

FishTank



Look at all these fish! They come in all colours, shapes and sizes – such a lovely sight! Build your own fish tank in which schools of fish and other creatures swim free! Choose the best combinations for your fish tank to thrive.

Goal of the game

Assemble fish cards into certain shapes to gain VPs. The player with the most VPs wins.

Gameplay

A game of Fish Tank consists of two halves. Players start each half with a hand of 8 fish cards (Note: even though there are also Shrimps and Snails, collectively we call them 'fish cards'). All players simultaneously do the following. Choose 1 of your 8 cards and place it face down in front of you. Pass your remaining cards to the player on your left (if it's the first half of the game) or on your right (if it's the second half of the game). Everyone now flips the card they chose face up. The same drafting mechanism continues until everyone has 16 cards in front of them.



Fish card

Card placement

Place your cards on the table so they form a 4 x 4 grid. At the end of the game everyone should have a grid of 16 cards in front of them. This is called your 'fish tank'.

When you place your last (16th) card in the last round of the game, it should go in the last remaining slot of your fish tank.

When placing down cards, you don't need to connect them to previously played cards. An easy way to start is to place the first 2 cards in the opposite top corners of the grid. This outlines the frame of your fish tank. If you decide to place your cards down next to each other, you have the flexibility of determining the tank's frame later on.

NOTE! Once a card has been placed down, you can no longer move it.



At the end of the game, your fish tank will look like a square of 16 cards.



If you place the first 2 cards as shown above, they can be in any part of the fish tank when the game ends.



If you place the first 2 cards as shown above, you've established the width of your fish tank. You may not cross this border.



You can outline the distance between the fish cards by placing reference cards down on the table.

Sets of cards

There are 12 different types of cards. Every type has its own illustration and a victory point condition in its top left and/or right corner. These conditions indicate how you must position the fish cards in order to score VPs. Note that fish of the same type always have the same condition.

1) SHAPES: these cards score VPs if they're arranged into specific shapes. Their condition can be met more than once, however each card can only be part of one shape.



Easy condition Hard condition



The easy condition in the top left corner of this fish card can be met by placing two cards of this type next to each other. Each pair scores 5 VPs. Placing three of these cards next to each other scores 11 VPs.

2) AREAS: these cards score VPs if they're placed in specific areas of your fish tank. Their condition shows in which area you're supposed to place them. The suitable areas of your fish tank are depicted as dark squares.

Aside from where you place these cards, it's also important to include as many cards as the number on the right suggests. Area conditions can only be met once. Cards outside the specified area do not count.



For example, if you have 1 or 2 Marlboro Red Discus fish in the specified area, you score 4 VPs. If you have 3 or more, you score 12 VPs. Fish outside the specified area are not taken into account.

3) AMOUNTS: Freshwater Angelfish are unique to the game because to score VPs for them, you need to have a specific amount of them in your fish tank. You won't score anything if you have 2 or 3 of them, but any other amount scores VPs.

4) ADJACENCY: there are 9 basic types of fish, and 3 unique creatures with specific conditions. You score VPs for these creatures if you place the required combination of cards next to them.

The condition in the top left corner shows a shape: the dark square represents the card itself. You need to try and surround this card with other cards. Inside the light squares, you'll notice either identical or different symbols. If the symbols are identical, you must surround the card using a single type of cards. If the symbols are different, you must surround the card using different types of cards.



Plants

On the reverse side of each card is a plant. It has its own VP condition and is therefore considered a 13th type of fish card.

When placing down a card, you may decide to flip one of your cards to its plant side. This can be the card you're placing down, or one of your previously placed cards.

You can use plants to surround fish cards, or when you realise you won't be able to meet a certain condition. This way you can at least gain VPs for plants.

The condition of scoring VPs for plants is to have a specific amount of them.



2-player game

The 2-player game works almost exactly like the normal game, but with one difference. In each half of the game, when players pass each other cards, they must discard 1 random card and draw 1 card from the unused pile. They can then look at all their cards, pick one and place it in their fish tank. Drafting continues until the players have passed their last card. At this point they draw 1 card from the unused pile and choose which of the two to place in their fish tank.

End of the game

The game ends when all players have placed down their last (16th) card, completing their fish tank. Everyone now totals the VPs for their sets of fish cards. Write down your VPs for all types of fish cards on the included score pad. The player with the most VPs wins. In case of a tie, the player with more different sets of fish cards wins.

A game with fewer cards

For a more balanced game, we suggest eliminating two types of fish cards in games with 2 or 3 players – the **Tricolor Shark Minnow** and the **Neon Tetra**.

Example of scoring

Joe scores **44 points** for his aquarium:

- **5 VPs** for the Green Swordtail (2 cards placed in corners)
- **5 VPs** for the Neon Tetra (2 cards above each other)
- **6 VPs** for the Zebra Pleco, (2 cards in a specific area – the 3rd card scores no VPs)
- **3 VPs** for plants, (2 cards in a fish tank)
- **10 VPs** for Snails (the top one is adjacent to 2 plants, the middle one is adjacent to 2 other snails, and the bottom one doesn't meet its condition)
- **5 VPs** for the Redtail Shark Minnow (2 diagonal cards)
- **4 VPs** for the Marlboro Red Discus (1 card in the centre area)
- **6 VPs** for the Shrimp, (its corners are adjacent to 2 snails)



List of Fish

There are 99 playing cards and 9 reference cards. There are 9 types of dark fish cards, and each type is comprised of 9 cards. There are 3 types of light creature cards, and each type is comprised of 6 cards. They're collectively referred to as "fish cards". Dark cards always have conditions that require more than 1 card, but light cards allow you to score VPs for each individual card.



I came up with the concept of this game while I was designing a small game for a Czech Dragon calendar project in 2021. I wanted to create an easy drafting game. The game's second iteration featured aliens collecting samples from Earth, but this abstract topic was never very popular among playtesters. After a night on the town with my co-workers from Albi, we decided to change the theme to creating your own fish tank. We based it on an idea by Bára Joštová, who was currently in the process of building her own fish tank. Thank you, Bára: this idea ended up fitting like a glove!

I would also like to thank my cousin Vojtěch Marek, who's quite the aquatic enthusiast and helped me in my search for fish that could coexist peacefully in one tank. Thanks to all the playtesters: Anežka Bělohoubková, Eda & Zuzka Šípek, Jan Cizner, Jan Hartl, Ján Novodomský, Jiří Trojáněk, Kateřina Suchá, Marek Jaroš, Metoděj Klang, Michaela Máslová, Miša & Jakub Vávra, and Viktor Dobrovodný. Finally, many thanks to my significant other, Zdeňka Kyselová.

English Rulebook Editing: Jo Lefebure for The Geeky Pen.