. Tanks of around 80-100 cm in length are an ideal size for your first aquarium setup. Aquariums that come with a built-in cabinet underneath are also great for storing external filters, food and cleaning accessories. Step 3: Choose your lighting Lighting is essential for maintaining a healthy fish tank. Aquarium lighting has an important effect on the physiology and behaviour of your fish, as well as improving their general wellbeing. Lighting also provides vital energy for any plant life or other photosynthetic organisms living in your tank. Having a well-lit tank also means you can properly appreciate the beauty of your new aquarium and its inhabitants, so it's important you have this ready to go before you begin adding any fish or plants to the tank. Some aquariums come with lighting tubes already fitted into the aquarium lid. However, if you're not putting a lid on your tank, or if you wish to upgrade or change your lighting you can choose from a wide range of LED, metal halide and fluorescent light fittings. Fluorescent and LED lighting is relatively cheap to run and ideal for beginners, whereas metal halide lighting is generally used by the more advanced fish owner with larger aquariums due to its more intense light output. Step 4: Choose a filter An aquarium filter is an absolutely essential piece of kit, and your fish won't stay healthy for long without one. Filters remove harmful toxins, debris and other wastes from the water, ensuring they don't build up and cause damage to your aquarium life. There are two types of aquarium filter setup you can choose from: Internal and external. Internal filters are more commonly used by beginners, and particularly by those with less available storage space around the aquarium. Internal filters, as their name suggests, sit fully submerged inside the aquarium, and are usually attached to the side of the tank using suction cups. Internal filters work by drawing water from the tank using an internal pump, before feeding it through the filter media and then returning the clean water to the aquarium. External filters are designed to be kept outside of the main aquarium and are usually kept in storage cabinets beneath the tank. As they do not need to be kept inside the aquarium, external filters tend to be larger and contain a wider variety of filter media, therefore providing a more thorough level of filtration. They work much in the same way as internal filters, drawing water from the main aquarium through pipes and feeding it through filter material before returning it to the aquarium. If you have available space and budget, we would recommend an external filter simply due to their more advanced designs, but an internal filter will keep your aquarium water perfectly safe and healthy and are ideal for beginners just starting out. Step 5: Choose a heater & thermometer Unlike coldwater fish such as common goldfish, tropical fish require warmer water in their aquariums to keep them alive. For this, you must install a fish tank heater to heat the water to the appropriate temperature and maintain it there. Remember, different types of fish require different temperatures to stay healthy, so make sure you build this into your research back in step one. Aquarium heaters come in many shapes, sizes and price points to suit different tank sizes, fish and budgets. There are two main types of heater: Submersible and external, and all come with safety features to ensure your fish and personal safety are not at risk. A thermometer is also a very important addition to your beginner's equipment kit, as it ensures you can keep a close eye on your water temperature. Temperature shouldn't shift by more than a degree or two on a daily basis, and your thermometer will ensure you can make any necessary changes should anything go wrong. Step 6: Buy water conditioners Did you know that your tap water contains chlorine, chloramine and heavy metals? These can be very harmful for your fish, so you must add water conditioning substances to remove chemicals and impurities like these from the water and keep your fish healthy. You can also buy other additives such as salts, stress coats and clearing solutions to add electrolytes, reduce fish stress and clear cloudy water. Step 7: Choose your substrate Now you've got all your essential technical equipment, it's time to move on to aesthetics. The substrate is what covers the floor of your aquarium, and is usually made up of gravels and pebbles. You can have some fun with this element of your aquarium setup, as there are lots of attractive colours and combinations to choose from. Alternatively aquarium sand offers another attractive option. Make sure you wash your gravel, pebbles and sand to rinse away anything nasty before you add them to the tank. Step 8: Choose your aquarium decor There is more fun to be had when choosing the decor for your aquarium, as you can get really creative. You can choose aquarium backgrounds to add the illusion of extra depth to your tank, and there is a world of different ornaments and artificial plants to choose from. Decor and plants