# Acclimating New Corals to Your Aquarium's Lighting System

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Safe is always better than sorry, especially when acclimating new coral arrivals to your aquarium. Careful light acclimation is often the deciding factor in successful transplants. Without proper light acclimation, corals can bleach, burn, or become severely damaged.

## Understanding Coral Light Acclimation

While most hobbyists are very diligent about conventional water temperature and water chemistry acclimation, coral light acclimation remains somewhat unfamiliar. After carefully researching the light requirements of a particular coral, many reef hobbyists are anxious to immediately place new corals in the brightest location, closest to the light source. This may seem appropriate, but in many situations, it can cause more harm than good.

Keep in mind that lighting conditions vary from aquarium to aquarium. No two fluorescent or metal halide systems have identical light properties. Therefore, a coral acclimated to artificial lighting from one system (e.g., a pet store or an online retailer) will need to gradually adjust to different lighting conditions when introduced to a new aquarium system.

## Acclimating Your Coral

Regardless of your light setup, place all new corals on the bottom of your aquarium until they begin to adjust. If you employ metal halide lights, place some sort of screening material above your coral during the first few weeks of acclimation. The screen could be egg crate light paneling or fiberglass

**Q A**

**How long should I take to acclimate my new coral?**

Acclimation of any aquarium inhabitant needs to occur slowly. For corals, however, the process is considerably longer - up to a few months. Start with new coral low in your aquarium until it has adjusted to the lighting. Then gradually move it to the preferred location.



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mesh. Also, reduce the photoperiod by a quarter for the first week and gradually add an hour each week to reduce the risk of light shock. A good indication your coral has adjusted is when it appears fully expanded and displays full coloration.

Slowly inch the coral to its preferred location over the next month or so. Generally, brighter colored corals should be nearer to the lights. Bright colors signify tissue pigment development that helps protect coral from the UV-light present in shallower depths. Though proper light acclimation is a slow process, it can be the difference between a home reef that simply sustains and one that thrives for years to come.

### Handling Corals

Different corals require different handling techniques. For instance, soft corals, polyps, and mushroom corals will normally arrive attached to a small rock. Only handle these corals by the rock, this way you can avoid touching the polyps. Hard corals with large fleshy polyps can be handled by their base, which is the hard exoskeleton. Other hard corals, including SPS corals, should be handled only by the base where it was fragmented, or by the plug or rock it is attached to. A pair of Aqua Gloves or disposable gripper sleeve is highly recommended in handling all corals, and will reduce the possibility of irritating the coral when handling it. Furthermore, always handle all corals with a gentle touch in order to minimize the chances of damaging the specimen.

## ESSENTIALS

**LUX Light Meter** measures light intensity in your aquarium with professional precision.

**Aquatic Forceps** are available in three stainless steel sizes for easy coral positioning.

**Coralife Power Center** is a 24-hour multi-timer system to automate your lighting setup.



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