

Wilmette Pet Center

"the place for people who love pets"

Fish keeping is an incredibly rewarding and relaxing hobby. And many people find that they have trouble successfully setting up a tank for the first time. But we're here to help! Check out these tips to succeed in keeping fish:

Go slowly. Adding too many fish to a new tank, before it has cycled properly, is the main reason people fail at fish keeping. Adding too many fish too quickly causes a huge ammonia spike, often resulting in die off. Add just a few fish at a time, wait a week or two to allow the ecosystem time to increase, then add a couple more. You can ALWAYS bring in at least half a cup of your tank water; we'll be happy to test it (for free!) and let you know if your tank is ready for new fish.



The colorful Glofish is a perfect starter fish.

Reduce stress. Moving to a new tank is very stressful for fish. And, just like us, when fish get stressed, their immune system stops functioning and they get sick. Float the bag for a few minutes to help equalize water temperatures. Keep the lights off after adding the fish, and don't feed them for about a day - this will help reduce stress and keep ammonia levels from spiking.

Don't over feed. Fish, in the wild, exist on the brink of starvation. Over feeding results in higher levels of ammonia, both from the fish waste and uneaten food. Our rule of thumb: Give only as much food as your fish can eat in 15 seconds. Feed two meals a day, but skip a few during the week. With fish and feeding, less is more.

Decide on what kind of tank you want and plan for it. Are you creating a gentle community tank? Will you be keeping more aggressive species? Do you want to make one stunning type of fish your showcase? Not all fish get along, so knowing what type of tank you want will help us suggest appropriate and compatible species for you.



The gorgeous discus makes a stunning display, but belongs in an aggressive tank with larger fish.

Change your water. In nature, most fish live in with a constant supply of fresh water and there is very little ammonia present. In aquariums, it's a closed system, so we need to help them out. On average, change 30% of your water once a week. Using a gravel vacuum is a huge help, as it removes a lot of the organic debris hidden at the bottom of the tank that can cause ammonia spikes.



For more info, including understanding the ammonia cycle process, feeding, common fish keeping myths and more, head over to our website and check out our [caresheets](#). And stop by any time to talk with our trained staff about your tank and how to succeed with keeping fish.