

# Light Pollution



VIRGINIA  
**AQUARIUM**  
& MARINE SCIENCE CENTER

*Learn about light pollution, how it affects turtle hatchlings, and how to help. This is a great game to play at dusk, when flashlights are easily seen but before it is too dark to safely run.*

## Duration

Preparation: 15 minutes

Activity: 15-30 minutes

## Supplies

- Flashlights (or printed circles to represent lights; included at the bottom)

## Background

Background knowledge: Sea turtles make their nests on the beach, laying about 100 eggs in each nest. The mother turtles lay eggs and leave the nest, never to return. When baby sea turtles hatch, they must make their way from the nest to the ocean. They hatch at night and are guided by the moon. However, if there are lots of other lights on the beach, sometimes turtles follow the wrong light. They get lost and never end up at the ocean.

## Instructions

1. Split into two teams making one team Turtles and the other team Lights.
2. Each Light member will need a flashlight (or yellow circle).
3. All Turtle members spread out (best if in a large open field or yard).
4. The Light team will secretly select one member to be the Moon, while the other members are lights from buildings, streetlights, or headlights.
5. Members of the Light team will spread out amongst the Turtle members with their flashlights on\*.
6. When the leader says, "go," all Turtles should run toward one of the Lights but may only select a Light that is "on."
7. All Lights, except the Moon are then directed to turn off their Lights.
8. The Turtles are then given 5 seconds (less if the space is small) to find the Moon and reach it. All Turtles that do not reach the Moon in time are Out. These turtles represent those hatchlings that never make it to the ocean.
9. Repeat the game and switch up roles if you'd like
10. For the final round, when the Lights are secretly selecting the Moon, instruct all the Lights to keep their lights off so that when the leader says, "go" all the Turtles will see and run to the moon.

\*If you are playing during the day or do not have flashlights use the yellow circles as replacements for the lights. Have the students hold up the circle over their heads to show that their light is "on" and behind their backs to show it is "off." The Moon will only hold the circle up as the moon cannot be "off"

**Follow-up discussion:** Explain that by turning off all the other lights it was easy for the turtles to find the right light (the moon). We can help turtles by turning off lights at the beach during hatchling season (late summer).

## Vocabulary

Light pollution

## Resources

Print the circles below onto firm yellow paper or have students color them in yellow. If you have a color printer, print the yellow circles. Cardstock is best.



