



Beginner's Guide to Keeping Frogs as Pets

Keeping frogs as pets is a rewarding experience for some people. For others, not so much. In this post, I'll go over the pros and cons of caring for frogs, give you a list of the things you'll need, and tell you how to get started!

Before You Buy a Frog

There are a number of things you should consider first, before buying a frog. Where will you keep the frog, how will you feed it, and are you okay with the croaking sounds it makes? These are all great questions to ask yourself. Also, most frogs and toads don't do well with handling. It's stressful for them and, if your hands are dirty, it can be harmful too.

Perhaps the most important step to take is to learn about the type of frog you want. Many popular species are available at local pet stores and breeders, so they're fairly easy to acquire. Because of this, most people don't stop to consider where the frog comes from. It's important because you need to familiarize yourself with the type of environment they need to survive. Some frogs live in arid regions with moderate temperatures

while others inhabit tropical jungles, requiring high humidity. In short, do your research first. Look for [care sheets](#) to find out what type of habitat you should aim to provide.

Are frogs the right choice for you?

Frogs are delicate amphibians. Their skin is semi-permeable, absorbing what comes into contact with it. This is how they're able to breathe underwater (kind of). Oxygen in the water is absorbed through their skin, allowing them to stay underwater for long periods of time. They absorb chemicals from toxic water or from whatever is lingering on your hands.

For this reason, it's best to leave frogs alone. They're more of a display pet, which are great for looking at but not-so-good for playing with. If you're looking for something to hold, I suggest finding another pet.

Learn about the species you want

Learning about the specific type of frog you plan to keep is the best thing you can do. Frogs come from varying climates and conditions, so their enclosure should match their native habitat. Whether it be special UVB lighting with a day and night cycle or providing the correct substrate for burrowing, it's all important.

Thankfully, people have been keeping frogs as pets for years and there is a wealth of information online. Once you've narrowed down a list of 2 or 3 potential frog pets, read some care sheets about each one of them. This will give you an idea of what to expect, how to set up their cage, what they eat, etc.

And of course, plan accordingly. If you don't have time to mist your frog's enclosure, find one that doesn't require as much attention or consider installing an automated misting system.

The Pros & Cons

Since you're on this page, reading a beginner's guide for frogs, I'll assume you're at least a little bit interested in buying one. That's awesome! But keeping frogs isn't for everyone! I want to provide you with the best information I can, in hopes of helping

you make an informed decision. So, without further ado, here are some pros and cons.

Pros

- Frogs make great display pets
- Some species sound beautiful
- Relatively low maintenance
- After the initial start-up cost, caring for them is inexpensive

Cons

- It can get expensive*
- They're not the best pet for handling
- Not great for kids
- Wild-caught frogs can be very dangerous*
- They can be noisy & so can their food (crickets)

***It can get expensive.** This largely depends on the species and your desired tank setup. You can likely buy a **bumblebee toad**, a large faunarium and everything you need to care for them for \$100 or less, which is inexpensive compared to my next example. If you want a bio-active vivarium with 3 **Vietnamese mossy frogs**, you'll spend over \$500 to get everything set up. The

frogs alone cost around \$100 each while a 24" x 18" x 18" terrarium is roughly \$125. Then, of course, you've got to add in the cost of all the other equipment.

*Wild-caught frogs can be very dangerous. **Poison dart frogs are deadly**, a few toads have bufotoxins in their parotoid glands, and all frogs can carry salmonella, which is spread through their droppings. I do not suggest keeping frogs or toads you catch in the wild. They don't adapt well to captivity and they can be dangerous. If you want a frog, please, seek out a local breeder or pet store! Captive bred frogs pose far less risk and they're already adapted to captivity.

Supplies for Keeping Frogs

There is a seemingly endless supply of products for frog enclosures. The necessities largely depend on the species you're keeping but I'll do my best to cover the basics for each one in the section below. As I mentioned from the previous section, find out everything you need to properly care for the species you want.

Enclosures

Obviously, you need a container for your frog to live in. You can go as cheap or as expensive as you want, but the cages I suggest on this website are usually reasonably priced. Whether it's an aquarium or terrarium, there are plenty of brands all competing to make the best product at the best price. They offer multiple sizes and often cater to the reptiles and amphibians. Also, [terrarium starter kits](#) contain many of the things you need to set up your pet's enclosure, all in one package.

There are three basic types of cages you should familiarize yourself with; Arboreal, terrestrial, and aquatic. I'll quickly cover each one in the sections below.

