

# Acclimating Corals Into Your Reef Aquarium

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While it has become easier than ever to find aquacultured and exotic corals from online retailers, the biggest challenge reefers still encounter is in handling and acclimating these delicate creatures after arrival. But with a careful touch and the right approach, experienced hobbyists can enjoy a beautiful living reef in their own homes.



## Handling techniques for different corals

Different corals require different handling techniques. For instance, soft corals, polyps, and mushroom corals will normally arrive attached to a small rock. Only handle these corals by the rock, this way you can avoid touching the polyps. Hard corals with large fleshy polyps can be handled by their base, which is the hard exoskeleton. Other hard corals, including small polyp stony (SPS) corals, should be handled only by the base where it was fragmented, or by the plug or rock it is attached to. A pair of Aqua Gloves or a disposable gripper sleeve is highly recommended in handling all corals, and will reduce the possibility of irritating the coral when handling it. Furthermore, always handle all corals with a gentle touch in order to minimize the chances of damaging the specimen.

## Acclimating new corals to your lighting system

Among the many species of corals available to the hobbyist, there are many differences in where they grow in nature and the corresponding lighting conditions they need in order to survive. Corals are highly adaptive to different lighting conditions, but some are more sensitive to change than others. It takes time for a coral to acclimate to its new environment, and care must be taken to help the organism adjust. This is especially important with some of the very intense lighting systems, like metal halides and T-5 fluorescents. Some corals, when not acclimated properly, can actually be "sunburned" by the artificial lighting, which opens the door to infection and possible demise. Place your new coral on the bottom of the aquarium in the substrate until the coral adjusts to the new lighting. A good sign that the coral has adjusted to the new system is when it appears fully expanded and displays full coloration. At that time, the coral can be moved to the desired location. Continue to monitor the coral's response to its new location, and if its coloration and expansion appear to decrease, relocate the coral to a lower position.

## Proper placement of corals

When determining the final placement for your new coral, research its lighting and water flow requirements, and especially the coral's aggression toward other inhabitants within the aquarium. With all of this in mind, and an open space within the rockwork that affords room for future growth, gently move the coral to its new position. Since the coral may get knocked over by snails, sea urchins, or large hermit crabs, we recommend that you use a reef-safe underwater epoxy such as Mr. Sticky's Underwater Glue or AquaStik Epoxy Putty.

