**About Fish Keeping**

I got my first fish when I was about three years old. He was a fancy goldfish who I named Fishy. My parents didn’t know much about them, and as a result fishy lived through some things he probably shouldn’t have. The tank was overcrowded more often than not, and water changes were almost nonexistent.

We went a few years without fish, but eventually I talked my parents into getting another tank. My dad’s only requirement was that we weren’t doing goldfish again. So, we ended up with a community tank with mollies, guppies, and Corydoras. They quickly became some of my favorites.

A few years later I was about to head off to college, so I decided to invest in a small tank I could take with me. And thus, began my obsession with betta fish.

**Ten Reasons to Get a Fish Tank NOW**

1. Fish are relaxing to watch
2. They’re really quiet
3. Make great starter pets for kids
4. Cheaper than most other pets
5. Rewarding to watch them grow and thrive
6. Don’t require long walks or lots of attention
7. Don’t take up much space
8. Come in lots of shapes and sizes and types
9. Provide uplifting home décor
10. Won’t get your house dirty

**Getting Started**

Buying your first fish can be as nerve wracking as it is exciting. I wanted to absolutely everything right when I first started, and I did a lot of research before buying my first fish. On this page, you’ll find a simplified set of instructions to get your first tank up and running and a list of ten easy freshwater fish to start with!

**How to: Set Up Your Tank**

1. Test your water!
   1. You can either buy a test kit (I recommend the API Freshwater Master Test Kit) or call a local fish store or pet shop and see if they test your water. This will tell you if you need additional water softeners, water conditioners, etc.
2. Research fish
   1. I recommend visiting your local pet store or fish store to see some of the different fish in person. This will give you a better idea of what kinds of fish you might want. Write down the types of fish and then go do some research to determine specifics that each fish type needs to thrive
3. Buy the materials
   1. Based on the type of fish you want, find an appropriately sized tank. Some stores do sales on tanks. For example, Petco often has a $1/gallon sale and you can get larger tanks for cheap! You’ll also need an appropriately sized heater and filter, sand or gravel, plants (live or plastic), and hides or decorations. It’s a great chance to get creative!
4. Set up the tank
   1. Before putting gravel in the tank, it’s best to rinse it off. Then start by putting the sand or gravel in the tank. Place any decorations and/or plants where you want them. Get the filtration system and heater in place but wait to plug them in/turn them on.
5. Fill with water and let sit
   1. Slowly pour the water in and fill to the top of the tank. Once the tank is full, you can get the filter and heater systems running. If you’re using sand, there’s a good chance your water will be really cloudy at first. Let the tank settle and leave the tank running for at least 24 hours before adding fish. It can also be a good idea to test the water again before adding fish.
6. Buy your fish
   1. Once your tank has been running, it’s time to buy your fish! I always try to support my local fish store, and they tend to have some really nice fish! If you don’t have a local fish store and don’t want to risk having fish shipped to you, chain stores like Petco and Petsmart are great too!

**Beginner Fish Facts**

1. Bettas
   1. Tank Size: 3+ gallons
   2. Temperature: 74-82 degrees F
   3. Diet: Carnivorous
   4. Lifespan: 3 years
   5. Size: 2-3 inches
   6. Temperament: aggressive
   7. Other: prone to jumping, so get a lid!
2. Mollies
   1. Tank Size: 10+ gallons
   2. Temperature: 77-82 degrees F
   3. Diet: Omnivorous
   4. Lifespan: 5 years
   5. Size: 2-4 inches
   6. Temperament: peaceful
   7. Other: live-bearing and easy to breed
3. Guppies
   1. Tank Size: 4+ gallons
   2. Temperature: 50-84 degrees F
   3. Diet: Omnivorous
   4. Lifespan: 3 years
   5. Size: 1-2 inches
   6. Temperament: peaceful
   7. Other: live-bearing fish and VERY easy to breed
4. Goldfish
   1. Tank Size: 20+ gallons
   2. Temperature: 68-74 degrees F
   3. Diet: omnivorous
   4. Lifespan: 10-20 years
   5. Size: 1-12 inches
   6. Temperament: peaceful
   7. Other: ONLY keep with other goldfish
5. Swordtails
   1. Tank Size: 15+ gallons
   2. Temperature: 65-82 degrees F
   3. Diet: omnivorous
   4. Lifespan: 3-5 years
   5. Size: 1-6 inches
   6. Temperament: peaceful
   7. Other: live-bearing fish, prone to jumping so need lids
6. Platies
   1. Tank Size: 5+ gallons
   2. Temperature: 70-77 degrees F
   3. Diet: omnivorous
   4. Lifespan: 3 years
   5. Size: 1-2.5 inches
   6. Temperament: peaceful
   7. Other: live-bearing fish
7. Rasboras
   1. Tank Size: 10+ gallons
   2. Temperature: 72-81 degrees F
   3. Diet: omnivorous
   4. Lifespan: 5-8 years
   5. Size: 1-2 inches
   6. Temperament: peaceful, shoaling fish
   7. Other: can be easily stressed by more outgoing fish because they are kind of shy, shoaling fish so keep them in groups
8. Tetras
   1. Tank Size: 10+ gallons
   2. Temperature: 75-78 degrees F
   3. Diet: carnivorous
   4. Lifespan: 5-10 years
   5. Size: 1.5-2 inches
   6. Temperament: very social
   7. Other: shoaling fish so keep them in groups
9. Corydoras (Cory Catfish)
   1. Tank Size: 10+ gallons for dwarf types, 20+ gallons for larger types
   2. Temperature: 70-78 degrees F
   3. Diet: omnivorous
   4. Lifespan: 5 years
   5. Size: 0.75-4 inches
   6. Temperament: peaceful
   7. Other: do best in groups
10. Barbs
    1. Tank Size: 20+ gallons
    2. Temperature: 77-82 degrees F
    3. Diet: omnivorous
    4. Lifespan: 5-7 years
    5. Size: 2-3 inches
    6. Temperament: playful, occasionally aggressive
    7. Other: showy and active fish, do best in groups but can be aggressive sometimes