

# Swim Turtle Swim



VIRGINIA  
**AQUARIUM**  
& MARINE SCIENCE CENTER

Learn about the threats to sea turtles in this game similar to Sharks and Minnows for students in grades K through 4.

## Duration

Preparation: 0 minutes

Activity: 10-30 minutes

## Supplies

- None

## Background

Sea turtles face many dangers throughout their lives. When baby sea turtles hatch, they must make their way from their nest on the berm crest section of the beach back to the ocean. This journey is dangerous, as many predators lurk on the beach. Hungry birds, crabs, raccoons, dogs, and even ants try to eat the eggs or baby sea turtles. It is estimated that less than 1% of sea turtle eggs grow up to reach maturity. Once in the ocean, they face large fish, sharks, and birds if they're close to the surface. Human interaction is also a problem for sea turtles. They can become entangled in nets and fishing gear, consume marine debris, get hit by boats, or be affected by oil pollution.

## Instructions

1. Designate a starting line and a finish line across a room or open area.
2. Line up the children shoulder to shoulder along the starting facing the finish line. Tell them that they are the Turtles and that the starting line is the nest and the finish line is the ocean where they will be safe.
3. Choose two students to go to the center of the area and pretend to be one of the threats to sea turtles (such as birds).
4. When the Leader says, "go" the Turtles will start to run across toward the Ocean and the Birds will try to tag as many Turtles as they can. All Turtles that make it safely to the finish line can freely walk back to the nest and remain sea turtles for the next round. Those that were tagged become new threats in the center (i.e. crabs)
5. Repeat the process adding more "threats" as they are tagged. Examples might be dogs, racoons, ants, or light pollution).
6. Once there are only two Turtles remaining, these two become the new threats and you can start the game all over again.

**Follow-up discussion:** Talk about why these things might be threats to hatchlings and stress the fact that in real life, very few sea turtle hatchlings make it safely to the beach. Older kids might be able to understand what this then means to the survival of the species when you discuss threats that adult sea turtles face.

## Vocabulary

Threat