

Turtle vs. Tortoise

(April 2017)

Do you ever think about how turtles and tortoises are different? If so, you are probably not alone. They are both reptiles with bony shells on their backs, but they are in different families, so they are distinct in lots of ways. If you ever confuse them, there is sure to be someone who will point out your mistake. That is why you should collect plenty of turtle and tortoise facts. For that, you are in the best place.

The biggest thing that separates turtles and tortoises is where they live. Tortoises stick strictly to land. They live in all kinds of spots, from deserts to tropical forests. They do not go in the water unless they want a drink or a bath. This is a lot different from turtles. Turtles live in water almost all of the time. In fact, many will only go on land when they are expecting to lay eggs.

Turtles and tortoises have different kinds of bodies, too. Tortoises have shells that are in the shape of big domes. Some have bumps on the tops of their dome-like shells. On the other hand, turtles tend to have rather flat, slick shells. Then there are the feet. Tortoises have stubby feet with stumpy, bent legs. Turtles have webs on their feet and long claws, so do not get too close.

Turtles and tortoises nest differently. Tortoise hatchlings go from their nest to their mother's nest not long after they are born. Turtle hatchlings are a bit more independent. They hang out in their nests all alone for 90-120 days. No going back to Mom for them!

When they become adults, turtles and tortoises like to dine on different things. Most tortoises are herbivores who munch on grasses, plants, and fruit. Some tortoises snack on insects, worms, and dead animals, but it is not that common. Turtles have

different tastes depending on where they live. Some like aquatic plants and snails or mollusks. From time to time, they will munch on rotting marine animals. There are some turtles that will only dine on fish, jellyfish, and other small animals. They do not like plants for lunch.

Lifespan is another thing that is different. Tortoises tend to live longer than turtles. They can survive from 80 to 150 years while turtles live to be just 20 to 40 years old. Jonathan, a giant tortoise who lives on an island in the South Atlantic, is about 185 years old. No word yet on the world's oldest turtle, but odds are it will not be quite as old as Jonathan—then again, not many things are!

With all these amazing facts under your belt, you will never have to stress about confusing a tortoise with a turtle—or with being corrected by a reptile know-it-all!

Teacher Resources

This text passage is archived under *Animals*.

Text Easability Scores

If you would like to measure the text easability scores of this passage, please follow the directions below.

1. Visit the Coh-Metrix Text Easability Assessor website at <http://tea.cohmetrix.com/>. If you do not already have a login and password, create one. It is free and easy to sign up for access to the website.
2. Once you have created an account and sign in, you will be taken to a page with an empty, white text box. Copy and paste the text from this passage into the empty, white text box. Make sure you are only copying and pasting the body of the passage. Do not include the title, date, or any of the resources present in the passage.
3. When you have pasted the passage into the text box, click on the red button beneath the text box that says "Analyze." There will be a short delay and after a few seconds, you will see a bar graph appear to the right of the screen.
4. The bar graph will give you the percentages for several text characteristics including: narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion.
5. Below the bar graph, the Flesch Kincaid Grade Level is also included for your benefit.
6. Lastly, a paragraph is provided that explains the meaning of the measurements of the text characteristics for your particular passage.
7. Once you have completed measuring your passage, you can click on the "Clear" button below the text box and measure another passage, if you wish.