

Stop Tank Confusion!

A Guide to an Easy, Stress-Free Saltwater Tank

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The biggest problem today in the salt water tank world is that you, as a salt water tank owner, have a confused tank and you are like 98% of all the other tank owners out there.

Tank Confusion Starts Online

If you look at the internet forums today, you'll see lots of people asking lots of questions and getting lots of very different answers. For example, here's a question I saw asked last week on a reef keeping forum:

Q: "What coral is best for beginners?"

Answer 1: mushrooms

Answer 2: zoanthids

Answer 3: leathers

Answer 4: Xenia

Answer 5: Green Star Polyps

etc..etc..

How the heck do you know which one to go with? You could do more online research and get more information on each type of coral, see what fits in your budget, see what looks pretty, etc. Or, you could grab one of each, plop them in your tank and see what happens. This approach is known as "hoping for the best" and leads to you back online posting in the "help" threads in the emergency forum.

And, if you bought some of all the above, you'd end up kicking yourself down the road when you want to switch to hard corals because the Xenia would have taken over and the mushrooms would kill anything they touch.

A similar type of question/answer confusion shows up on the equipment side.

Q: What skimmer should I buy?

Answer 1: Vertex

Answer 2: Euro-Reef

Answer 3: Bubble King

Answer 4: Deltec

Answer 5: ASM

Answer 6: Reef Octopus

etc.

Other than seeing what fits in your budget, how would you choose? Maybe you'd try one brand and it works okay, but you find out that it is really for high-end tanks and you're just getting started. You could have saved a bunch of cash if you'd known that fact.

The problem? Online forums leave you with a tank that has all different types of equipment you don't need. Some pieces aren't needed at all and other equipment is total overkill.

Here's an example.

I was talking to a newbie reefer the other day and his tank is just finishing cycling. He's excited - almost time to add the first fish. But first he has to get his calcium reactor up and running.

Err...what?

Why would you have a [calcium reactor](#) on a brand new tank that has no coral in it - hence no need for a reactor?

That's like saying you need to figure out how to drive a formula 1 race car before you learn to drive the family mini-van.

The result: confused tank.

Yes, you can do research online and read people's reviews and see what has worked for other people, but how would you know is right for YOU and YOUR TANK?

The truth is, you'll never find that answer on the internet forums because no one is asking the real question of:

"What is your tank personality"?

Yes, YOU have a tank personality. A tank personality is how you approach your tank.



When you know your tank personality, you can make faster buying decisions that leave you with the right equipment, fish and coral for your tank. The end result...a successful tank that looks beautiful and makes you happy.

3 Distinct Tank Personalities

Tank Dabbler

Just because you are a new salt water tank owner, you are NOT automatically a tank dabbler. You could be years into the hobby and be a tank dabbler.

As a tank dabbler, you want your tank to look great, and you do not want your tank to be your life.

Your day consists of counting your fish (make sure they're still there and alive)...then head to work. Easy...done.

You do monthly water changes and periodically test your water parameters. You don't keep any corals, so there isn't much else to do.

You don't need high end equipment. Period. Don't buy a [calcium reactor](#) no matter what Joe Blow says on the forum. Why? Because you don't have hard corals. You don't need it!

Being a tank dabbler doesn't exclude you from having a really nice looking tank. You are just clear that you aren't willing to move heaven and earth to keep it that way.

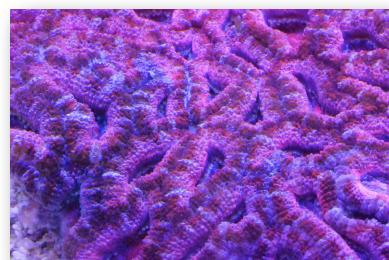
You know if you're a tank dabbler. You're a fantastically busy person who wants to enjoy the sexiness and beauty of a reef tank without killing all your free time and spending all your hard earned cash on tank stuff. Good for you! Live large.

