



# Cycling Your Tank

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## Supplies

Aquarium	API Master Test Kit
Filtration for Double the Tank Size	Appropriate Ammonia Source
Air Pump	Seachem Prime
Air stone if not using a sponge filter	Heater
Thermometer	Seeded Filter (Optional)
	Bottled Beneficial Bacteria (Optional)

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## Introduction

You will need to cycle your aquarium before your axolotl can be placed in it. You will need the tank, stand (if using), filtration without zeolites, API Master Test Kit, and Seachem Prime at a minimum. You can also place your substrate and decorations. You can add those at any time.

You will additionally need Dr. Tim's Ammonium Chloride Solution for cycling an aquarium. You will **not** be following the instructions on it.

Additional items that may speed up your cycling:

You can purchase pre-seeded filter media. I sell this sometimes. [Angels Plus](#) is another source. You can try to source them from your local axolotl group or local fish stores. Keep in mind, it is common to seed these filters using snails as an ammonia source and therefore can come with snails. All snails need to be removed from the tank before adding your axolotl. The Mottled Lottl also has seeded filters.

For cycling using my method, you will purchase [Tetra Safe Start](#). I have tried Dr. Tim's One & Only Nitrifying Bacteria and it made my fish sick, so I do not recommend it. TSS and Dr. Tim's are the same thing produced by different companies. Other options include Seachem Stability, API Quick Start, Fritz's, and Microbe Lift, but may not fast cycle aquariums the same way TSS and Dr. Tim's do. Aqueon PURE balls are **UNSAFE** for use in tanks housing or eventually housing axolotls.

When purchasing any of the canned beneficial bacteria (TSS, Dr. Tim's, API Quick Start, Fritz's, or Microbe Lift), purchase a bottle that has been manufactured as recently as possible for the highest



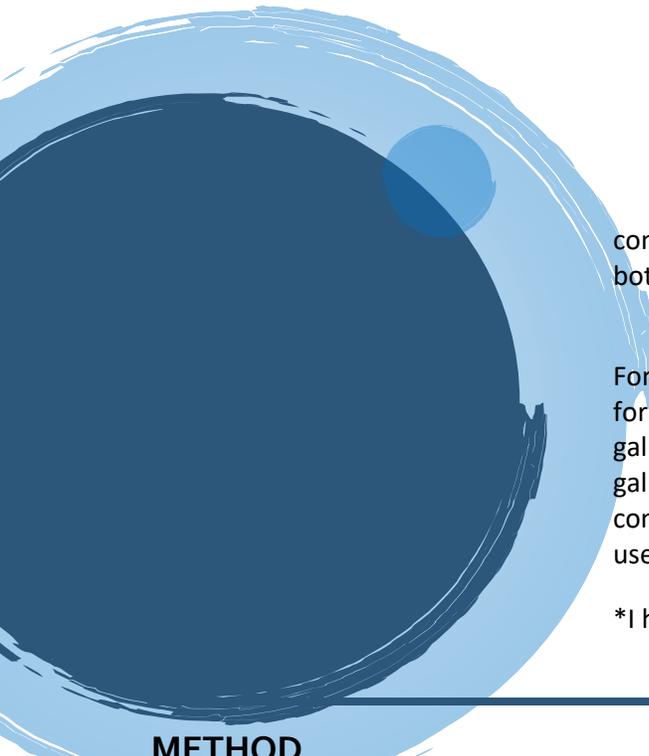
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concentration of live bacteria. The bacteria will begin to die off in the bottle and with mishandling of the bottle.

For the first dose, you will double whatever the bottle dose suggests, ie for a 40g breeder you will need two bottles of TSS that treat up to 50 gallons. (40 gallon breeders actually have a larger volume than 40 gallons when full.) Round up to the nearest whole bottle of TSS. It comes in multiple sizes, so you can purchase the 50g and 20g dose to use on a 20-30g tank.

\*I have a slightly different method than other cycling guides.

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## METHOD

Set up your aquarium in its permanent home on its stand. Add any decorations and substrate you already have and plan to use from the beginning. (If you plan to add sand, you can do that later if you are getting a larger than 5-inch axolotl.)

Test your water source (tap/well) with the API Master kit: pH, ammonia, nitrite, and nitrate to see what your base values are. Take a picture with a note that says the source and keep it. (It doesn't hurt to retest every couple of months if you are on supplied water as sometimes water supplies change.)

Using a bucket that has no residue and has not been washed with soap, fill it with water and treat with Seachem Prime. Then add it to your aquarium. Use this method to fill your aquarium full (not half, not 3/4s, but within 2.5" of the top). You must prime your water before adding it to the aquarium once cycling has started.

Add your heater if using. I've done both with and without a heater using my method for fast cycling. If you heat your tank, you will have to slowly cool it before adding your axolotl, checking your parameters and making sure your cycle doesn't crash.

