

## 11. SPEED BUDDIES

**Overview:** Use a story about desert animals to create a situation for comparison and contrast of the adaptations of the tortoise and the jackrabbit.

**Objective:** To compare and contrast the different adaptations of the tortoise and the jackrabbit.

**Time needed:** Approximately 45 minutes

**Group Size:** whole class and then divide into groups of 2-3

**Age appropriateness:** 2nd - 4th

**Site:** tortoise enclosure

**Background:** Prior knowledge of desert animals and adaptations will be helpful. Adaptations include size, coloration, water usage or storage, speed, body structure, and nocturnal behaviors. Research desert animals prior to activity would be beneficial.

**Materials:**

Provided at the Garden  
the book The Tortoise and the Jackrabbit  
two large loops of string  
tortoise and jackrabbit fact strips  
Provided by the classroom teacher

**Preparation:** none

**Pre Activity:** Videos, posters, and class discussion of adaptations of desert animals will prepare students for the activity.

**Procedure:**

1. Assemble students under mesquite tree near the tortoise enclosure.
2. Read the story The Tortoise and the Jackrabbit and relate it to the desert environment and animal adaptation.
3. Use the string and set up a Venn diagram on the ground. One circle represents the tortoise and the other the jackrabbit. Overlapping area would indicate adaptations to desert habitat that they both exhibit.
4. Hand out one fact strip to each group of 2 or 3 students.
5. Each group reads their fact and decides where they should be placed on the diagram.
6. As facts are placed on the diagram, students explain why they placed it where they did. Others groups should be encouraged to challenge if they can justify placing the fact differently.

**Modifications:** Older students may write their own facts and create their own Venn diagrams.

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**Extensions:** Students can draw the tortoise or the jackrabbit in their habitat. Other animals can be researched and habitat adaptations can be identified. Students could write a story like the one they were read, but use other animals. The animal tracks could be identified.

**Reference List:**

Desert Wildlife of the Southwest by Rita Warner  
Ranger Rick Amazing Mammals part II  
Desert Life by Pamela Elise Bell

**Time of Year:** any

**\*\*This activity was created by Mollie Nestor and Manzanita Collins**

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## **TORTOISE AND JACKRABBIT FACT STRIPS**

I can live as long as fifty years.

I am a small, furry animal with long ears.

I have powerful hind legs.

My ears help me regulate my body temperature.

I have a suit of armor that protects me from predators.

I eat plants.

I store water in two special sacks inside my body.

I dig a burrow to escape cold or hot weather.

My large eyes give me good eyesight.

I am a crepuscular animal which means I am active before daylight or dark.

If I am flipped onto my back, I must right myself or die.

I hatch from eggs.

I am born alive.

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## **TORTOISE AND JACKRABBIT FACT STRIPS (answers)**

- T I can live as long as fifty years.
  - J I am a small, furry animal with long ears.
  - TJ I have powerful hind legs.
  - J My ears help me regulate my body temperature.
  - T I have a suit of armor that protects me from predators.
  - TJ I eat plants.
  - T I store water in two special sacks inside my body.
  - TJ I dig a burrow to escape cold or hot weather.
  - J My large eyes give me good eyesight.
  - TJ I am a crepuscular animal which means I am active before daylight or dark.
  - T If I am flipped onto my back, I must right myself or die.
  - T I hatch from eggs.
  - J I am born alive.
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