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# 7 Things A Beginner Aquarist Must Know!



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What follows is a short report of what a beginner aquarist MUST know before starting their first aquarium if they want to save themselves a load of frustration. It is basically a list of things that fall into the category of, "I wish someone had told me that two years ago" or to quote Kenny Rogers, "If I knew then what I know now". Without further ado:



## Learn As Much As You Can About Aquariums & Aquarium Fish



Read, read, read, ask questions and then read some more. You can find useful information in magazines, books, the internet and best of all, people who have aquariums.

The best source of the four, is people who currently have aquariums, but you may not know anyone, so the second best source is magazines and books. Books and magazines are usually (not always) more reliable than the internet because the publishers of the books and magazines have a lot to lose if they give you inaccurate info. On the other hand, anyone can post a blog on the internet and tell fairytales about aquariums with little or no consequences. That is not to say the internet should be avoided, but you should be more critical about information on the internet.

To get started, here are some topics you should familiarize yourself with:

- Nitrogen cycle (it's pretty complicated so don't worry about memorizing it, just make sure you know what it is and maybe print of a one page poster of it for exciting bedtime reading)
- Bioload
- Freshwater aquariums vs. saltwater aquariums
- Find the names of the fish you want in your aquarium and find out if they can live together (some fish are not "team players" if you catch my drift)
- Managing pH levels of the water and changing the aquarium water
- Aquarium plants
- Aquarium equipment (lights, heaters, filters, cleaners, etc.)
- Quarantine tanks

That should get you off on the right foot.





## Don't Believe Everything You Hear At Your Local Fish Store



Hopefully you have done your research before you set foot into a fish store. I know that fish/pet stores are usually staffed by people who are SUPER enthusiastic about pets and caring for them, but they are not always SUPER well-informed. Pets are very complicated living creatures and although the pet store staff won't intentionally mislead you they may do so unintentionally. If you have done your research then YOU know what you're talking about then you can more easily decide if they staff knows what THEY are talking about. If you have not done your research then you are left to assume that everything the 13 year-old, who has never had an aquarium and is now heading up the aquarium department, knows exactly what your fish and your aquarium needs. At the end of the day, they are there to sell things, so it is on you to check and double all the information you receive.



## Save More By Spending More...what?



So, I'm still hoping that you have done your research. I can hear you say, "again with the research!" Yes, again with the research : ) Research is the backbone of your successful aquarium. You WILL save time, effort and most importantly money by doing your research.

All the equipment for your aquarium comes in to types; first, there is the 'real deal' equipment and second, the cheap knock-offs. The cheap knock-offs might be tempting. After you buy that cheap under gravel filter (UGF) and later toss it out because it's a piece of junk and then have to buy the more expensive Canister filter, you would have saved a lot of time, money and frustration by just going for the 'real deal' from the start.

Books are a huge help in this area, but not all books are created equal. Read reviews of the books you think might help you and decide if that book is for you. After doing your research (again with the research!) you can find the right book in the library, a used book store, Amazon, or a retail book store.





## Ask Yourself What You Want Out Of This Hobby



Do you like to watch your fish swim around because it relaxes you after a hard day? Do you want colorful, energetic fish or do you want docile, slow moving ones? Do you want a salt water aquarium or a fresh water aquarium? Do you enjoy the aquarium plants more than the fish?

Once you know exactly what you want and what you like (which you may not know until after you've had a working aquarium for a while) then you can tailor your aquarium to suit your needs.



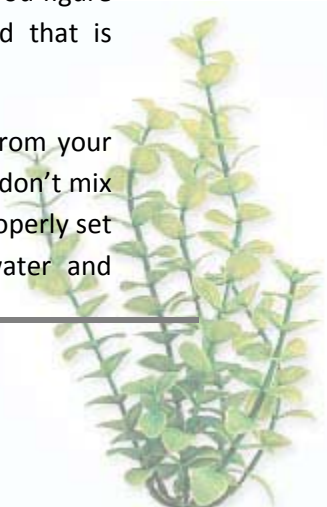
## The Logistics Of Aquariums



Make sure you place your aquarium near and electrical outlet! Once you have 55 gallons of water in your tank it is an amazing pain to move. When you do the math you'll find out that 55 gallons of water weighs 400 pounds! Add to that the weight of the tank itself, the substrate (rocks, gravel or sand), and the cute little sunken pirate ship and you'll be close to 500 pounds. Unless you enter the World's Strongest Man competition on a regular basis you will want to make sure that you rarely have to move your tank.

On the topic of weight, you will want to make sure that were you are putting the tank can support its weight. That includes both the floor of your house and the stand that you want to place the tank on. You may have to call a structural engineer in to help you figure out how much weight your floor can support. Also, find an aquarium stand that is specifically designed for your size of tank.

I'm sure one of the first things you remember learning as a child, either from your parents telling you or in my case personal experience, is that water and electricity don't mix well. For that reason you need a GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter). When properly set up, the GFCI will stop anyone from getting an unfriendly jolt if the tank water and



electrically-powered tank equipment are faulty. You will also want a surge protected power bar as insurance against power surges, however rare they may be.

Also keep in mind how far your aquarium is from your water source, the closer the better. Less work for you! Place your aquarium away from windows if possible because of the possibility of annoying algae issues in your tank. Algae is annoying to look at, annoying to clean and it annoys your fish. Avoid algae. At the very least have curtains that will block or disperse as much light as possible if you cannot avoid placing your aquarium near a window.

Lastly, place your aquarium where there are no outside or inside doors. Aquarium fish can be easily stressed which can lead to illness and death if taken to the extreme. The loud noises and vibrations caused by opening and closing doors are not much fun for your fish. If near an open outside door the temperature of the tank can change or the tank might receive direct sunlight.

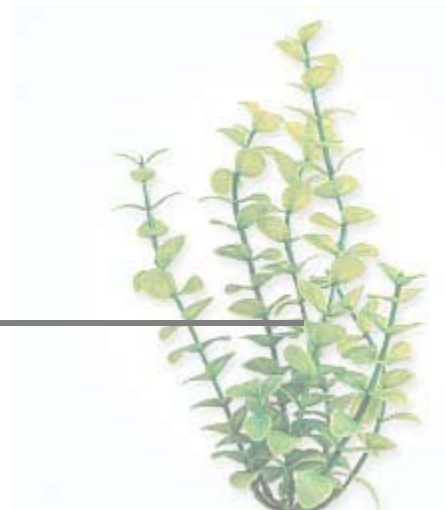
Place your tank in a low-traffic area. Low traffic will allow your fish to get used to humans and they won't swim for the hills every time someone approaches.



## You WILL Make Mistakes, So Get Over It!



Making mistakes is how we learn, so welcome mistakes and learn from them. Then apply what you have learned to avoid the same mistake in the future. Then after a few years you'll be writing a book just like this full of the mistakes you've made and how someone who has not made them yet can avoid them. Neato!







**It's A Hobby So Have Fun!**



If you find that caring for an aquarium full of fish and plants is a chore then I suggest you search out another hobby.

I hope you find this info useful and that's the way to fish swims,

Bjorn Allpas

