

2015

ULTIMATE GUIDE ON TRAINING
YOUR BETTA FISH



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INTRODUCTION TO TRAINING YOUR BETTA



What is This Book About?

One of things most fish keepers don't realize is that you can train some species of fish, the most prominent being the Betta, Oscars, Parrot Cichlids, the Goldfish and more.

In this book we will focus on training the Betta fish, male or female.

Training your Betta can be a fun experience for yourself and especially children and for the most part pretty easy to do.

Why Am I Writing This Book?

I have had a love for fish since my early childhood. My father bought me my first aquarium when I was 5yrs old and I haven't looked back.

As a young boy, I would have been amazed to have learned that fish could perform tricks like a dog. Instead of just watching them swim around all day I could have been training them! Mind Blown!

And that is why I decided to write this book...Children!

I am now 36 years old with two wonderful little boys of my own and when I see them playing with their toys using their imagination and seeing the excitement, I think back to how much I could have training my own fish.

Don't get me wrong, this isn't only geared towards children; I felt a great sense of accomplishment the first time a fish swam through a hoop on command.

Young, old you will have a fantastic time learning a new way to enjoy your fish.

What Will You Learn In This Book?

Simply, you will learn how to teach your fish some awesome tricks.

Together we will go over the methods used, the equipment needed, the basics of training and then walk you through step by step every trick in the book, literally.

“Young, old you will have a fantastic time learning a new way to enjoy your fish.”

TRAINING METHODS



Positive Reinforcement:

The most effective and simple way to train your fish is by using simple positive reinforcement technique. Here's how positive reinforcement (Operant Conditioning) works:

“Operant Conditioning is a method of learning that occurs through reinforcements and punishments for behavior. It encourages the subject to associate desirable or undesirable outcomes with certain behaviors. Operant behavior means that a response is followed by a reinforcing stimulus”.

“Operant conditioning deals with the reinforcement and punishment to change behavior. Operant behavior operates on the environment and is maintained by its antecedents and consequences, while classical conditioning is maintained by conditioning of reflexive (reflex) behaviors, which are elicited by antecedent conditions. Behaviors conditioned through a classical conditioning procedure are not maintained by consequence. They both, however, form the core of behavior analysis and have grown into professional practices.”

If you're interested in a more detailed & scientific description, continue reading at [Wikipedia](#).

Although training a Betta fish may sound intimidating and unbelievable at first. In short, food is used as reinforcement to reward your fish after performing a desired activity.

Your fish will eventually associate the food with a desired trick and/or action. Once this occurs it will become easier to teach your fish more complicated tricks.

So where do you begin when you want to start training.

“The most effective and simple way to train your fish is by using simple positive reinforcement techniques.”

TRAINING PREPARATION AND EQUIPMENT



The Basics:

Equipment: So here's typically all you need

- A treat! This can be a pellet, blood worm, insect something that will really excite your little buddy.
- Any props that you will be using. Such as hoops, elastics bands, mirrors, bobbars, balls, etc...
- A stir stick, string. This is used to submerge and move a treat underwater to lead the fish.
- A video camera or phone to record your successful tricks.
- Patience. For kids this might be tough, you'll need to explain that it can take a few days for a fish to learn a new trick. The more complicated the more training.

Betta Health: Before starting any training session be sure you watch your fish for a few minutes to ensure they are happy and healthy. If you notice any odd behavior it is best to wait to train.

Training can be stressful to your Betta and we recommend only training at regular feeding times. This also ensures that you do not feed your Betta fish more than they can handle in one day.

Note: Do not to exceed your daily pellet maximum!!

Always be sure to rinse your hands before starting any training session. Be sure to never use any soap or harsh chemicals on your hands, simply use warm water. If at all possible try not to stick your hands in the water.

Experimentation: Different foods might get a stronger or different response from your Betta. Also try different props with your training. It's all up to you and your imagination.

TRAINING YOUR BETTA



Where To Start:

The first thing you want to do is brainstorm up some ideas for tricks. Here are some great ideas for tricks. We will give you step by step instructions for each of these tricks in the next module.

- Flare
- Follow your finger
- Eat from hand
- Jump for food
- Swim through a hoop
- Obstacle course

Once you have a trick in mind, think carefully how you are going to break down each trick and exactly when you will award the treat. Some tricks may need to be broken down into a few parts before your Betta can complete the task.

As an example: Getting your Betta to swim through a hoop may only need one part, whereas, having your Betta swim an obstacle course may involve multiple parts so that your Betta understands each part.

Now The Fun Part!!

