

Houston Zoo at Home

SEA TURTLES

Operation Migration

When female turtles are born, they never forget what their birth home looks and feels like. Sea turtles will return year after year to lay their precious eggs in holes they have dug on sandy beaches. After an incubation period, these tiny babies will dig their way through the sand and towards the ocean to begin life. Try out your hand at being a female turtle laying her eggs.

Materials Needed:

- Play sand
- Corn starch
- Dish soap
- Deep plastic tub (at least 6 inches deep)
- Ping pong balls, golf balls, cotton balls or other items to represent turtle eggs
- Sandbox toys and molds (optional)

Steps:

1. Follow the link to create kinetic sand:
<https://onelittleproject.com/how-to-make-kinetic-sand/>
This website also gives some suggestions on ways to make kinetic sand with other materials like shaving cream. You can use any recipe.
2. Once you have created your sand, play in it a little bit! Enjoy the feel, does it move differently than sand from a beach you have visited previously? Does it smell differently? Can you build shapes with it?
3. Now it's time to dig your nest! Create a hole in the sand and bury your eggs. The goal is to cover up your eggs and make it look like nothing had been there before.

Level up Challenge: Challenge another family member to see if they can be a sea turtle research scientist and gently uncover and collect all your turtle eggs.

Share your project with us!

Tag your photo using #HoustonZoo or email us your story at communications@houstonzoo.org.

Turtle Shells –Just the Essentials

Ages 6 and up

Turtles and tortoises are born with a hard, protective shell that is attached to their bodies –so they carry it around with them wherever they go. The shell is made up of a carapace on top and plastron on the bottom that is covered in scales called scutes made of strong keratin, the same as your fingernail. Their shells provide them with shelter and protection just like our homes. It's kind of like they are carrying their entire house on their back, but they only have room for the essentials. If you were a turtle, what would you pack inside your home?

Material Needed:

- Backpack or your favorite bag
- Personal belongings you think are essential for your day-to-day routines

Tip: Think about how you are going to spend your day.

What do you need to feel comfortable and prepared?

Steps:

1. Take your backpack or favorite bag and fill it with the items you have collected from around your house. Test out the weight of your bag, is it heavy or light?

If you were a sea turtle, would you want a shell that was heavy or lightweight?

Which items did you include, and which ones did you leave out?

2. Challenge yourself to go three hours only using the items from your bag. For example, if you didn't put a tv remote in your bag, you can't change the channel on your television.

Did you really pack the essentials? What did you forget to pack or realize you needed later?

Which items did you use the most? How might you pack differently next time?

Level Up Challenge:

Now let's switch it up. Have each of your family members pack a bag for another family member. Spend the same amount of time with only the essentials from that pack. When time is up, discuss the experience with your family.

- What did you like or dislike about having the pack that was made for you?
- Why did you choose those items for your family member?

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