Arboreal



Arboreal enclosures are typically taller than they are wide. They're great for tree frogs. [Click here to learn how to set up a tree frog terrarium](#) → These cages are mostly for tree frogs. Arboreal species spend a great deal of time in trees. As such, they prefer vertical space over horizontal space. When finding a cage to suit tree frogs, your best option, in my opinion, is a terrarium. Terrariums are similar to aquariums except they allow airflow through vents near the bottom. They also have doors in the front which gives you easy access to everything inside.

Terrestrial



[To learn how to set up a terrestrial frog enclosure, click here →](#)

A terrestrial cage is an enclosure focused on more horizontal space than vertical space. The inhabitants of these enclosures are generally toads or burrowing frogs. Species that don't climb well or jump very high. You can use a terrarium or an aquarium for terrestrial frogs. Just be sure, if you're using an aquarium, to fit the top with a screen lid so your pet can't escape.

Aquatic

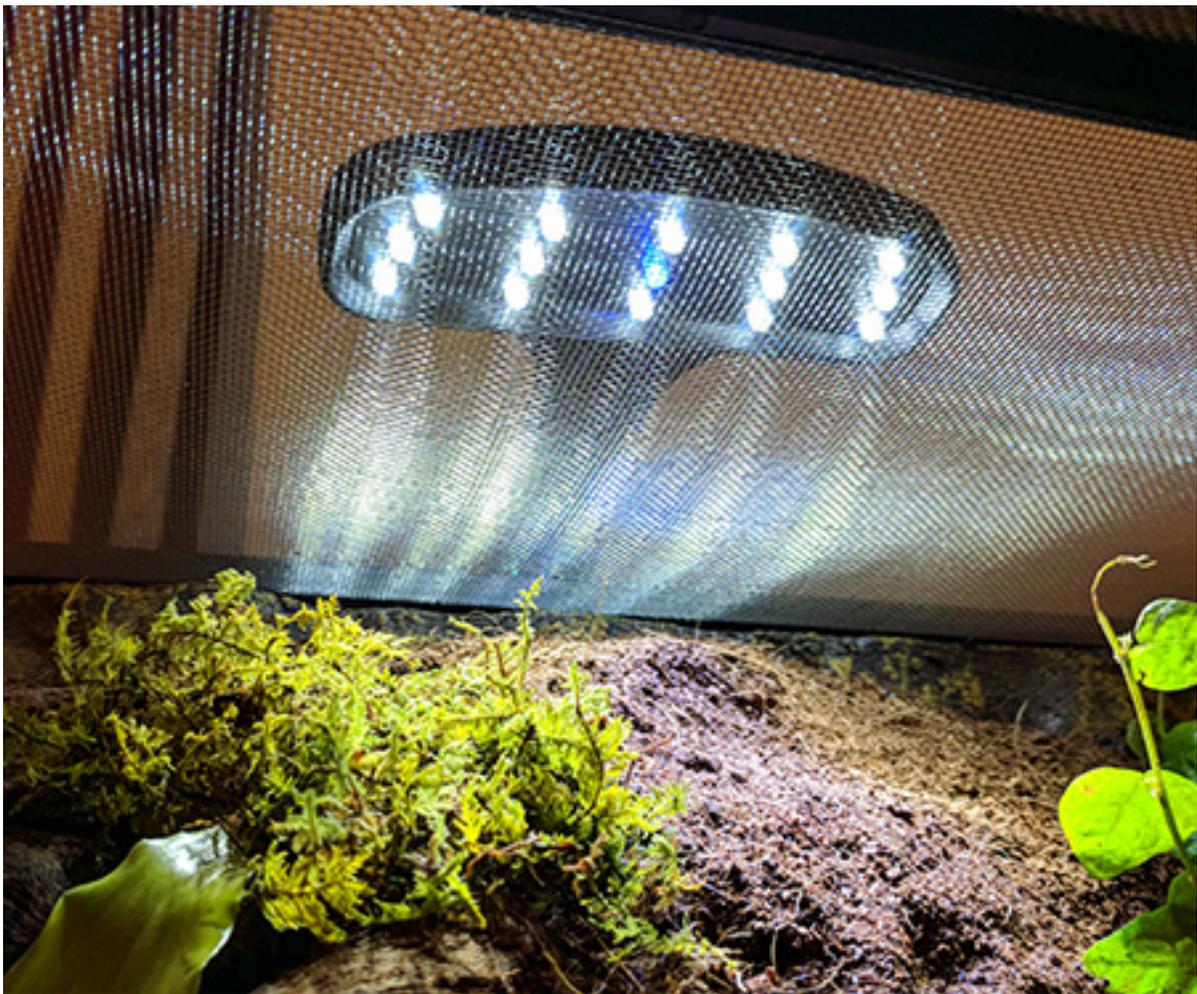


A rocky bottom with a few decorations to serve as hiding places. Btw, please excuse my terrible pictures. If you want [to learn how to set up an aquatic frog tank, click here →](#)

