



New Tank Setup Checklist

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Betta fish care, backed by real research.

SHOPPING LIST

- ☐ **Tank:** 5 gallons or larger, with a lid
- ☐ **Adjustable heater:** 15–25 watts for a 5-gallon, 30–50 for a 10, 60–100 for a 20
- ☐ **Filter:** sponge filter (plus air pump and airline tubing), or a hang-on-back with adjustable flow
- ☐ **Thermometer,** separate from the heater
- ☐ **Substrate:** smooth gravel or sand, nothing sharp
- ☐ **Décor and hiding spots:** live or silk plants, a cave or driftwood, a leaf hammock
- ☐ **Water conditioner** that handles both chlorine and chloramine
- ☐ **Liquid test kit:** ammonia, nitrite, nitrate, pH
- ☐ **Gravel vacuum and a dedicated bucket** for water changes
- ☐ **Ammonia source** for fishless cycling
- ☐ **Optional: light on a timer.** Needed if you want live plants
- ☐ **Optional: bacterial starter,** or media from an established tank, to speed up cycling



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SETUP STEPS

- 1 ☐ **Pick the spot.** Somewhere firm, level, and out of direct sunlight, away from heating vents and drafts. A full 5-gallon tank weighs about 50 pounds, so make sure the surface can take the weight.
- 2 ☐ **Rinse everything with plain water.** The tank, the substrate, the décor. Never use soap or detergent; even a trace of it is harmful to fish.
- 3 ☐ **Add your substrate and décor.** Pour in the rinsed substrate and slope it gently toward the back, then seat rocks, caves, and driftwood firmly so nothing can topple.
- 4 ☐ **Fill the tank most of the way.** Set a small plate on the substrate and pour the water onto it, so the stream doesn't blast a crater in your gravel.
- 5 ☐ **Add water conditioner.** Follow the dosing on the bottle. This neutralizes the chlorine and chloramine in tap water, which are toxic to fish.
- 6 ☐ **Plant and top off.** Add your plants, finish decorating, and fill the rest of the way. Leave a small air gap under the lid, since bettas come up for air at the surface.
- 7 ☐ **Power on the heater and filter.** Give the heater a few hours to work, then check that the thermometer reads between 77 and 82°F.
- 8 ☐ **Cycle the tank.** This grows the bacteria that make the water safe for your fish, and it takes 3 to 8 weeks. Track it with the cycling log printable.
- 9 ☐ **Acclimate your betta.** Float the sealed bag in the tank for 15 to 30 minutes, then add a splash of tank water every 5 to 10 minutes for another 20 to 30. Net your betta gently into the tank, and throw away the bag water.