Reef Enthusiast

The day you buy your first coral, you are a reef enthusiast.

As a reef enthusiast, buying and successfully keeping corals is clearly your life blood. It marks the beginning of a new relationship with your tank. You immediately re-work your tank to match up with your new personality.

You'll find out that some of the fish you have either eat or nip at corals. You gotta get 'em out of there and trade them back to the local fish store ASAP.



Next thing you know, you are getting interested on what the calcium, alkalinity and magnesium levels of your tank are. Before, as long as everything was alive in your tank, that was fine by you.

As a reef enthusiast, it's time to UP the education! You start reading about [T5](#) and metal halide lighting and light temperature and which corals live best under what lights. It's a priority to get your nitrates and phosphates as close to zero as possible. Adding vodka to your tank isn't a party foul, its actually something to consider doing immediately.

And then, its garage sale time! The ["starter" protein skimmer](#) that you bought to start your tank...gotta go. Now spending \$300 on [skimmer](#) isn't out of the question. You aren't

going to spend \$600+ on a cone skimmer, but \$300 is manageable. If you bought a starter set of lights...they have to go too. A swing arm hydrometer...junk. You need a [refractometer!](#)

Your tank is undergoing a remodel and how you approach your tank is too. You are now making sure that the next fish you purchase won't become the grim reaper for your tank. Likewise, you are interested in which equipment would give you the most performance, and the most variety of corals for your budget. How can you make your tank thrive with the resources you have? And you're willing to sink some more cash into your tank if it will help your corals thrive.

Reef Junkie

Yep, a *junkie*. You know who you are.

You are the true addicts of the reef keeping world and you are proud of it.

You can name all the corals in your tank by their scientific name. You don't have to test your tank levels. One glance at your corals and they'll tell you which parameter is out of whack.

Spending hundreds of dollars for a couple inches of hard corals is a weekend activity for you. You scour the internet for the most rare imports of SPS that you can find to grow it out to pay for the mortgage...or at least your electric bill.

If I show up on your doorstep, I'd see that half your house is dedicated to your tank. You'll have pipes running through the walls and the garage is full of equipment. Your house might even be falling down, but your tank is in perfect condition.

For you \$300 for a [powerhead](#) is a necessary expense because its the *new-new* thing. \$700 for a [protein skimmer](#)...? You spent more than that on your Bubble King and now that the new cone skimmers are out, that Bubble King is up for sale.



New reef keeping techniques are hot grounds for arguments and you can back up your opinion by extensive research. And rest assured that hours, if not days, of research time will be spent before you make any changes to your tank.

Soaking up every bit of reef keeping knowledge is a daily priority and there is always something else to have for your tank.

Know Thy Tank Personalities

Until you know what your tank personality is, you will be in limbo about what equipment, fish and corals to buy and your tank will show it. You'll spend way more money than you need to up front, or you'll try to cut corners and end up costing yourself headaches in the long run.

Here's a great example. You are a reef enthusiast who doesn't know you are a reef enthusiast are told that you should consider a [media reactor](#) to avoid algae outbreaks. As an unknowing reef enthusiast, you dismiss the advice because you think you can get away with just throwing some media in a bag and placing it in the corner of your sump.

What happens next? Algae outbreak. Your sand bed ends up looking like a matt of red fuzzy stuff from a high school biology class and your rocks look like a healthy lawn of green grass that most homeowners would envy but you hate.

If you knew you were a reef enthusiast, you would have budgeted another \$75 for a [media reactor](#) and [media](#), set one up in your tank and avoided the headaches of trying to deal with vacuuming out all the algae, scrubbing down the rocks and then adding the media reactor. Did the media reactor cost you \$75, yes. Is \$75 worth it to avoid having to battle algae outbreaks...YES!

When you know your tank personality, you have a fool-proof way to make decisions on what tank, equipment, fish and corals to buy.

