



Ages: 2-5 yrs.

Time Required: 10-20 min

Discovery Time: Turtles!

Make a turtle using things you can find in your backyard or park!

Materials

- Natural items such as: leaves, acorns, rocks, etc.

Try this!

Step 1: Gather leaves, bark, flowers, seeds etc.

Step 2: Start with a leaf or other item that is shaped like a shell.

Step 3: Find natural items and place them on the shell, these can be “scutes”.

Step 4: Add four legs (ideas: sea turtles have long flippers for swimming, river turtles have toes for climbing and tortoises have stumpy legs).

Step 5: Add a head and eyes. Don't forget a tail!



What's going on?

Turtles are reptiles, and have a large shell that covers most of their body. Turtles are excellent swimmers and prefer to live in or near water, but breathe air just like we do. Tortoises are related to turtles but live only on land. Their shells are made up of bone, and if you could look inside the shell you would be able to see its backbone going along the center in a head to tail direction that is fused to the ribs. The top part of the shell is known as the carapace, the bottom side is known as the plastron. The exterior of the shell is covered by scutes, which are plates made of keratin that protect the shell from scrapes and bruises. However soft-shell turtles do not have scutes on their shells and they tend to spend more time in water. Scientists can get lots of information just by looking at turtle shells, like knowing what species they are, how old they could be and whether it's a male or female. Turtles live in water but will crawl out of the water to warm up in the sun. All turtles dig a nest and lay their eggs on land.

Extension Activity

Visit <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/discover-herps/florida-amphibians-reptiles/turtles/> to get ideas of what different turtles look like and learn where you can find them. If you want to

make your turtle as realistic as possible, try to make your turtle “life size” or “true to size”, this means that the turtle you make in your yard should be about the same size as the real turtle that you are trying to create. Click on the “iNaturalist” link for the turtle that you are interested in creating, and search for the average size it grows. When you find the size of the real turtle, make sure to go outside with a ruler and measure the items that you are planning to use to make your turtle and make sure you don’t pick a “shell” that is too small or too big.

Additional Resources

You can visit <https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/educators/resource/discovery-time-turtles/> to learn more about turtles and see a step-by-step guide on how to make this activity! You can also check out other cool activities and tips on how to explore the outdoors with toddlers.

Supporting Stories:

Turtle Splash! Countdown at the Pond by Cathryn Falwell

A Place for Turtles by Melissa Stewart