

What fish should I get?

You should get fish that both prefer the same kind of water (have similar **temperature**, **pH**, **alkalinity**, and **GH** requirements) and will be able to live together once they are full sized. Talk to your local fish store about their fish recommendations!

What are all these letters?

There are a lot of chemistry terms in fish keeping, but don't worry! The basics are pretty easy to grasp.

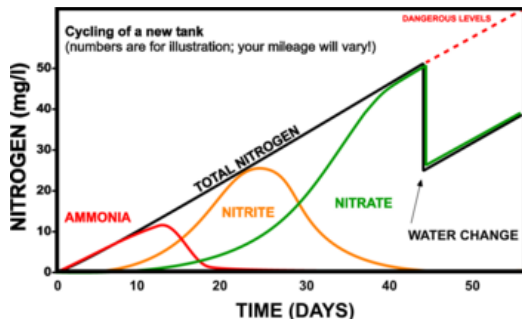
pH is a measure of how acidic or basic your water is. Each fish will have a preferred pH range, and it's the fishkeeper's job to keep the pH in that range. A pH of 7 is neutral, and is where most community fish prefer the pH to stay.

Alkalinity (KH) is a measure of how easy it is to move your pH. A low alkalinity might make your pH unstable, but a high alkalinity might drag your pH upward. Pick a moderate alkalinity for your pH and use buffers to hold it there

GH is a measure of how much minerals are dissolved in your water. This doesn't tend to shift unless water evaporates or new water is added, so you should only need to supplement GH during a water change.

What is a cycle?

An aquarium cycle is the process of growing the beneficial bacteria that converts toxic fish waste into less toxic forms. It can take anywhere from 1-3 months, and is an essential part of keeping a healthy tank. During a cycle, you'll see **ammonia** (fish waste) turn into **nitrite**, then **nitrate** (which is relatively nontoxic). Once there is no ammonia or nitrite showing up on your water tests, and your nitrate is slowly rising, your tank is cycled!



Your Shopping List

- Aquarium**
Large enough to house all the fish you plan to keep when they are adult size
- Filter**
Seachem recommends the **Tidal Filter** for ease of setup, high capacity and flow rate, and reliability.
- Filter Media**
This is what goes in the filter. Seachem recommends **Matrix** biomedica, **Purigen**, and possibly **MatrixCarbon**.
- Heater**
Most freshwater fish prefer tropical temperatures, and cannot be kept at room temperature.
- Substrate**
It will be difficult to change the substrate later, so if you intend to keep plants some day, it will be worthwhile to have a substrate suitable for plants now. Seachem recommends **Flourite**.
- Decorations**
Fish do better if they have sufficient cover, but feel free to decorate according to your own aesthetic preference!
- Water Conditioner**
Seachem recommends **Prime** to make tap water safe for fish and to detoxify ammonia and nitrite during the cycling process.
- Beneficial Bacteria**
A good bacteria supplement hurries the cycling process along and helps prevent New Tank Syndrome. Seachem recommends **Stability**.
- Buffers**
Depending on your tap water, you may need to alter pH and alkalinity to suit the needs of your fish. Seachem recommends **Neutral Regulator** for fish-only systems or **Acid and Alkaline Buffer** if you'd like to keep plants later on.
- Mineral supplements**
You may need to supplement your GH using a mineral supplement. Seachem recommends **Replenish** for the fish-only system and **Equilibrium** if you'd like to keep plants some day.
- Fish!**
Depending on your preferred cycling method, you might purchase some hardy fish immediately, or you might wait until the tank is cycled.
- Test kits**
You'll need to monitor ammonia, nitrite, and nitrate during the cycling process. Seachem recommends the **Ammonia Alert**, **pH Alert**, and **MultiTest: Nitrite and Nitrate** test kits

Starting the Freshwater Tank The Seachem Way

An introduction to cycling, water testing, and maintenance of freshwater

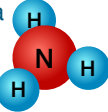
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Cycling Tips

Fish-less vs Fish-in

Using ammonia

In an ordinary fish tank, ammonia is produced by your fish or by organic waste breaking down in your system. However, you can instead opt to add ammonia manually with pure ammonia (no chemical additives, supplements, or artificial colors). Add around 0.25 ppm of ammonia every day.



