Better Betta Breeding Basics:
A Quick Guide That Will End Your Confusion About Breeding Your Little Ones

By Marcus Song
The Nuts and Bolts of Breeding

Breeding Bettas can be fun but it can be a challenge as well. Just because you are interested in breeding Bettas, it doesn’t mean that the Bettas will be. Your job is to set the mood for love.

Also keep in mind that you might become too successful. The typical highly-fertile female can produce a few hundred eggs... meaning you might wind up with a few hundred Bettas! The good news though is that your local pet store will often be happy to take them off your hands -- and often for as much as a dollar a piece or on rare occasions as much as $2.50 or $3.00.

When the time comes that you’re ready to give it a shot, follow these tips and you could be rewarded with a brood of new fry.

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Preparing the breeding tank

Set up a 10-gallon tank especially for breeding. Place a few live or plastic plants in the tank so the female has somewhere to hide, but do not add gravel or other ornaments. Follow the same water handling procedures as you would for a regular Betta tank.

Install a box filter that uses a fiber filter material, not charcoal. Run the filter for a week or so, before introducing the fish, to give the bacteria culture time to grow. If you want, you can remove some filter material from your main tank and use it to seed or jumpstart the bacterial growth.

And now you can...

Select a breeding pair
Chances are your existing Betta will be too old to breed. Your breeding pair should be between 8 months and 12 months old. The average pet store Betta is over a year old when it is sold. Plus pet store Bettas are, sadly, typically too stressed to be good breeding candidates.

Because of that, it’s advisable to purchase your breeding pairs from a reputable Betta breeder. I say "pairs" because it’s a good idea to buy more than one pair in case there are compatibility issues or the fish just refuse to breed.

Choose ones that have the color traits that you are seeking. Never breed an overly aggressive male, because aggression is a trait that gets passed down.

Starting two weeks beforehand, feed both Bettas live Mysis or brine shrimp, bloodworms and other protein-rich meat in order to trigger their mating hormones.

**Introducing the Male**

Introduce the male to the tank first.

Place the female in a separate 5-gallon (or so) tank and place it in sight of the male. This should trigger the male to begin building a bubble nest. This could take several weeks, so patience is a must. If there is no indication that the male is interested, use your fallback pair.

Keep the female’s separate tank at 78 degrees Fahrenheit. Have a small bit of Java Moss in it along with a rock cave. That way she’s got a couple places to hide and will become comfortable in her tank... but at the same time you can lift her out with your net when you need to.

Another thing that will help stimulate the male to build a bubble nest is to float something small
on top of the water. One attractive option is to put in a little bit of Crystalwort (Riccia Fluitans), a floating pond plant that produces beautiful green branches. If nothing else, you can always cut off the bottom of a Styrofoam cup and float that.

Other than that, your male’s tank should be empty so he’ll have an easier job gathering the eggs later on.

**Introducing the Female**

When vertical lines begin to appear on the female, and she has grown fatter (indicating her eggs are mature), she is ready to breed. Some females may also exhibit a bright white gravid tube protruding from behind the anal fin.

Introduce the female to the male’s tank. Raise the temperature of the tank to 82 degrees. Once the temperature’s raised, lower the water level to about 4 or 5 inches. This simulates the dry season of Southeast Asia, which is what triggers Bettas to start mating in the wild. At this point the male should start building a bubble nest if he hasn’t already.

Watch for signs of extreme aggression. Chasing and some mild aggression is normal at first. Don’t worry if a fin gets torn (since a Betta's fins tear super easily), but if the male attacks aggressively, remove the female back to the other tank and try again each day until the male either accepts her or it becomes obvious that he has no plans to. In that case, switch to your backup pair.

**Spawning**

When spawning occurs, the male coaxes the female to the bubble nest... at which point they proceed to dance. The male wraps himself around the female and extracts her eggs, releasing sperm at the same time. This will continue until all of the eggs have been extracted. At that point, the male will chase the female away from the nest. Remove the female when this occurs or the
male will kill her.

The male will then gather the eggs and place them into the bubble nest, where he tends to them to prepare them for hatching.

Treat both tanks with a fungicide at this point to prevent fungus from forming on the fish or their eggs.

The male will stay busy keeping the eggs in the nest and he may refuse food until the fry hatch which normally occurs 24 to 36 hours after the spawning.

### Caring for the fry

Wait 24 hours before feeding the fry. At that time you can give them baby brine shrimp, daphnia, microworms, or commercially available liquid fry food. The fry will need to be fed 4 to 5 times a day.

Make sure the tank is covered with a tight lid, or if that's not available use plastic wrap from your kitchen. This allows the air above the water surface to have a high level of humidity, which helps each fry's labyrinth to develop. Failure to take this crucial step can cause most of the fry to drown.

Change the tank water every other day.

Remove the male from the tank once the fry are free-swimming.

When the fry have reached about one inch in length you can begin feeding them ground-up adult Betta food. Reduce the number of feedings to 2-3 a day.

When the fry reach about 4 weeks old, the males will begin chasing each other. That’s the time to separate the more aggressive males into their own individual tanks or bowls.
The females can be kept together for 3-4 more weeks unless they start showing signs of aggression sooner.

**Mouth Brooders**

While most species of Betta are “bubble nesters” some species are “mouth brooders.” This means that the male holds the eggs in his mouth until the fry hatch. This is not a common practice for the types of Betta that we normally see.

**Don’t Give Up**

Don’t be discouraged if your first breeding attempts fail. Your pair may simply not be “in the mood” or there may be environmental conditions at work. Even external conditions like sudden changes in atmospheric conditions can affect your Betta’s mating urge.

**Breeding Better Bettas**

There are so many variables involved with Bettas – color, patterns, fins – that you need to make a plan for what you want to do. If you just breed willy-nilly, you’ll end up with all sorts of weird (and sometimes undesirable) combinations that often have little or no market value or even any aesthetic appeal. And once, for example, a color gets mixed into a bloodline that you don’t want – like green into a red betta – it could take decades to breed it out.

But it’s all up to what YOU want. It could be that you’re just looking to have nice pets rather than show-quality bettas that will impress your friends and bring you high prices if you decide to sell them. If you’re serious about breeding, however, I recommend joining the [International Betta Congress](https://bettacongress.org) and learning about the IBC’s standards so that you know what you’re aiming for before you start to breed your little ones.

There's also an advanced book I highly recommend called [Bettas by Dr. Robert J. Goldstein](https)--
despite the way the book is marketed, it's not a book for beginners but instead one that's highly technical... and I would definitely get it to answer any questions not answered in this report. Either click the link above or type this into your browser: http://bettalovers.com/goldstein

Good luck and best wishes to you and your Betta breeding!