

Live Rock and Live Sand



CARE SHEET

Developed with and approved by a Qualified Veterinarian

Live rock serves as a platform for coral and invertebrates and provides a surface for beneficial bacteria to live. Live sand is brimming with useful bacteria as well as different types of worms and crustaceans eaten by many fish. Live rock and sand are beneficial and aesthetically pleasing additions to your aquatic system. Both the live rock and live sand 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.

Curing Process

Live rock can be purchased as uncured, partially cured or fully cured. PETCO sells partially cured live rock, which means the curing process is begun prior to purchase and will need to be finished by you. Gathering live rock can be stressful to the living organisms that inhabit it, which can cause decay of these organisms. Curing live rock is the process by which the rock is conditioned and stabilized over several weeks. Throughout the process decaying material will need to be removed so that re-growth of the beneficial organisms can occur. Once the curing process is completed the live rock is ready to be placed into an aquarium.

Needed Supplies

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

- Bristle brush
- Large and small buckets
- Large plastic container, with or without drains
- Air stone or power head
- Water testing materials
- Water heater

The Steps

There are many processes to 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 specific aquatic system.

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

1. Set up your new aquatic system according to the manufacturer's instructions. Set the salinity to 1.021-1.025 and temperature near 80 degrees.
2. Using a small bucket of saltwater rinse each piece of live rock. Ensure that loose organic matter is rinsed away.
3. Arrange the live rock pieces in the new aquarium. It will be helpful to turn the lighting system off for the duration of the curing process to discourage algae growth.
4. 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 bristle brush you may need to scrub the rock to remove any build up of dead material.
5. Check the ammonia and nitrite levels weekly until both reach zero. At this time, perform another 50% water change and then wait 24 hours.
6. Check the pH and adjust as needed to achieve the appropriate level of 8.1-8.4.

Most aquariums will complete the curing cycle in about a 2-4 week time period with this process.

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The Steps **Curing live rock for the aquatic system that contains aquatic life:**
It is very important that you do not place your new live rock into an established tank before completing these steps

1. 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.
2. Immerse the live rock in a saltwater mixture with a specific gravity of 1.021-1.025. The temperature will need to remain near 80 degrees to aid in the curing process. Keep the container in a dimly lit area to discourage algae growth.
3. You will need to maintain continuous water movement, which can be achieved by using an air stone or power head.
4. A 100% water change done twice weekly will be needed, ensure that you siphon out organic matter and debris that may gather at the bottom of the container. Scrub the live rock with a nylon brush to remove any build up of dead material.

Most live rock will be fully cured within 2-4 weeks and can then be safely added to your aquarium.

Acclimation process for live sand:

1. Fill a bucket half way with the newly arrived live sand.
2. Fill the bucket with saltwater until it is 2/3 full with water and sand. Slowly stir the sand in the bucket.
3. Discard dirty water and place the live sand back into the shipping bag. The shipping bag is an efficient way to transport the sand from the bucket to the bottom of the tank without too much cloudiness occurring as would happen if you simply poured the sand in.
4. Immerse the bag down to 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/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. If you are unsure of your water quality or pH levels, PETCO stores provide free water testing.

Once the acclimation/curing process is complete for the live rock and sand then maintenance is easy. Live rock requires moderate lighting and water movement and will benefit from the addition of trace elements, strontium, calcium and iodine. Live sand will benefit from the addition of sand-sifting fish and invertebrates as they will maintain the oxygen content in the top layer of the sand.