1. **Get Your Cheat Sheet** 

Hey there!

Thanks for joining me at Happy Hydro Farm!

**My goal is to make hydroponic gardening fun and easy.**

**​**

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| [**Download The Cheat Sheet**](https://click.convertkit-mail2.com/75uwxd2r80f2ud9k56fzhqgqro66/7qh3367rb8h0w322kziz/aHR0cHM6Ly9oYXBweWh5ZHJvZmFybS5jb20vZmlyc3QtZ3Jvdy1scC8=) |

In case you didn't download the cheat sheet, here it is again.

This cheat sheet will make your hydroponic journey easier, but I'm sure you still have questions. In a few days sending start sending some follow up emails to help guide your first grow.

Also, these emails are open lines of communication with me. If you have questions you can reply to this email.

**One more thing:**I'm always working to make hydroponics easier. The information on my website is free, and I need your help to make sure it answers all your questions.

**Please reply to this email and let me know what your biggest challenge with hydroponics is right now.**

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| [**First Grow Shopping List**](https://click.convertkit-mail2.com/75uwxd2r80f2ud9k56fzhqgqro66/kkhmh6h86z9z52cl/aHR0cHM6Ly9oYXBweWh5ZHJvZmFybS5jb20vc2hvcHBpbmctbGlzdHMtZmcv) |

I hope you enjoy this cheat sheet!

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**Chris Cook**​  
Founder of Happy Hydro Farm

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113 Cherry St #92768, Seattle, WA 98104-2205

1. **Preparing for Your First Grow**

Hey there!

I hope you're enjoying the *First Grow* cheat sheet.

This email is intended to help clear up some common questions that slow people down on their hydroponic journey.

I'll be sending you one email per week for the next six weeks. These emails will expand on each week of the cheat sheet.

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| [**FIRST GROW SHOPPING LIST**](https://click.convertkit-mail2.com/38uln920m8bdux3ok9urh5d5ponn/08hwh9hmzq4orvil/aHR0cHM6Ly9oYXBweWh5ZHJvZmFybS5jb20vc2hvcHBpbmctbGlzdHMtZmcv) |

**Do I really need everything on the shopping lists?  
​**The shopping lists are a complete inventory of everything I use to grow salad greens. You can add or subtract items based on your own needs.

I do highly recommend the grow light, aerator, nutrients, meter, and pH buffers. The grow light is the best value you'll find, and it's one that I use every day.

If you have questions about items on the list, ask me by replying to this email.

**Where should I setup my hydroponic system?**​  
You probably know the answer to this better than I do, but I'll offer a couple thoughts that might help.

Choose an area that is close to both electrical outlets and a water source. Carrying a bucket of water through the house gets old quick.

Also, the grow light is bright. Place the system in an area where you don't mind the grow light being on all day.

Off the floor. If you have pets or children, or both, it's a good idea to get the system up off the floor so the plants aren't being messed with.

**How do I hang the grow light?  
​**This depends on your growing area.

The grow light in the shopping list comes with ratcheting hangers that hook onto eye hooks.

You can hang grow lights from the ceiling with small eye hooks.

If you don't want to have hooks in your ceiling, you can buy or build a grow light stand. If you're in the DIY mood, I recorded a video just for you!

Check out: [Build a DIY Grow Light Stand Under $25](https://click.convertkit-mail2.com/38uln920m8bdux3ok9urh5d5ponn/dpheh0hq5rx4nlsm/aHR0cHM6Ly95b3V0dS5iZS84d1dFR2pXTG9nRQ==)​

Or [read this article for additional options](https://click.convertkit-mail2.com/38uln920m8bdux3ok9urh5d5ponn/p8heh9h9x8e30khq/aHR0cHM6Ly9oYXBweWh5ZHJvZmFybS5jb20vZGl5LWdyb3ctbGlnaHQtc3RhbmQv).

**How do I calibrate the pH meter?  
​**I made a video showing how to calibrate this exact pH meter.

​[Click here to watch the pH meter video](https://click.convertkit-mail2.com/38uln920m8bdux3ok9urh5d5ponn/qvh8h7h8nq375eul/aHR0cHM6Ly95b3V0dS5iZS93T1RKUUMwWGZ1TQ==)​

That's all I have for this week. If you have any questions, you can ask them by replying to this email.

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1. **Week 1 - First Grow** 

Hey there!

Welcome to Week 1! Ready to learn as you grow?

Keep calm, and have fun. If you need my help, let me know by replying to this email.

**Seed Soaking**​  
First thing's first, start soaking your seeds.

A small dish of water works great. Soaking softens the seed and jump-starts the germination process.

**Planting**​  
Planting seeds using starter plugs is really easy. For step-by-step instructions, read [Rapid Rooter Instructions](https://click.convertkit-mail2.com/wvuxle3vnmh6umq5zra7he2ezkxx/x0hph6hn36w5kvu5/aHR0cHM6Ly9oYXBweWh5ZHJvZmFybS5jb20vcmFwaWQtcm9vdGVyLWluc3RydWN0aW9ucy8=).

**Set Up Growing Area  
​**While your seeds are soaking, go ahead and set up the growing area so everything is in place.

Adjust the height of the grow light so the seed tray is reading a DLI in the range of 6-10.

**How do I adjust light intensity?  
​**If you've read over Week 1, I'm sure you're confused about adjusting light intensity and daily light integral (DLI). I published an easy-to-follow article and video on this exact subject.

