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THE COMPLETE TURTLE &
TERRAPIN CARE GUIDE - SAMPLE

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Introduction

Turtles are one of the oldest species living on planet earth today. In fact, like crocodiles they have been around since dinosaurs walked the earth – long before humans existed.

In ancient times the earth's climate was a much warmer place and today's turtles are still adapted to those conditions. This is why you will not see many wild turtles surviving in colder climates.

The natural habitat of today's modern turtles lies in the tropical and sub-tropical regions of the world. However, by hibernating through the winter months, some species of turtles have been able to adapt to the changing seasons and survive quite comfortably in parts of North America, Europe and Australia.

In the UK, freshwater turtles (the kind you would keep as a pet) are usually referred to as terrapins with turtles only being used to describe the wild saltwater species. In this guide I will use the term turtles to describe all species – saltwater or freshwater.

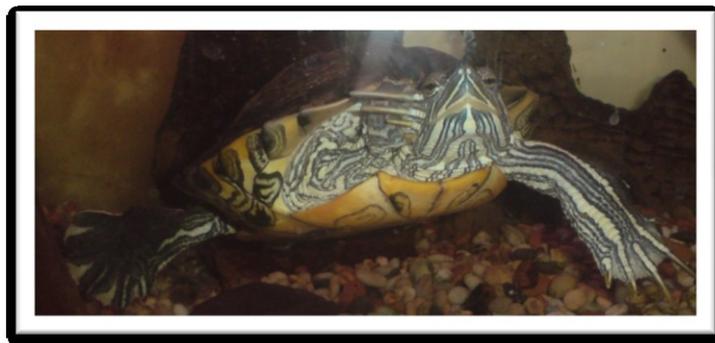
This fascinating long past and uniqueness in appearance make turtles a popular choice of pet for many children and adults alike.

Unfortunately, too many people purchase a turtle as a pet without understanding much about the conditions that are needed to keep a turtle healthy.

This often leads to turtles being set-free in the local lakes and rivers as the owners lose interest in their once loved pet. It is sad to report that very few of these 'released' turtles survive for more than a few months because of the specific conditions that are needed to thrive.

It is my aim in this guide to educate you on the wonderful world of turtles and how to successfully keep them as pets. If shown the right amount of love and care, turtles can be a fantastic addition to your family and provide you with joy and entertainment for many years.

I myself have had a pet red eared slider turtle, named Terry for over 10 years and he still provides me with a great centrepiece for my home and hours of entertainment. You can see a photo of Terry below:





Is a Turtle the Right Pet for you?

Before buying your first turtle you need to be sure that a turtle is the right pet for you. Turtles can live for 30-40 years so they are a long-term pet; you need to be sure you can care for one properly for the full length of its life.

Factors effecting your decision:

1. Do you have space for an aquatic turtle?

Turtles that live in water will need a large aquarium as a living space. Although many turtles are very small when they are young, they can grow quickly and reach sizes of up to 12 inches (30cm). A medium-sized aquarium that holds 52 gallons (200 liters) of water will weight around 550 pounds (250kg) when complete with all accessories.

2. Do you have a yard or garden?

Although it is not necessary, some turtles will thrive when exposed to fresh air outside during warm summer months.

3. Can you provide a warm environment for your turtle?

Many turtles require a warm environment to survive; therefore you may need to buy an aquarium heater to keep the water at the best temperature for your turtle.



4. Do you have time for regular cleaning of your turtles environment?

Turtles are naturally very messy eaters. Even with the best filtration, a turtles aquarium and living space can become messy quite quickly. You should be willing to give your turtles home a good clean every week.

5. Can you afford to keep a turtle?

Keeping any kind of turtle can be expensive. From buying the right food through to purchasing special equipment and covering vet bills the costs can mount up. Aquatic and semi-aquatic turtles can be particularly expensive to keep. That said, once you have bought the initial tank and accessories – if looked after properly you should not need to spend much more than \$20 (£10) a month on your turtle.

6. Do you have access to a cold cellar or unheated basement?



Depending on the type of turtle you purchase and your location in the world, your turtle may benefit from hibernating in the colder months of the year. For this purpose a cold cellar or unheated basement is an ideal location for your hibernating turtle.

7. Can you suitably accommodate an indoor aquarium?

Just like if you keep fish, a turtles aquarium needs to be suitably positioned in your home – away from drafts, direct sunlight and excessive vibrations (e.g. from a stereo or washing machine).

8. Is there a trained veterinarian in your local area?

Should your turtle ever become ill you will need a veterinarian who is trained to treat turtles. Before purchasing your turtle you should locate your nearest specialist and ensure you will be able to get there quickly in the event of an emergency.