Your Tank Personality Isn't a Life Sentence

The best part of knowing your tank personality is that once you know it, you can decide if you want to change it and what a change would look like and how much it would cost.

But before you change your tank personality, there are three crucial questions to ask yourself:

“Am I willing to increase/decrease the amount of time I spend on my tank?”

“Am I ok selling that coral or fish because it won’t fit in my tank personality anymore?”

“Is the increased investment ok with me if I change my tank personality?”

If the answer is “yes” to these questions, you’re ready to change your tank personality.

Keep in mind that if you change your tank personality, life won’t be the same on the other side. You’ll have to put in more time and money into your tank. Or if you are scaling back and moving from a reef junkie to a tank dabbler, your high end corals will lose some of their color, stop growing as fast and some might even die, but these trade offs will be worth it for the time and money you’ll save.

There is a cost with changing your tank personality, and you can decide if the cost is worth it for you.

After you change your tank personality, enjoy your new one! Broadcast it to your friends that you are now a reef junkie and you are looking for high end corals. Or, start selling your high end equipment because as a tank dabbler, you don't need it anymore. Go spend the money on something else! Get that predator tank up and running that you've always wanted or book a cruise without worrying if the tank will be ok while you are gone!

Ok, Now What?

Your next step is to move forward making your tank fit 100% the personality you have chosen for it. If you want to change your tank's personality, that's great! Do it and own the new personality! Just don't be bipolar and confuse your tank and yourself. Choose a camp and stick with it.

If you are a tank dabbler, start spending your time looking for really colorful fish NOT corals that require costly, time consuming equipment. Check out a Niger Trigger fish, or a One spot Foxface, but whatever you do, DO NOT get a damsel fish!

Likewise, if you are a reef enthusiast, eliminate the fish that are not reef safe. That Niger Trigger fish that was suitable as tank dabbler, it should go. Ditto for the Coral Beauty Angelfish.



best.

They might be pretty, but they won't make your tank thrive and will damage your corals. And get yourself a controller and [go plus one](#) on your skimmer ASAP!

Reef Junkies, start owning your addiction! Let your buddies know that bringing you beer on a friday night is ok, but frags would be better. Schedule in an hour a day to research the latest topics such as LED fixtures and [cone skimmers](#). If you have any piece of equipment that isn't top of the line or close to it, sell it and upgrade. Its time you have the

Be...Your Tank Personality

Now that you've figured out your tank personality, you have access to making quick, informed decisions about your tank that were not possible before.

The single best thing you can do with your tank personality is to *become* that tank personality.

Start basing your decisions about equipment or fish on the basis of “does it fit my tank personality?”

Likewise, when you get advice from people on online forums, ask yourself, “what tank personality is this person and does this advice fit my personality?” How do you know if that advice fits your personality? I’ll be covering that in a report that I’ll be releasing next week so keep your eyes on my site for it.

Your tank personality is really a way of life for your tank and as long as you stick to your personality, the saltwater aquarium hobby is easy, enjoyable and affordable.

This report is a whole new way of looking at keeping a saltwater tank and I don’t expect you to get all you need from it. It’s just a framework to get started. There is a lot more to saltwater fish keeping than what is in these pages, which is why I’m stocking mrsaltwatertank.com full of information for each tank personality so that you can be successful with your tank. Start with my blog post about what’s missing in the [saltwater tank world](#) and leave your comments on what your tank personality is and how its helped your tank.

You can also check out my webTV show, [Mr. Saltwater Tank TV](#), where I interview tank owners of varying tank personalities and I show you great shortcuts that will save you time and money.

Lastly, don’t go it alone. I’d like to hear your feedback on the report and how your tank is going. Feel free to share the website with your your saltwater buddies so that they understand what the heck you are talking about when you mention your tank personality. Click here to [tweet it/facebook it](#) with them.

Keep watching mrsaltwatertank.com for more great information.

Go get your hands wet,

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