

# Care

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Guppies are easy to care for and come in a wide range of brilliant colors.

One of the most popular freshwater aquarium fish is the guppy. Guppies are noted for having colors and patterns that are very unique and beautiful. No two guppies are exactly alike. Guppies are fascinating to watch, and they are remarkably easy and enjoyable to care for.

Guppies are a species of fish related to the Pike. This publication provides the following information on the origination of the guppy. The guppy is a member of the Poeciliidae family. Wild guppies are found in Barbados, Trinidad, Guyana, and the northern part of Brazil. Wild guppies are also found in the United States, in the state of Florida. This small, freshwater fish usually lives in clear tropical waters, but they can also survive in brackish water.

A male (top) and female guppy. Differences between male and female guppies. Female guppies are much larger than males, and they have dull colored bodies with brighter colors enhancing the tail. Male guppies are brilliantly colored, and the pattern and color possibilities are endless. "Guppies.com" says a guppies beautiful hues develop from very tiny spots of color known as melanophores. The amount and location of the melanophores determines the varying patterns and colors of the guppy. In addition to color and size differences, "Guppy Care" says male guppies can be identified by longer tails and tail fins.

The International Fancy Guppy Association website article entitled "IFGA Guppy Tips" gives specific aquarium and water requirements for guppies. These recommendations are listed as follow. It suggests the use of a ten gallon aquarium or larger for guppies two months of age or older. For baby guppies, a five and one half gallon tank is sufficient. It is a good idea to have more than one tank so male and female guppies can be kept separate. Doing so will prevent poorer quality male guppies from breeding and reproducing, and separation will prevent unwanted babies.

Proper aquarium maintenance is important in keeping fish healthy and disease-free.

Approximately twenty percent of the aquarium water should be siphoned out and replaced once a week. Siphoning water from the bottom of the tank is important since removing water from just the surface does not get rid of debris. Most pet stores sell siphons that vacuum out waste and leftover food from the aquarium bottom.

The recommended pH level of the aquarium water needs to be between 6.8 and 7.6. The most desirable range is between 7.0 and 7.2. Kits to test and adjust the pH level of the aquarium water are available in most pet stores. Taking time to check pH levels is an important part of maintaining a healthy tank for your guppies.

Baby brine shrimp are a high protein favorite of the guppy. These tiny eggs can be hatched at home and fed as a supplement to flake fish food. They should not be fed exclusively because they are mostly protein and do not contain other required nutrients. The same article says baby brine shrimp eggs are available in most aquarium supply stores.

Another popular guppy food are white worms. These little worms are often found under stones and in decaying plant matter along the Atlantic coast. Various species of white worms are also commercially bred in refrigerated units that maintain a temperature between 45 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit. The same article recommends keeping white worms alive with a diet of cracker crumbs, bread crumbs, or powdered milk.

"Guppy Care" recommends providing guppies with several small feedings each day as opposed to one large feeding. This is especially important if there are baby guppies in the tank. Adult guppies that are not getting enough food may eat the babies. The article also mentions that feeding more often will ensure baby guppies are getting the proper nutrition for growth and development.

With regular aquarium cleaning and maintenance, guppies will remain healthy. They are a pleasure to own and add a lot of beauty to an aquarium. Breeding and caring for guppies is a great hobby that can be very rewarding. It is no wonder why guppies are one of the most popular freshwater aquarium fish.

**Fry Care** Perhaps, before your female guppy gives birth, you ought to consider what you're going to do with the fry. You'll need to decide a couple things. Do you want to deal with the many fry being born monthly? If not, consider talking with local stores to see if they'll take the guppy fry. In the US, it is customary for a Local Fish store to take the fry for either trade or monetary payment. Pet supply stores do not take for trade nor for monetary payment. Infact, they will take your fry, but only as a donation on your part. So check your local phone book for Aquarium stores and check there first. Many other countries require you to have a license to sell fish, so check with your area regarding laws. If you decide to raise the young fry, consider setting up a few tanks to let the fry grow out in. Start any tank immediately, before the young ones arrive so the tank can cycle before the fish are added. Do this "fishless

cycling" either by ammonia cycling (adding 3 drops of ammonia per day until nitrite forms), or by taking water from your existing tank and filling the new tank with all siphoned debris and water. The debris starts the ammonia which starts the cycling, and any water provided from the existing tank will have some nitrifying bacteria already in it providing a quick start for the nitrogen cycle. If possible, exchange filtration media from an existing tank to the new tank so the process will be expedited. In the fry tank, you'll need to cover any suction devices with a material to stop fry from being sucked in to filtration.

I suggest you find some fine bridal netting or tulle and cut a piece to cover suction tube and hold in place with a rubber band. Some suggest using nylon pantyhose, which you can use until you find netting, but I don't suggest using it all the time as it will interfere with filtration process. The fry tank can be a simple tank, meaning all you'll need to provide is filtration, heating and lighting. I don't have any type of gravel in my fry tanks as this allows very easy cleaning of the tanks. As the fry mature and are separated, then I place gravel and plants in larger tanks for them to continue growing. Set the temperature to 80F if possible to allow maturation and then as the fry age, you can reduce the temp back to 78F. After the new tank has cycled when levels are ammonia zero, nitrite zero, and nitrate is 40ppm or less, then you can add the fry.

You'll need to feed the fry a few times per day. If possible for the first four weeks feed them as often as time will permit. Some feed the fry 5 times per day. The first four weeks of their lives go into building body and muscle tone. Grind the tropical flake food to powder to feed the fry. It would be great if you're able to hatch brine shrimp to feed the fry a couple times per week. The baby brine shrimp provide a great source of nutrition to enhance fry coloration. Don't use color enhancing flakes as the flakes don't provide correct vitamins the fry need to grow properly. At the end of the first four weeks, the fry begin to sexually develop into male or female guppies. At the age of 6 weeks, they become sexually active. So, between weeks 4 and 6, you might want to consider separating the fry into female, male groupings. Do this by taking one fish out at a time and placing in a small container with water from the tank and with a magnifying glass look for either the gonopodium or the gravid spot. More often it is better to see the gravid spot of a female. Mix ups do happen and don't be too worried as the fish can be selected out and put into the correct group. It's just a bit less to worry about what you'll be doing with the fry of all the young females if you decide to separate them. Between the ages of 6 weeks and 6 months, you'll need to consider putting some of the fry to sleep due to deformities in some of the fry. This is a procedure called culling which means to take out the bad fish. Most stores will take the culled fry off your hands, but don't expect anything in return, as they are doing you a favor. See the page about putting fish to sleep.

At six months of age the guppies are then considered adults. So, you're still going to have to find someone to take them. A donation on your part at this age is considered highly recommendable, but think about all the effort you put into raising the fry. If local fish stores won't trade or pay you for your efforts, consider asking who their distributor is and get a name and phone number. Check the distributor to see if they'll take your fish. Distributors pay you more money for larger fish. Meaning, if by week 4 the fry are too much to handle, a distributor will take them, but probably only for a couple dollars. But if you wait till they're six months old, you will probably get 50 cents per fish. Same goes for trading or receiving payment from a local fish store. The bigger the better. Remember to check with your area regarding laws.