Believe it or not, there are actually [aquatic frogs](#) and they're very popular. For the fully aquatic species, the obvious choice is an aquarium. The dimensions of the tank largely depend on how many frogs you're keeping but almost any 10-gallon aquarium will work. A common practice for housing multiple frogs is to follow the 10-gallon per frog rule. For African Dwarf Frogs and African Clawed Frogs, the size of the tank can be as large as you want, so long as the height is no more than 12".

Lights and Heating

All frogs require a certain temperature range to remain healthy and active. Some, in fact, require UVB lighting as well. In order to provide a healthy environment, you'll need to find a way to heat their enclosure and, if needed, provide special lighting.



There are many options available for both. Heating pads are popular among amphibian owners. They can be placed under the enclosure or on the side, out of sight. Another option is

basking lamps, which are placed over the top of the enclosure. They're great for creating a nice temperature gradient.

Should you be placing a frog or toad enclosure in a room with little or no natural light from a window, you need to provide them with a light so they can have a day and night cycle. If you simply need a light for reason alone, I recommend the [Exo Terra Day & Night LED](#). It's a simple light you can usually find for \$25 – \$30 dollars, it sticks to the side of the cage and has a daylight mode and nightlight mode as well.

Humidity

The best way to [increase humidity in a terrarium](#) is by misting. Whether you install an [automated misting system](#), a [fogger](#), or simply by misting the cage with a cheap spray bottle, you'll need to do this often. How often depends on the species you're keeping. Poison dart frogs, for example, require high humidity while common toads don't require nearly as much.

Either way, you'll need to plan ahead. Since this article caters to beginners, I'll assume you're not familiar with misting systems and foggers. It's an interesting topic, one you should look in to eventually. But to start with, I suggest buying a cheap spray

bottle from your local big-box store or perhaps a \$10 – \$15 Mr. Mister spray bottle.

Substrate & Decorations

The bottom layer, aka ‘substrate’, can be anything like soil, coco fiber, coco-husk fiber, sand, etc. It’s important to select the proper substrate for your pet. Particulate substrates like sand and tiny pebbles, by themselves, can have a significant impact on frogs. If you’ve done any research already, you’ve likely heard someone mention impaction.



Learn more about the common [substrates used in frog enclosures](#) →

Impaction occurs when your frog, or other reptiles, accidentally consume something they cannot digest. Over time, it builds up in their stomachs and causes a lot of damage, usually resulting in death. For this reason, I always recommend non-particulate substrate. There are mixes that combine soil, coco-husk fiber, sphagnum moss, and sand. The sand is nicely mixed in together. With these mixes, you generally won't have problems with impaction.

Should you decide to place live plants in your frog's enclosure, substrate mixes like ABG mix are well suited for growing.

Another issue you'll run into is water drainage. For this, use a water-retaining layer on the bottom (like hydroballs), a substrate barrier (screen mesh), and then the substrate on top. This type of setup will keep your substrate from getting soggy.



Cork bark 'flats' and 'rounds' are great! [Learn more about the popular kinds of wood used in frog enclosures →](#)

As you can imagine, there are hundreds of decorations available. Anything from hiding holes to [waterfalls](#) and everything in between. Among the most popular decorations are tree branches and logs. Whether real or fake, they provide climbing, hiding, and shade. You can sterilize certain [types of wood for terrariums](#), which helps decrease the setup costs. If not, buying something from the pet store is another option.

Food & Supplements

Not only do you need to consider how you will acquire your frog's preferred foods, you need to familiarize yourself with "dusting" with vitamin and mineral supplements. In the wild, frogs consume a wide variety of insects to meet their nutritional needs. In captivity, however, it's just not feasible to feed them everything they would normally find in the wild. This is why vitamin & mineral supplements are used.

For most frogs, a calcium supplement is dusted on their primary food source with every feeding. In addition to that, the vitamin supplement can be given 1 – 2 times per week. Again, this is just starting point. How often you give your pet frog supplements depends on the species and the individual frog.