9. Do you own any other pets?

If the turtle will live in the same house as another animal you must ensure that the animals will get along. For example, cats can be very inquisitive of a small animal such as a turtle. If there is a potential conflict between your new turtle and another animal you should take steps to ensure you can provide a safe environment for all your animals.

10. Is there someone who can look after your turtle when you are on vacation?

Just like when you buy any new pet, you need to plan ahead and ensure you know someone who can look after your turtle while you are away. Ideally this person should be able to look after your turtle in your own home to avoid the stress a turtle can suffer during transportation and a change in its surroundings.

11. How many turtles would you like to keep?

The number you would like and the number you are able to keep may be different. Turtles can grow very large and so you should ensure the living space you can provide is large enough for the number of turtles you would like.



12. Do you want a male or female turtle?

If you only want to keep one turtle then its sex is not overly important. The behaviour of both male and female turtles is very similar. However, if you wish to keep more than one turtle then you should ensure that you only purchase all males or all females unless you wish to breed them.

Once you have given consideration to all of these points you can then go ahead and purchase your first turtle. Be sure to find a specialist aquatics store to purchase your turtle from. An ordinary pet



store may lack the skills and knowledge to look after a turtle properly and this could mean you inadvertently purchase a turtle that is already sick.

Common Turtle Profiles

As mentioned earlier, turtles are one of the oldest animal species alive today. Fossils of turtles dating back as far as 180 million years ago have been found around the world. Many of these fossils have shown that back then, turtles were slightly larger than today's turtles at around 20 inches (50cm) in length.

Interestingly the fossils also showed that 180 million years ago, many turtles had small knobbly teeth. This is different to the modern day turtles that have no teeth but instead rely on horny and jagged edge jaws to tear up their food to eat it.

The largest turtle around today is the leatherback sea turtle which is more than 5 feet (1.5m) long and weighs as much as 1,800 pounds (800kg)! Compare this to the smallest aquatic turtles (e.g. spotted turtles) which are commonly only 4.5 inches (10-12cm) long and around 4 ounces (120g) in weight.

Aquatic and Semi-Aquatic Turtles

Wood Turtle

Latin Name: Clemmys Insculpta

Size: Female 5 inches (13cm), male up to 9 inches (23cm)

Natural Location: USA and Canada (protected in all states)

Habitat: Bogs, woodlands, and pasture edges

Behaviour: Active by day. Can climb over wire-netting fence 6ft (2m) high. Very intelligent.

Care: Terrarium or outdoor enclosure with hide box; air temperature should be 65-80F. Good candidate for outdoor enclosure if temperature permits.

Diet: Beetles, snails, worms, berries, and fruit.

Hibernation: Yes – hibernates under water or rarely burrows under the soil or land.



Common Musk Turtle (Stinkpot)

Latin Name: Sternotherus Odoratus

Size: Up to 6 inches (15cm)

Natural Location: USA (Florida) to southern Canada

Habitat: Still waters, abundant vegetation, gentle slopes

Behaviour: Active day and night, big eater.

Care: Semi-aquatic terrarium and garden pond; provide water temperature of 68-77F (20-25C) for specimens from northern US and 73-82F for those from southern US. Air temperature 75-82F (24-28C). May be kept in a garden pond spring and summer when temperatures permit.

Diet: Carnivorous

Hibernation: Dependent on place of origin, winter cooling generally sufficient.

Special Notes: Poor swimmer. If kept in a garden pond ensure the shore is gently sloping for easy exit. The name 'Musk Turtle' comes from the foul-smelling musk the turtles secrete when disturbed.



Red-Eared Slider

Latin Name: Trachemys Scripta Elegans

Size: Up to 10 inches (25cm)

Natural Location: Southern USA, east and west of the Mississippi

Habitat: Quiet waters with lots of vegetation and warming quickly in the sun's heat.

Behaviour: Active by day, enjoys basking in the heat and is a lively swimmer.

Care: Aquarium – water temperature 79-82F (26-28C), air 79-90F (26-32C). Can be kept in garden pond in hot weather (70F or 21C and above).

Diet: Adults are mainly herbivorous, young are carnivorous.

Hibernation: Not necessary, even to breed.

Special Notes: This turtle is best kept as a solitary turtle – does not mix with other turtles well.





There are 16 turtles profiles included in the full guide

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There is no better time for you to start becoming a better turtle owner. The knowledge you gain from this guide could help **save your turtles life**. Take action today by clicking the link below:

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