Use organic waste

You can also feed bacteria by adding organic matter. This can be fish food, bits of frozen shrimp, or anything else that might naturally be found in a fish tank. This method is a bit more messy, so don't be alarmed if you see things like mold or algae starting to grow in your tank.



Pick some hardy fish!

With the use of an ammonia detoxifier like **Prime**, it is possible to use live fish as a source of ammonia when cycling a tank. If you use this method, choose just a few hardy fish to cycle your tank and make sure to keep on top of dosing your **Prime** every other day!



Why isn't my tank cycling?

Many tanks will take longer than a month to cycle, but if your tank is taking a very long time, there may be something holding it back. Here's some possibilities:

Tank fluctuations

Bacteria doesn't like tank instability, so if there are big fluctuations in water parameters like pH and alkalinity, the bacteria will have a hard time growing. We don't recommend large water changes while cycling for this reason.

Not enough space

Bacteria needs lots of surface area to grow on. If your tank doesn't have enough bio-media like **Matrix**, it will have a hard time cycling

Too much / not enough ammonia

Bacteria needs plenty of ammonia in order to grow, but excessive amounts can actually slow down bacteria growth. Ammonia levels in a cycling tank should not exceed 4ppm, and remember to use **Prime** to detoxify the ammonia.

Your Tank Startup Schedule

Day 1

Set up your tank

Add all of your substrate and decorations and set up all of the equipment needed for your system. This includes adding your **Matrix** Biomedia, but we recommend holding off on adding chemical media until your tank is fully cycled. Remember to rinse substrate, media, and decorations as needed!

Dose your products

This first day, add your **Prime** and your buffers (if needed). Depending on your water source, you might also be using some mineral additives to raise your GH.

Let Er' Rip!

Now is the time to start up all your equipment and make sure it will all run smoothly. Leave it running for at least a day.

Day 2

Add your ammonia source:

If you are doing a "fish in" cycle, add your fish! If you are doing a "fish-less" cycle, add your flake food or other ammonia source

Add Prime

One capful per 50 gallons will detoxify 1 mg/L of ammonia, and you can use up to 5x this amount in case of high levels of ammonia and nitrite. Check your **Ammonia Alert** to see if you need to add more **Prime**!

Add Stability

Add 1 capful per 10 gallons of tank water.

Day 3

Add Stability

Dose 1 capful per 50 gallons. Once you are done cycling, you can add this dose any time you think your bacteria colonies may be stressed, especially during water changes!

Check on that ammonia

Usually you don't need to add more **Prime** at this point, but it's worth giving that **Ammonia Alert** a quick glance. Remember - your **Prime** Limit is 5x the recommended dose in any given 48 hour period.

Day 4

Add Stability

Dose 1 capful per 50 gallons.

Add Prime

Your dose of **Prime** is wearing off now, so it's time to dose again. Dose 1 capful per every 50 gallons for every 1 mg/L of ammonia that you measure.

Day 5-9

Repeat!

Dose **Stability** every day and **Prime** every other day to seed your bacteria colonies and detoxify the ammonia.

Day 9-?

Test, detoxify, and maintain

Keep dosing **Prime** every other day according to the amount of ammonia and nitrite in your water. This is where having a full range test kit on hand will be helpful - check regularly to see how your cycle is progressing.

After the cycle

Water changes

Once your tank is cycled, you'll likely have nitrate slowly building up in your water. Do regular (weekly or bi-weekly) water changes of about 20-30% of the tank to dilute down the nitrate. Remember to add buffers and conditioners as needed to keep pH, alkalinity, and GH in their proper ranges.

Water testing

It's important to test your water parameters regularly to make sure all is well in the aquarium. We recommend to test ammonia, nitrite, nitrate, pH,

Track your tests!						
Date	Ammonia	Nitrite	Nitrate	pH	Alkalinity	GH