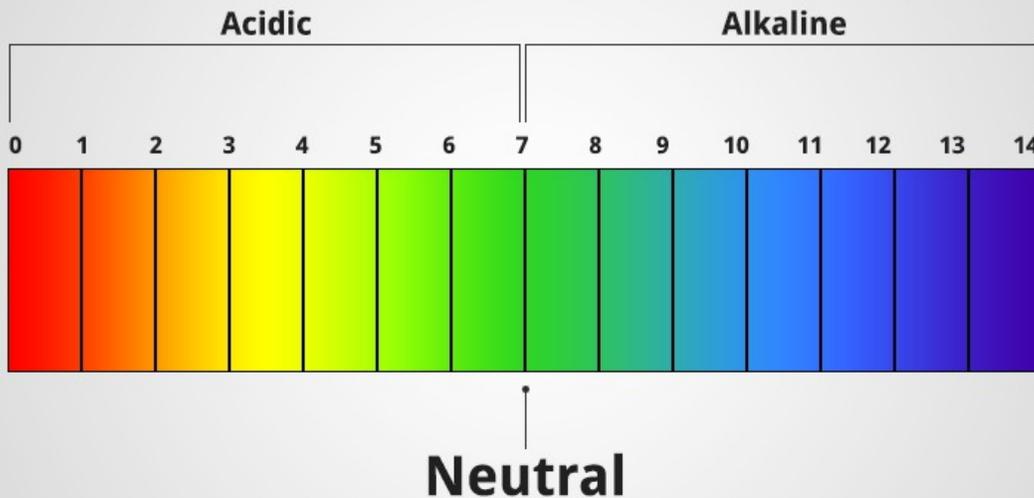
The term "dusting" is something you'll often hear in the reptile & amphibian world. It refers to the 'dusting' of insects with the supplement powders I mentioned above. The most common method is to place a few crickets inside a small bag, add the supplement powder, and finally, shake the bag for a few seconds. The supplements will cover the crickets aka 'dusting' them.

Aside from the dusting, you should also consider the noise factor. The most common food source is crickets, and they're noisy. Will you buy crickets or breed them? Also, will you or the people you live with be bothered by noisy crickets?

Amphibian-safe Water

All amphibians have semi-permeable skin. This means they absorb things which come into contact with their skin. Take water, for example, amphibians absorb oxygen found in water. This is why most can stay submerged underwater for great lengths of time and some can stay in water indefinitely; aquatic frogs. Frogs swimming in chlorinated tap-water will absorb the chlorine as well. Along with any other toxins in the water. Due to this, careful attention should be made to provide frogs with safe, quality water.

The pH Scale



Amphibians prefer toxin-free water with natural minerals and a neutral pH level. If you're interested in this topic, I encourage you to check out our [safe water guide for amphibians](#). Ultra clean water such as distilled water lacks the minerals they would typically be exposed to in nature. Fortunately for us, there are water conditioning agents readily available online and at your local pet store. Products like ReptiSafe should be added to tap-water before using.

Thermometer Hygrometer

Perhaps one of the most valuable products you can purchase for your frog's enclosure is a **thermometer hygrometer**. They're well worth the \$10 - \$15 you'll spend on them. I suggest finding a digital thermometer hygrometer combo, which will display the temperature and humidity level. After all, what's the use of misting your pet's enclosure if you don't know what the relative humidity is? Likewise with the temperature.

Why Frogs Make Great Pets

Frogs are awesome; they're fantastic display pets. If you're the type of person who enjoys nature, including plants, flowers, moss, and frogs, a naturalistic vivarium with colorful tree frogs might be perfect for you. Go crazy with their enclosure.

Me personally, I just finished building a bio-active vivarium for three red-eye tree frogs. It has two beautiful pieces of Mopani wood sticking out of the background with a small waterfall, eight different plant species, and real moss. I've just introduced isopods and I'm waiting for the springtails to arrive. I'm going to a ReptiCon this June to (hopefully) find three red-eye tree frog.

It was a fun build and I love looking at it! If that sounds fun to you, then I bet you'll love keeping frogs too.

While most frogs shouldn't be handled, there are a few species that will tolerate it. The white's tree frog (dumpy frog) is one of the most popular species because of this reason. Also, they look really cool and get quite large. But, for the most part, frog's shouldn't be handled very often. They're just really fun to watch.

