



## Turtles and Tortoises (A Firefly Guide)

By Ferri, Vincenzo

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Turtle Vs Tortoise. In our quest to match you with the perfect reptilian pet, let's start with the most basic brass tacks question. What is the difference between a tortoise vs turtle? Turtle. A shelled reptile that spends the majority of its time in or near water. This can include fresh water and marine (salt water) turtles. Thanks to a thriving demand for turtles and tortoises as pets, there is now a good body of information regarding which species tend to do better in captivity. If possible, always try to match your local geographic climate with the native climate of your prospective shelled pet. For example, if you live in humid Texas, you will fare better by choosing a tropical, humidity-loving pet. If you live in arid New Mexico, a desert species is a better fit for sure. Using the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists definition, a turtle is a reptile with a hard, bony shell belonging to the order of Testudines which includes all sea, land, and other aquatic turtles. The term tortoise is used to describe most land-dwelling turtles. With this definition, we can highlight their general differences. "Turtle" is the umbrella term for all 200 species of the testudine group, which includes turtles, tortoises, and terrapins. All turtles have two distinct features: A shell to which their ribs and vertebrae are fused, and a pelvic girdle that sits inside their rib cage. This "compressed anatomical structure," says Madrak, is what gives turtles their signature lumbering walk. Turtles can be aquatic, semi-aquatic, or mostly terrestrial. One easy way to tell a tortoise from a turtle is to look at its feet, which are "designed for trucking around on land," says Madrak. Or even underneath it, since some tortoises are burrowers, like the gopher tortoises of the southeastern United States. "They look like tiny elephant feet," whereas semi-aquatic and aquatic turtle feet are webbed. Turtles actually don't make ideal pets, they were once shot into space, and a few other facts you never knew about turtles and tortoises. Few things in the animal kingdom are more confusing than the difference between turtles and tortoises, for linguistic (rather than anatomical) reasons. Terrestrial (non-swimming) species should technically be referred to as tortoises, but residents of North America are just as likely to use the word "turtle" across the board. Further complicating matters, in Great Britain "turtle" refers exclusively to marine species, and never to land-based tortoises. To avoid misunderstandings, most scientists and conservationists refer to turtles, tortoises, and terrapins under the blanket term Testudines. A field guide to the Turtles and Tortoises of Hawaii. All 8. Taxonomy. 5 Sea Turtles Superfamily Cheloniaidea. 1 Pond and Box Turtles Family Emydidae. 2 Softshell and Flapshell Turtles Family Trionychidae. Search. Sort. Complete guide including all photos and descriptions, spanning multiple pages. journal. Split page, species info on the left, room for notes on the right. Species info will be truncated to fit on the page. Taxa to include. All taxa in this guide. 8 taxa matching current filters. Note: most browsers have an option to print to PDF.