

Do You Keep a Log?

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Stardate 41153.7 encountered a new life form ...

Until three years ago, I kept only one aquarium and sometimes two when babies were born. Then I joined the Kitchener-Waterloo Aquarium Society which sparked an increase in aquariums and fish kept. Knowing when was the last time I changed water or added a fish or plants was very easy with one aquarium. Now I have nine. For consistency of care and management of my hobby, I borrowed a technique from Star Trek and now keep a log.

At first, I just entered the date and what I did on that date in a coiled journal note book. Tasks included, water changes, filter cleaning, plant trimming and so on. I also recorded when I added fish, plants and medications. For my large South American planted tank, I built a do-it-yourself CO2 injector, so I had to keep track of when the sugar and yeast had been replaced. Keeping Rift Lake cichlids in other tanks also meant keeping track of when I added trace elements and other salts, depending on whether they were Malawi or Tanganyikan.

After a year, I found it awkward to find when a particular activity last occurred in a specific tank. Some tasks were done on a weekly basis, some every few weeks, some monthly, and others were done only when required or when I had time. Single incidents were happening at a random frequency.

Some examples of referring back in the log:

- when did I last clean out that canister filter?
- I have some sick fish, when were they added, and when were other fish added?
- what were the symptoms last time?
- what medication or procedure did I apply last time?
- when did I start using that new food?
- is it time to add trace elements?
- when did that yellow lab start holding eggs?
- should I move that holding female to a birthing tank now or next week?
- when were those babies born?
- when was that fluorescent tube last changed?
- where did I get that fish from? I would like to get another to breed
- that plant looks larger, how long has it been there?
- when did I add fertilizer?
- which fish were bought at auction and which were from the local fish store (LFS)?
- when was the last time I put in some zucchini for the plecos?
- I need more spirulina flake, where did I get it last time and for how much?
- has the CO2 generator been running for 2, 3 or 4 weeks?
- and so on ...

There has to be a better way to find information, so I came up with one for myself. For each aquarium, I created a table page like so:

Date	Water Change	Cleaned Filter	Notes
Sun 10 Oct	25		
Wed 20 Oct	24	X	
Sun 31 Oct	24		Recharged bottle #1
			Added 2 clown loaches from Big Al's \$6.99 ea
Sat 6 Nov	18		
Sat 20 Nov	25		Trimmed sword plants, added plant tabs in pots

The table is placed on the page using landscape orientation (11 inches across, rather than the usual 8 1/2) and as many lines needed to fill the page to the bottom. On the computer, you can use Word or Excel. Without a computer and printer ? You can hand write on loose leaf lined paper instead. The columns have the date, volume in gallons of water changed, filter cleaning indicator, and notes of any event for future reference. I printed a blank page for each aquarium and put the pages in a binder with separator tabs. I could then flip to the aquarium I was working on to write an entry or try to find an answer.

In the example above, I could see at a glance the last time the canister filter had been cleaned in my 100 gallon aquarium and when and which of the CO2 bottles was last recharged. This table also shows that my "weekly" water changes were not really weekly ! The volume of water changes varied, so now I change the same amount each and every week.

I recommend using a log to record all events to help you manage your aquarium maintenance to give the best possible conditions for your fish and plants.