Buying Fish Online

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Unheard of only a few years ago, it's becoming quite common for hobbyists to shop online rather than at their local pet shop when looking for that perfect addition to their aquarium. The wide selection of guaranteed healthy fish, the variety of vivid colors and species . . . it's tempting to try your first online aquatic purchase, but you still have questions. Why pass up the chance to point out the exact fish you want through the glass tank at the pet store? How will you know if your internet fish will arrive healthy and safe?

Point & Purchase vs. Click & Buy
The biggest drawback to buying fish online is you can't "point-and-purchase" the exact fish you want. Or can you?

It's becoming more common, especially with marine life, to search for websites offering "WYSIWYG" (What-You-See-Is-What-You-Get) or "Eye & Buy" selections online. Simply click on a picture to see the fish, coral, or invertebrate for sale in its holding aquarium.

In most other cases, the hobbyist views a general photo of the species and has to trust that the fish they purchase online look as good as promised. Your best security is to find a website with an expert staff, a good reputation, and a risk free guarantee.

How much stress will shipping cause the fish?
Another reason for online anxiety is concern over the stress your fish may experience during shipping. Many hobbyists recall the anxious moments after arrival, opening the cardboard box, lifting out the styrofoam container, and opening the lid to reveal their fish swimming around in carefully sealed bags. It's a wonder every time: healthy, beautiful fish in a box! The key is the advanced shipping methods developed in the past decade by leaders in the industry. You'd be amazed by the numerous steps they take to minimize the stress on fish during shipping to your doorstep.

Also, consider this: the fish in your local pet shop have shipped from location to location, distribution point to distribution point around the world, before finally reaching the store. However, when you buy online, your fish ship directly from the importer to your doorstep. Less travel means less stress, and less stress means your aquatic purchase is in better health.

Selection, selection, selection
When you buy online, you're selecting your fish from the healthiest and most vibrant stock available - the "first picks" so to speak. Where do the second picks go? To your local pet store. Where do the third picks go? To your local megamart.

You're also going to find a much wider variety online. Take Tetras for example. A pet store may have enough room for a few aquariums holding the most popular Neon Tetras and perhaps Rummynose or Black Phantom Tetras. But visit an online fish store and you'll discover a seemingly limitless selection of hard-to-find species like Green Fire, Diamond Head, Red Tail Mirror Blue, Albino Buenos Aires, Congo, and Splashing Tetras!

Online buying tips
Buying fish online doesn't come without its risks. You can greatly improve your online experience by following a few important tips:

- **Demand a Guarantee** - Look for a site that offers a guarantee of at least 10 days from the time of shipping. You're paying for healthy fish, sight unseen, and you have the right to get credit if they arrive diseased or already expired.

- **Seek out Experience** - Just as you'd seek out the most knowledgeable staff member in the store, look for a site that offers extensive species profiles, care articles, and quick specs. Avoid sites that look like online catalogs with simple listings of fish but little or no details on how to care for the specific species you're shopping for.

- **Order with Others** - The one thing to expect when buying online is to pay a bit more for the expert shipping methods that guarantee the health of your fish. But you can help share the shipping charges by pooling your order

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with friends and fellow hobbyists. Not only is this a fun venture, you can help reduce the amount paid for shipping by increasing the quantity in your group order.

If you've been reluctant to buy fish online, it's never been easier, safer, or more rewarding than it's become in the past few years. For the hobbyist living far away from a big city selection of freshwater or saltwater fish, buying aquatic life online is probably the best way to stock your aquarium with uncommonly beautiful species from around the world.

Quality Aquatic Life Delivered Direct to Your Door
Explore the web's best selection of vibrant fish, corals, invertebrates, plants, live rock and sand - ready for your aquarium and delivered direct to your door.

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