add stimulation for your fish and make for a very attractive aquarium. Try not to get too carried away, however, or you risk overcrowding your tank and reducing the quality of life for your fish. You should also make sure you wash any new decorative additions to the aquarium, especially if you're introducing an object that has not been specifically designed for aquarium use. You can also choose to add real plant life to your aquarium. If you choose to do this, make sure you research each individual plant's needs in terms of light, water conditions and compatibility with fish. Step 9: Cycle your tank Cycling your tank is a very important step in setting up a new aquarium, and one that many people tend to ignore. Not cycling your tank before adding new fish can lead to a phenomenon called 'New Tank Syndrome' (NTS) which can be harmful and even fatal for your fish. The fish tank cycle is how the biological filtration deals with waste produced within the aquarium, such as ammonia. Biological filtration relies on friendly bacteria which converts ammonia into less harmful nitrates, but brand new tanks do not have these bacteria. If you add fish to the tank straight away, the filter media may not be able to handle the sudden increase in toxins, and this can lead to NTS. The best way to cycle your tank is to add a very small amount of fish food to the water each day, which releases ammonia into the tank as it decomposes. You can also add pure ammonia, though this is harder to get hold of. Do this for around a month to build up a good level of friendly bacteria in your filtration, and then... Step 10: Add your fish ...The time has finally come for the most rewarding part of setting up your brand new tropical aquarium, adding the fish! Once again, try not to get too carried away and add too many fish at once. You may have cycled the aquarium, but adding too many fish can still overload the filtration system. Your best plan of action is to visit your local pet shop or aquarium specialists and get their first-hand advice on which fish to choose and how many. What temperature should a tropical fish tank be? When it comes to tropical fish tanks, getting the temperature right is extremely important. The ideal temperature for tropical fish is generally 24-27°C (75-80°F), and you can purchase aquarium heaters to help you keep the water at this temperature. As tropical fish's natural habitat in warm bodies of water such as lakes and rivers has a stable temperature not subject to much fluctuation, it's important to replicate this in your tank and ensure you maintain a consistent temperature. For this reason, it's also important to consider where in your house you place your tropical fish tank, ensuring you avoid situating it near sources of cold or heat from open windows or radiators. The best way to ensure your tank is at optimum temperature for your fish is to use an aquarium thermometer and check this daily. What pH should a tropical fish tank be? Another crucial factor is ensuring your water's pH levels are suitable for your tropical fish tank. When it comes to pH levels, 7.0 is considered neutral. For most tropical fish, a pH level between 6.8 to 7.6 is best, but it's important to check the requirements of each of your tropical fish, as this can differ between species. The pH level of your tank is another thing you need to keep a close eye on regularly, which you can do with pH aquarium test kits. How often do tropical fish need to be fed? Avoid overfeeding your tropical fish. They require feeding once or twice per day but this will be dependant on the specific species. You can check the amount is correct by looking to see if there is any food left uneaten. Excess fish food is bad for the overall health of your tank and can cause toxicity for your fish, so it's important to keep this controlled. Cleaning a tropical fish tank In order to keep your tropical fish happy and healthy, you'll need to give their tank regular cleans. Depending on the size of your tropical fish tank, you may need to do a partial water change once a week, replacing approximately 15-20% of the water with treated water. It's also important to give your tank a full clean once a month and clean any algae build-up on the glass, gravel and ornaments within your tank with simple aquarium cleaning tools. Equipment you'll need When it comes to looking after tropical fish, there are a few bits of essential equipment you'll need. We've created a checklist below for you to refer to: A suitable tropical fish tank Substrates and plants to help create a healthy ecosystem A filter system to keep your water clean and clear A thermometer to keep the temperature stable Aquarium test kits to check pH, ammonia, nitrite and nitrate levels Now you know these basics of tropical fish keeping for beginners, you can ensure you create a safe and happy environment for your fish to thrive. Remember, before you introduce your tropical fish to your aquarium, be sure to read our guide on cycling a fish tank, where you'll find all the information you need to set up a fish tank from scratch.

