



Mr. Saltwater Tank Tests Recommended List

Description of each parameter appears at the end of the tables.

Test by Tank Type		
Fish Only With Live Rock (FOWLR)		
<i>Test Parameter</i>	<i>Recommended Test Kit (click on the link)</i>	<i>Acceptable Value</i>
Salinity/Specific Gravity	Refractometer	1.019 - 1.020*
Ammonia	Salifert	0 mg/mL
Nitrite	Salifert	0 ppm
Nitrate	Salifert	0 - 10ppm
pH	Salifert	7.6-8.4
Phosphate	Hanna Checker	0 - .1ppm
* For FOWLR tank, a lower salinity (1.019 - 1.020) is recommended		
Softie Tank (Soft Corals)		
<i>Test Parameter</i>	<i>Recommended Test Kit (click on the link)</i>	<i>Acceptable Value</i>
Salinity/Specific Gravity	Refractometer	1.025
Alkalinity	Hanna Checker	6 - 11 KH
Ammonia	Salifert	0 mg/mL
Nitrite	Salifert	0 ppm
Nitrate	Salifert	0 - 3 ppm
pH	Salifert	7.6-8.4

Test by Tank Type

Softie Tank (Soft Corals), continued

Phosphate	Hanna Checker	0 - 0.1 ppm
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Mixed Reef (Softies, LPS, SPS)

<i>Test Parameter</i>	<i>Recommended Test Kit (click on the link)</i>	<i>Acceptable Value</i>
Salinity/Specific Gravity	Refractometer	1.025
Alkalinity	Hanna Checker	6 - 11 KH
Ammonia	Salifert	0 mg/mL
Calcium	SeaChem	380-450 mg/mL
Magnesium	SeaChem	1200-1400 mg/mL
Nitrite	Salifert	0 ppm
Nitrate	Salifert	0 ppm
pH	Salifert	7.6-8.4
Phosphate	Hanna Checker	0 ppm

SPS Dominant Reef

<i>Test Parameter</i>	<i>Recommended Test Kit (click on the link)</i>	<i>Acceptable Value</i>
Salinity/Specific Gravity	Refractometer	1.025
Alkalinity	Hanna Checker	6 - 11 KH
Ammonia	Salifert	0 mg/mL
Calcium	SeaChem	380-450 mg/mL
Magnesium	SeaChem	1200-1400 mg/mL
Nitrite	Hanna Checker	0 ppb

Test by Tank Type		
SPS Dominant Reef (continued)		
Nitrate	Salifert	0 ppm
pH	Salifert	7.6-8.4
Phosphate	Hanna Checker	0 ppb

Test to Run by Tank Personality		
Tank Dabblers		
<i>Test Parameter</i>	<i>Recommended Test Kit (click on the link)</i>	<i>Acceptable Value</i>
Salinity/Specific Gravity	Refractometer	1.019 - 1.020* (FOWLR),
Ammonia	Salifert	0 mg/mL
Nitrite	Salifert	0 ppm
Nitrate	Salifert	0 - 10ppm
pH	Salifert	7.6-8.4
Phosphate	Hanna Checker	0 - .1ppm
* For FOWLR tank, a lower salinity (1.019 - 1.020 is recommended)		
Reef Enthusiasts		
<i>Test Parameter</i>	<i>Recommended Test Kit (click on the link)</i>	<i>Acceptable Value</i>
Salinity/Specific Gravity	Refractometer	1.025
Alkalinity	Hanna Checker	6 - 11
Ammonia	Salifert	0 mg/mL
Calcium	SeaChem	380-450 mg/mL

Test to Run by [Tank Personality](#)

Reef Enthusiasts (continued)

Magnesium	SeaChem	1200 - 1400 mg/mL
Nitrite	Salifert	0 ppm
Nitrate	Salifert	0 - 3 ppm
pH	Salifert	7.6-8.4
Phosphate	Hanna Checker	0 - 0.5 ppm

Reef Junkies

<i>Test Parameter</i>	<i>Recommended Test Kit (click on the link)</i>	<i>Acceptable Value</i>
Salinity/Specific Gravity	Refractometer	1.025
Alkalinity	Hanna Checker	6 - 11
Ammonia	Salifert	0 mg/mL
Calcium	SeaChem	380-450 mg/mL
Magnesium	SeaChem	1200-1400 mg/mL
Nitrite	Hanna Checker	0 ppb
Nitrate	Salifert	0 ppm
pH	Salifert	7.6-8.4
Phosphate	Hanna Checker	0 ppb

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Explanation of Parameters

(in everyday language)

Alkalinity - how much your tank can resist a drop or rise in pH. Also known as “buffering capacity”

Ammonia - fish and invertebrate waste. Ammonia is the first step in the nitrogen cycle

Calcium - building block of coral. Also moves in opposite direction to Alkalinity. So when your Alkalinity is high, Calcium tends to be low.

Magnesium - binds to ions preventing their precipitation in your tank. Consistent low Alkalinity readings can be due to low Magnesium values. Magnesium is also a building block of coral and is often overlooked by saltwater tank owners.

Nitrite - *highly* toxic compound to fish, corals and invertebrates. A fully cycled saltwater tank should show 0 nitrates. Nitrites come about in the second step of the nitrogen cycle.

Nitrate - last step of nitrogen cycle. Toxic in high levels (above 20 ppm) to fish, invertebrates and corals. Learn more about it [here](#)

pH - simply, how acidic or basic a solution is. In reality, [keeping it at the suggested 8.3 is not necessary.](#)

Phosphate - food for algae. Usually introduced into tank by foods, non [RO/DI water](#) or the break down of wastes/excess food/dying livestock.

Salinity/Specific Gravity - how much salt is dissolved in water.