

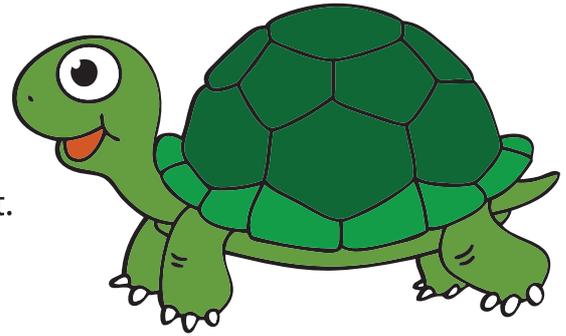
Name : _____

Turtles

by Guy Belleranti

Turtles are reptiles. Reptiles have scales, lay eggs and are ectothermic.

Ectothermic means the animal's body temperature depends on its external environment. If the environment is too warm, the animal must move to where it is cooler. For example, moving from sun to shade. If the environment is too cool, the animal must move to where it is warmer. For example, moving from shade to sun.



The most obvious difference between turtles and other reptiles is its shell. A turtle's shell is part of its skeleton. The shell has three parts. The top rounded section is the carapace. The bottom flatter section is the plastron. These two sections are connected on the sides by "bridges". The shell has nerves and blood vessels. A turtle's shell grows as the turtle grows.

The shell has two layers. The inner layer is made of bones. These bones include the backbone, breastbone and ribs. The outer layer (what we see) is made up of hard scales called scutes. Scutes are made of keratin. Keratin is the same material in our fingernails and hair.

Some turtles can pull their head, legs and feet into their shell for protection.

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Tortoises are land turtles with hard shells. Tortoises also have thick skin to help stop loss of moisture. "

Turtles with softer shells include many water turtles. Water turtles have webbed feet for swimming.

Sea turtles have feet like flippers. They can stay under water a long time. They must come up to breathe. Like other turtles they lay their eggs on land.

Some ancient turtles lived when dinosaurs did. Some of these turtles had teeth. Today's turtles don't have teeth. However, they do have strong jaws and beak-like mouths. Some only eat plants. Others eat plants and meat.

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Turtles

- 1) Write 'Yes' if the following statements are true, 'No' if they are false, and 'Not specified' if there is no discussion about these in the passage.
- a) Turtles that we see today don't have teeth, but have strong jaws. _____
 - b) Because of their foot-like flippers, sea turtles can stay underwater for a very long time. _____
 - c) Hard shell and soft skin set tortoises apart. _____
 - d) Ectothermic animals have to regularly change their habitat according to external temperature. _____

2) State two differences between sea and land turtles.

3) What is plastron?

4) What, according to the passage, is a specific protective measure the turtles have?

5) What is keratin and where is it found?
