



Location, Aquarium Preparation, Running in Filters

Ideal Locations

The ideal location for a discus aquarium is a frequently-used room (e.g. living room, dining room or eat-in-kitchen) so that your discus fish are accustomed to showing their natural behaviour in your presence. Our fish are accustomed to people frequently walking past their aquariums and to being cared for by them. Our fish enjoy the presence of human beings.

Unsuitable locations for a discus aquarium are directly behind a door, as this makes the fish very jumpy. Garages or cellars are also disadvantageous as these areas are not frequently used, which would also make your discus fish react more nervously. Also, to prevent an excessive build-up of algae, you should avoid placing your aquarium directly in front of a window or in direct sunlight.

The surface on which the aquarium will rest must be clean and level. Even a single grain of sand can cause the glass of a full aquarium to crack. The supporting structure, on which the aquarium rests, should be very sturdy, as an aquarium with a capacity of 180 litres / 50 US gallons, filled with water, can weigh more than 250 kilos / 550 pounds. Aquarium cabinets are designed to meet these requirements and also offer storage space for feed and equipment.

C a u t i o n:

Before installing larger aquariums, you should have the structural properties of the room checked!

Once you have found a good location for your aquarium and have set it up, please clean in as follows (without fish or plants):

1. Cleaning

a. Cleaning a new aquarium

- b. When you clean a new aquarium for the first time, you should use a vinegar solution, diluted with water. Wash the insides of the glass panes and the silicon joints thoroughly with the vinegar solution. Then wipe everything dry, so that no chemical residues remain, which could affect your water quality.

c. Cleaning a used aquarium

- d. Disinfect used aquariums with hydrogen peroxide (available from chemists or drug stores).

e. Dosage of the hydrogen peroxide solution:

Use 0.5 litres / 0,13 US gallons of a 30 % hydrogen peroxide solution per 180 litres / 50 US gallons of water.

Avoid direct contact with hydrogen peroxide!

It can cause chemical burns! Please wear safety glasses and use gloves!

Fill your aquarium with water and add the required dosage of the hydrogen peroxide solution as described above. This will disinfect the contents of the aquarium, the filters, any nets and also the water itself. Allow this water and hydrogen peroxide solution to stand for a full 24 hours. Then perform a 99% water change and fill the aquarium with fresh tap water. By using this procedure, you will kill off all bacteria and remove any germs/ pathogens.



2. **Adding the substrate**

Ideal aquarium substrates are quartz sand or fine aquarium gravel (both are available in specialist pet shops). Before placing the gravel in your aquarium, please wash it thoroughly under running water to remove all dust. This will help prevent your aquarium water becoming cloudy. A kitchen strainer or colander is ideal for washing gravel under running water. Once your gravel is washed, please spread it evenly as a substrate in your aquarium. Should you opt for fine quartz sand as a substrate, there is no need to wash the sand prior to use – you can place it directly in the aquarium.

3. **Filling the aquarium with tap water**

We recommend that you fill your aquarium using a bucket or hose. Please be sure to **use a bucket that you reserve solely for the purpose of water changes for your aquarium**, as it is vital that no traces of cleaning product residues enter into your aquarium water.

Please use cold tap water when filling your aquarium (exception: 90% water changes) as many hot water tanks and water pipes contain copper, which may cause your aquarium water to become contaminated with heavy metals. You should also let the tap run for a while, before using the water, as tap water which has stood in the water pipes for some time may contain harmful substances. Generally, it should be sufficient, if you **allow the cold tap water to run five minutes before use**.

If you use a hose for your water change, you should also flush out the old water in the hose thoroughly, before starting the aquarium water change, as the old water in the hose may contain softeners from the plastic, which should also not enter into your aquarium water.

4. **Heating rod, thermometer and ideal water temperatures**

To heat your aquarium water, please attach the heating rod on your aquarium's side or rear wall and set the heating rod to 29°C / 84 °F.

Caution: please be sure to **only switch on the heating rod once it is fully under water, as otherwise it will overheat and burn out!** The heating rod must be connected to a power source and run around the clock, without interruption. After approx. 24 hours, the water in a 180 litre / 50 US gallons aquarium should have reached the required temperature of 29°C / 84°F. At this point you can begin running in your filters (as described in item # 7).

Attach an **internal thermometer** to the front pane of your aquarium so that you are able to read and control the current water temperature at all times. The appropriate water temperature for your discus fish is approx. 29° – 30°C / 84°F--86°C.

5. **Diaphragm pumps**

6. To ensure a good oxygen supply for your aquarium water, a diaphragm pump (with an aeration stone) is ideal and highly recommendable. The diaphragm pump should run around the clock, without interruption. The pump should already be switched on when you run in your filters, as the newly introduced bacteria cultures will require a lot of oxygen.

7. **Filters – choice and use**

Once you have chosen the type of filter system you would like to use, you are ready to



install the filter. **What to do if an internal filter fails:**

If an internal filter should happen to fail, then it is important to not simply reconnect the filter to the power supply. The bacteria in the filter may die off after as little as 20 minutes and harmful sludge will form, which is hazardous to the health of your discus fish.

[\(LINK: Filter Failure – Power Failure\)](#)

8. **Running in filters, introducing a bacteria starter culture**

You should only add the required bacteria starter culture (available in specialist pet shops) **after your aquarium water has reached the required temperature of 29°C / 84°F.**

From the moment you add the bacteria starter culture, you should begin “feeding the empty aquarium” once daily with a little feed, e.g. Discus Frozen Feed (do not use dried feed, as your bacteria culture needs to adjust to breaking down animal proteins).

The process of “feeding an empty aquarium” is necessary because it provides the bacteria with nutrients and allows them to multiply. After about two weeks, a sufficient bacteria culture for filter performance will have developed in the aquarium and then the aquarium can be stocked with fish.

[\(see also LINK: Running in Filters/ Basics of Keeping an Aquarium\)](#)

9. **Activated carbon**

As a safety precaution, it is a good idea to place a bag of activated carbon (available as a filter medium in specialist pet shops) in your aquarium for two to three weeks, without any fish. Activated carbon will filter out any toxic substances which may be present in the water. It is important to remove the activated carbon after three weeks at the latest!

Removing the bag of activated carbon is vital, as toxic substances will be re-released into the water, once the carbon is saturated with them!

10. **Aquarium Lighting**

The aquarium lighting should only be switched on after the fish have been added. After placing your fish in your aquarium, please wait for one day before switching on your aquarium lighting, so that the fish can gradually familiarise themselves with the new environment. You can easily set the lighting using a timer clock (we recommend: 12-14 hours per day).

11. **Testing for suitable water chemistry**

(Liquid drop test kits/ indicator kits for pH value, nitrite, nitrate, ammonium, ammonia, etc. are available in specialist pet shops.)

When you initially “feed” your empty aquarium, nitrite will develop in the aquarium water (can be tested using a liquid drop test kit/ indicator kit). After two to three weeks, the nitrite content will have been broken down and the aquarium water is ready to be stocked with plants and fish.

Before adding your fish

Please test the water chemistry in your aquarium, before adding your fish. It is important that the test shows no traces of ammonium, ammonia or nitrite, as these are toxic for discus fish. In theory, these contaminants should already have been broken down. The pH value of the water should be between 6.5 and 7.8. To protect your fishes’ fins and mucous membranes, you can add a water conditioner just prior to adding your fish to the aquarium. Then, you’re finally ready to add your fish!

[\(LINK: How to Introduce Fish after Transport\)](#)