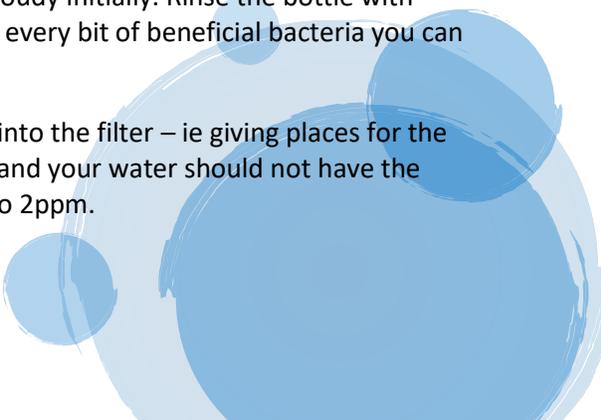
Add your filter. If you are using a pre-seeded filter media within your filter or in your tank, you must drip-acclimate it.

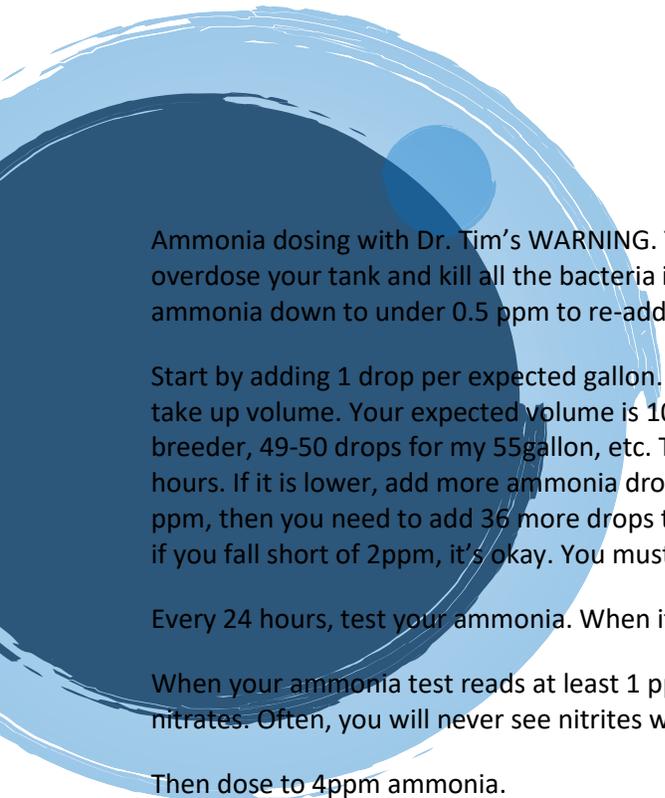
Within 24 hours of setting up your established filters, add a double dose of TSS (or beneficial bacteria of your choice) using the following steps.

Shake the bottle(s) hard. Shake it up because the bacteria will stick to the walls of the bottle and not dump into your tank.

Dump the entire bottle into your tank. It will make your water cloudy initially. Rinse the bottle with water from your tank, shake and return the water to the tank. You want every bit of beneficial bacteria you can get out of that bottle.

Wait until your filter has pushed the bacteria throughout your tank and into the filter – ie giving places for the bacteria to settle and grow. This should be about 15 minutes maximum and your water should not have the cloudiness anymore. No longer than 2 hours later, dose your ammonia to 2ppm.





Ammonia dosing with Dr. Tim's WARNING. The instructions on the label are wrong! If you follow them, you will overdose your tank and kill all the bacteria immediately. You will then have to do a water change to get the ammonia down to under 0.5 ppm to re-add the bacteria.

Start by adding 1 drop per expected gallon. Keep in mind that if you added substrate and/or decorations, they take up volume. Your expected volume is 10% less than the total tank volume, ie 36 drops for my 40 gallon breeder, 49-50 drops for my 55gallon, etc. Test your ammonia with your API kit. If it is 1-2 ppm, leave it for 24 hours. If it is lower, add more ammonia dropwise. Do this proportionately. If you added 36 drops and it's 0.5 ppm, then you need to add 36 more drops to get to 1ppm. Do only this many and test again. For this first day, if you fall short of 2ppm, it's okay. You must not exceed 2ppm.

Every 24 hours, test your ammonia. When it drops below 2ppm, re-dose to 2ppm, careful not to exceed 2 ppm.

When your ammonia test reads at least 1 ppm less than you dosed after 24 hours, test your nitrites and nitrates. Often, you will never see nitrites when using this method. As long as you have nitrates, you are okay.

Then dose to 4ppm ammonia.

As before, test ammonia every 24 hours. At this point, test nitrites and nitrates.

Do NOT do any water changes during this time unless your nitrates go above 100ppm (which you are only testing once your ammonia goes to from 2ppm to 0ppm within 24 hours).

Two weeks after your first dose of beneficial bacteria, regardless of your status in cycling (on-going or complete) add one more single dose of TSS.

When your aquarium is going from 4ppm to 0ppm in 24 hours with 0 nitrites for 3 days straight, your aquarium is considered cycled for an adult axolotl.

You can do daily primed 50% water changes to bring your nitrates down to 5-10 ppm and then add your axolotl following acclimation procedures.

