

For Creative Minds

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Turtle Fun Facts

Turtles have existed for a long time. They were on the earth with the dinosaurs!

There are over 300 different types of turtles that live in habitats all over the world; including the ocean, salt marshes, wetlands, woods, grasslands, and deserts.

All turtle species lay eggs. The female turtles use their hind feet to dig a nest into which they lay their eggs. Turtles that live in water must crawl onto land to dig their nests. Sea turtles lay their nests on sandy beaches, returning to the general area where they hatched 30 to 35 years before. In the United States, these beaches are found on barrier islands in the Southeast and along the Gulf of Mexico.

The hatchlings swim directly into the ocean.

Turtles don't change shells as they grow—the shell grows with them, just like our bones grow as we grow.

All turtles are reptiles that breathe air — even turtles that live in or around the water. Sea turtles must rise to the surface of the water to breathe.

Turtles are cold-blooded, which means they absorb heat from their surroundings. Many turtles may be seen basking in the sun, warming themselves. Some turtles hibernate in the winter, and sea turtles migrate to warmer waters.

Sea turtles find their way to the ocean by moving toward the brightest, most open horizon, which under natural conditions is towards the ocean. Bright lights from houses may cause the turtles to crawl the wrong way, just like the turtle in this story. Most turtles that go the wrong way are not lucky enough to survive. Some get stuck in ditches or tracks or get run over by cars.



Match the turtle adaptations

Turtle bodies are adapted to their environment. Match the description to the corresponding image. Answers are upside down on the bottom of the page.



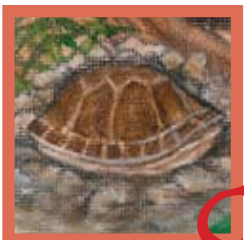
a.



c.



e.



g.

1. Turtles that live in water and on land often have **webbed feet** for the water and claws to help them crawl on the land.

2. Sea turtles have **flippers** to help them swim in the ocean.

3. Painted turtles **bask** in the sun to get warm. You may see them on rocks or logs.

4. Box turtles have a hinge so they can **completely close** their shells for protection!

5. **Sea turtles** cannot pull their head or flippers in at all.

6. Turtles don't have teeth like we do, but they have strong **beaks** that they use to crush food.

7. A turtle's shell is actually part of its skeleton. The top part, called a **carapace**, is really its backbone and ribs. The shape and color of the carapace is different for different types of turtles. For example, a box turtle has a high, rounded carapace—almost like a helmet, so that it can pull its head and limbs tightly inside.

8. The bottom part of the shell is called a **plastron**. Some, but not all, turtles' plastrons cover their entire body.



b.



d.



f.



h.

Match the turtle to its habitat

1.



ocean

A.



box turtle

2.



woods

B.



painted turtle

3.



ponds, wetlands, and slow-moving rivers

C.



terrapin

4.



salt marsh

D.



sea turtle