

live rock and live sand

Live rock serves as a platform for coral and invertebrates and provides a surface for beneficial bacteria to live. Live sand and live rock are brimming with useful bacteria as well as different types of worms and crustaceans eaten by many fish. Keep in mind that live rock and live sand can carry marine creatures you may not want in your aquarium. Live rock and sand are beneficial and aesthetically pleasing additions to your aquatic system. Live rock will need to undergo an acclimation/curing process before being placed in a tank with fish, invertebrates or coral. Live rock benefits from the addition of trace elements, strontium, calcium and iodine. Do not put uncured live rock into an aquarium with existing aquatic life. Live rock must be cured before adding it to an existing aquarium.

Needed supplies:

You will need the following to complete the acclimation/curing process:

- Nylon bristle brush
- Large and small buckets
- Plastic container, with or without drains, large enough to house the amount of live rock you need to cure
- Air stone or power head
- Hydrometer
- Water heater
- Marine aquarium salt

Steps - Live rock:

There are many steps for finishing the curing process for live rock. The following are our recommendations, one for an established tank containing fish, invertebrates and/or coral, and another for a new aquatic system with no aquatic life in it. Please ensure you use the appropriate process for your aquatic system.

Curing live rock for the new aquatic system containing no aquatic life:

- ❑ Set up your new aquatic system according to the manufacturer's instructions. Set the specific gravity to 1.023 to 1.025 and temperature to 72 to 78°F.
- ❑ Using a small bucket of saltwater, rinse and scrub each piece of live rock using a nylon bristle brush. Ensure that loose organic matter is rinsed away.
- ❑ Arrange the live rock pieces in the new aquarium. It will be helpful to keep the lighting system off during the curing process to reduce algae growth.
- ❑ A 50% water change will need to be done on a weekly basis during the process. Ensure that you siphon out organic matter and debris that may gather at the bottom of the tank. Using the nylon brush, you may need to scrub the rock to remove any buildup of dead material.
- ❑ Check the ammonia and nitrite levels weekly until both reach zero. At this time, perform another 50% water change and then wait 24 hours.
- ❑ Check the pH and adjust as needed to achieve the appropriate level of 8.1 to 8.4

Most aquariums will cycle within a 2 to 4 week time period with this process.

Curing live rock for the new aquatic system containing no aquatic life:

It is very important that you do not place your new live rock into an established tank

before completing these steps.

- ❑ Place the live rock in a large plastic container. It will be helpful to have drains added to the bottom of the container for efficient draining and water changes.
- ❑ Immerse the live rock in a saltwater mixture with a specific gravity of 1.023 to 1.025. Keep the temperature near 80°F to aid in die-off. Keep the container in a dimly lit area to prevent algae growth.
- ❑ A 100% water change done twice weekly will be needed. Scrub the live rock with a nylon brush to remove any buildup of dead material.

Most live rock will be fully cured within 1 to 3 weeks and can then be safely added to your aquarium.

Steps - Live sand: Acclimation process

- ❑ Fill a bucket halfway with the newly arrived live sand.
- ❑ Fill the bucket with saltwater until it is
- ❑ $\frac{2}{3}$ full with water and sand. Slowly stir the sand in the bucket.
- ❑ Discard dirty water and place the live sand back into the shipping bag.
- ❑ Immerse the bag into the bottom of the aquarium and slowly dispense the sand into the aquarium.

Allow the sand to settle for about an hour and then change or rinse the filter.

Important details: Be patient and don't rush the acclimation process. Stable water quality, water temperature, pH levels and specific gravity are critical to the acclimation/curing process of live rock and sand. It is essential to acclimate live rock and live sand to a specific gravity of 1.020 to 1.025 if you are using this in a fish-only aquarium or 1.023 to 1.025 if you plan to have invertebrates and corals. If you are unsure of your water quality, Petco stores provide free water testing.

Once the acclimation/curing process is complete, maintenance of your live rock or live sand is easy.



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