



WILD PLANET TRUST

KS1 - Make a 3D tortoise

Art

Make a 3D tortoise from card or clay

Learning Intention

We are using different materials to make patterned sculptures of animals.

Introduction

Our giant tortoises will probably live to be older than any other animal in our zoos – some at other zoos have lived 180 years! Tortoises are famous for their strong shell, which protects them from predators. The shell is built around their ribcage – you can still see their ribs inside their shell, if you look at an old shell. Their tummy is covered with a shell, too. Most tortoises can hide inside their shell when they are scared.

Can you make a model of a tortoise's shell?

Easy Method

A bread roll is just the right shape, so we would suggest using a stale, crusty roll to represent the shell.

Decoration

Paint your shell in the colour and patterns that can be seen on our tortoises. Start by giving the shell a coat of a light colour (yellow, beige), and then letting that dry. Then add the shape of the scutes with a sharpie or crayon in a brown or green.

The scutes (plates) can be different shapes, but many are hexagonal – each scute grows as the tortoise grows, so the shell gets bigger and bigger. They're made of a material like our fingernails.

Box turtles can completely close their shell, using a hinge in the bottom plate. This makes their shell even easier to model!

Clay Method

An alternative would be to make the tortoise out of clay, either as a solid lump or as a clay shell around a suitably shaped object.

1. Take a hand towel and scrunch it up to make the shape of half a ball. Secure with a little sticky tape if necessary. This shape will provide support for the clay shell as it dries.
2. Roll out some clay into a flat sheet, as thick as a pencil.
3. Cut the sheet in two, with one part bigger than the other.
4. Lay the smaller sheet of clay over the flat bottom of the paper towel shape.
5. Lay the larger sheet over the top and crimp the edges (like a pasty) to join the two sheets together.
6. Use a pointed stick to mark the pattern of scutes on the shell.