**​**[**Click here to learn more about lighting**](https://click.convertkit-mail2.com/wvuxle3vnmh6umq5zra7he2ezkxx/6qheh8hpog7mxmao/aHR0cHM6Ly9oYXBweWh5ZHJvZmFybS5jb20vcGxhbnQtZGxpLWNoYXJ0Lw==)**​**

**Build the Hydroponic System  
​**The water culture hydroponic system used for this cheat sheet is really simple to build.

Measure and mark the center line for each hole on the lid (there's a template on page 3). Cut the holes with a 2" hole saw.

One one side of the tote, measure down 1 1/2" from the inside of the lip and make a mark for 2 holes. These holes will be for the air lines. I install [**rubber grommets**](https://click.convertkit-mail2.com/wvuxle3vnmh6umq5zra7he2ezkxx/kkhmh6h8mqlkzxil/aHR0cHM6Ly9oYXBweWh5ZHJvZmFybS5jb20vc2hvcHBpbmctbGlzdHMtZmcvI29wdGlvbmFsLWl0ZW1z) in these holes so the air line fits tight and keeps water from splashing out of the holes.

If you don't want to use grommets, drill the holes with a 1/4" drill bit. If you use grommets, drill the holes with a 3/8" drill bit and use 3/8" rubber grommets. This size grommet has a perfect size opening for the airlines.

Once you've drilled/cut all the holes, clean the tote to get rid of dirt and debris. Cutting the holes for the net cups is a bit messy.

Connect the airlines and check valves to the aerator. Route the air lines through the side holes into the tote, and connect them to the air stones.

Need more help? Check out [**this article**](https://click.convertkit-mail2.com/wvuxle3vnmh6umq5zra7he2ezkxx/25h2hoh7dz2klxh3/aHR0cHM6Ly9oYXBweWh5ZHJvZmFybS5jb20vZmlyc3QtZGVlcC13YXRlci1jdWx0dXJlLWtpdC8=).

**Any questions?  
​**If you need help with anything, reply to this email and help will be on the way!

Good luck and I'll see you in Week 2!

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**Chris Cook  
​**Founder of Happy Hydro Farm

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1. **Week 2 - First Grow** 

Hey there!

Welcome to Week 2.

If you're at this point, congratulations! You've already made it beyond the hardest part.

This week you'll be transplanting seedlings into the hydroponic system. If your spinach seedlings aren't ready yet, don't worry. They're slower than the other plants.

**Filling the BRUTE Tote**​  
You'll want to fill the tote until the water line just barely touches the bottom of the net cup. For a quick reference, the bottom of the word BRUTE on the side of the tote is roughly where the bottom of the net cup will be.

Once the tote is full of water, it's HEAVY. Roughly 85 to 100 pounds. If you're positioning the tote on a table, make sure the table is sturdy enough to hold it. Also, fill the tote with water where you plan to leave it. Carrying a hundred pounds of water through the house is no fun!

**Mixing Hydroponic Nutrients**​  
If you're using [**Flora Nova Grow**](https://click.convertkit-mail2.com/0vulx03ekmbgun2o82ulhwew8k55/dpheh0hq5x5q3nam/aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cucG50cmEuY29tL3QvVFVKR1JVZEdUVUpIU0VaT1NFNUNSa2RJVFVWTz9zaWQ9JnVybD1odHRwcyUzQSUyRiUyRmdyb3dlcnNob3VzZS5jb20lMkZmbG9yYW5vdmEtZ3Jvdy03LTQtMTAtaHlkcm9wb25pYy1zb2lsLWdyb3ctbnV0cmllbnQ=)nutrients, this part will be really easy.

Fill the tote with water (one gallon at a time) until the waterline is about 1 inch below the airlines. Insert a net cup in one of the holes and make sure the very bottom of the cup touches the water.

Make note of how many gallons it took to fill the tote. Once you know how many gallons the tote holds you won't need to measure again in the future.

If you're using Flora Nova Grow, add 1.5 to 1.8 ml per gallon of water in the reservoir. For example, if you have 10 gallons of water add 15 to 18ml of nutrient.

Stir the solution and let it settle for 10 minutes. Using your EC meter, check the EC of the solution. If you're in the 500 to 1000 μS (microsiemens) range then you're good to go.

If higher than 1000, remove some of the solution and replace with water. If lower than 500 μS, add .25ml of nutrient per gallon.

**Balancing pH Levels  
​**Now that your nutrient strength is set, it's time to balance the pH. For this entire grow, aim for a pH of 6.0. As long as you're in a range of 5.8 to 6.2 the solution is good.

Using the pH meter test the pH level. If the level is high, add pH Down. If the pH level is low, add pH Up.

This part takes a bit of practice, but if you go too high or low you can add the opposite buffer to counter the effect.

Normally, in a 10 gallon tote 20ml of pH Down will lower the pH level by around 0.50. A good practice is to add the initial buffering, and then wait 20 to 30 minutes for the solution to settle. Retest the pH, and adjust again if needed.

Once you start getting close to the 6.0 range, add the buffer in 5ml increments until the pH level is balanced.

Take note of how much buffer solution was used to pH balance the water. That will make future pH adjustments faster.

**Transplanting  
​**Once roots start to poke out of the starter plug, the seedling is ready to transplant into the hydroponic system. To do that, carefully remove the plug from the seed starting tray and place it in a net cup. Make sure the roots poke out through the net cup.

**Grow Light Adjustment  
​**Now that you know how to adjust the DLI output of your light, adjust it so that your seedlings are getting a DLI range of 10-12 over a 10 to 12 hour period.

**Did I Forget Anything?  
​**If I failed to answer all your questions, let me know by replying to this email. Your responses help me make this guide better for everyone.

Good luck, and I'll see you again in Week 3!

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