

Take the Desert Tortoise Challenge!

Masters of Desert Living

Desert tortoises have excellent adaptations and abilities which allow them to survive in the harsh conditions of desert living. They have strong arms and tough nails to dig for shelter from extreme temperatures, and can survive on the limited amounts of water available to them throughout the year. Desert tortoises have a great memory for remembering where water will pool up after a rainstorm, and will even dig their own basins to collect water. They also search for plants to eat like wildflowers or prickly pear cactus. Once they get their fill, desert tortoises can go up to a year without needing another drink by storing the water in their bladder. Tortoises are basically walking water canteens!

Just like desert tortoises, we humans live in a desert state with limited precipitation. Some of the driest areas in Utah only receive about 10 inches of rainfall annually. Unlike desert tortoises and other desert animals, humans are not specially adapted to survive without plenty of water. Water is a necessary resource for our health and survival, so to survive in the desert we pump water up from underground lakes, or pipe it in from far away.

What can we learn from the desert tortoise about using our water resources in the best way?

Tortoise Challenge #1:

Tortoises are so good at conserving water, maybe we can try the same thing! Challenge yourself or your family to find ways to use less water every day such as:

- Turn off the tap while you brush your teeth or wash your hands. This can sometimes save hundreds of gallons of water per month!
- A bath can use up to 30 gallons of water, but a five-minute shower will use about 10-25 gallons. Choosing to take a quick shower instead of a bath can save water!

Tortoise Challenge #2:

Tortoises rely upon their one body as a water bottle, but we can just as easily rely upon one reusable water bottle to get us through the hot summer days. By avoid single use plastic water bottles we can save the water that it takes to manufacture plastic as well as prevent plastic pollution.