

HOW-TO: MIXING SALTWATER

Correctly mixing saltwater for a marine or reef aquarium is a vitally important—yet relatively easy—task.

First, find a container that can hold (at least) 5 to 10 percent of the volume of water used to fill your “display” tank. Old aquariums and clean garbage cans are popular among hobbyists, but you can choose whatever works best for your own “mixing tank.”

Next, fill the container with dechlorinated or reverse osmosis (RO) freshwater.

Add synthetic salt, being careful to follow the manufacturer’s instructions so you can match the salinity of your mixing tank water to your aquarium water. Ideally, salinity should be 27 to 35 parts per thousand (ppt), or 1.020 to 1.026 specific gravity. Use a refractometer to measure salinity and adjust your level accordingly.

Freshly prepared synthetic seawater is very caustic (capable of burning or corroding), so it will need some time to “cure” before it can be used in your aquarium. Allow the newly mixed seawater to sit in your container for a minimum of 24 hours before use. During that time, place an airstone or powerhead in the water to circulate and aerate the mixture. Lastly, drop in a heater to match the water temperature to that of your display tank.

TIP: Make note of exactly how much salt was used in your mix. That way, the next time you need to mix saltwater you’ll know in advance exactly how much salt to use. To be safe, it’s still a good idea to test the salinity with a refractometer.