BETTA TRICKS



Tip: If you touch the fish, or teach it to swim through a tube or something where it might rub off its slime coat, be sure to add a stress coat product to the water regularly.

API Stress Coat Water Conditioner, 16 Ounce is great because you can adjust the dose for smaller amounts of water more easily.

Teaching Your Betta To Flare:

Difficulty of teaching: 2/5

Description: This trick is also a useful and practical trick to teach your Betta in that it provides exercise, can be used to promote bubble nest building, acts as a stimulus to prevent your Betta from being "bored", and it's a great way to get beautiful pictures of your Betta. The only supplies that you need are a small mirror (if you don't have one, a printed picture of a male Betta would work as well) and a pen with a black or red cap. First, get your Betta to flare by placing a mirror or picture in front of the tank. Once your Betta starts flaring, place the pen right next to the mirror or picture. Repeat placing the pen and mirror/picture in front of the Betta a couple more times. Once your Betta starts to instantly flare, take away the mirror and leave only the pen. It's important that the pen is the same color throughout training so that your Betta will be able to recognize it. Reward your Betta with food each time he or she flares at the pen. Continue until your Betta flares each time you show the pen.

Get Your Betta to Follow your Finger:

Difficulty of teaching: 2.5/5

Description: This is one of those tricks where you either get it on your first try or your 100th try. However, it's also one of the most important tricks to teach your Betta because once your Betta knows how to follow your finger, it makes teaching new tricks easier. First, as a sort of pretest, place your finger on the outside of the aquarium near your Betta. If he responds and moves towards it, reward him with some food. If not, shake your finger until he does notice. Slowly start moving your finger to opposite sides of the tank and reward your Betta each time he follows it. Now move your finger vertical up and down to see if he follows it. Again, reward him if he does. Just keep practicing until your Betta masters it and then you're done!

Get Your Betta to Jump Out of The Water or Eat From Your Hand.

Difficulty of teaching: 1.5/5

Description: This trick is probably the easiest trick to teach your Betta because it's one of the natural habits of Bettas. It's also practical in that you can use this trick to feed your Betta when he or she is housed with other fish that may take the food that is meant for your Betta. If your Betta can jump then all you need to do is stick a piece of food at the end of a skinny straw (the one you use to stir coffee) or a popsicle stick and hover the food just above the water surface so your Betta can reach it and not the other fish. You can also use the tip of your finger instead of a straw or popsicle stick.

Betta Swimming Through a Hoop

Difficulty of teaching: 4/5

Description: This trick is one of the hardest trick to teach your Betta, but it's also one of the most amazing and satisfying because you're teaching fish to swim through a hoop on command. It's a great trick to show your family, friends, Betta fanatics, etc. and when combined with other tricks, you can have your own Betta circus. The only material needed for this trick is a pipe cleaner, which you can get at your local craft store.

To set up the hoop, simply bend the pipe cleaner into a circle with a diameter of 2 inches and hang it on the side of the aquarium. To begin training, have the hoop perpendicular to the side of the aquarium and touching it. Move your finger across the outside of the aquarium in the direction you want your Betta to swim through the hoop. Each time he or she swims through the hoop, reward him or her. Repeat this until he or she masters it. Slowly decrease the size of the hoop until it is a little larger than 1 inch in diameter. Remember to take your time and repeat each step if necessary until you're sure that your Betta knows what to do. Next, move the hoop farther away from the sides of the aquarium. Once your Betta can swim through the hoop in the middle of the aquarium you're done!

Betta Obstacle Course:

Difficulty of teaching: 4/5

Description: This is an extension of the hoop trick and the most difficult you will attempt. Once your Betta has mastered swimming through one hoop all you need to do is add a second hoop or tube. Continue to add more obstacles, one at a time until your course is complete.

Teaching Your Betta Sports (advanced):

Difficulty of teaching: varies

If you want to go pro and teach your fish to play soccer, football and basketball. These tricks take much more effort and a few more specialty tricks check out [Tropical Fish Care Guides](#) where we discuss the R2 Fish School.

OBSTACLES & ACTION STEPS



Common obstacles:

The only real obstacle you face is your own frustration and patience. Sometimes your fish will seem stubborn or unresponsive. They may just not be hungry or not well. Stay determined and your Betta will come around eventually just give it time.

Final Words and Action Steps:

You now have all you need to do to succeed! The rest is up to you! Just take one step forward every day. Start with the easy tricks and work your way up to the difficult ones, the rest will fall into place.

To your success,

Jack Dempsey,
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