MEET THEM AT PLUMPTON PARK ZOO

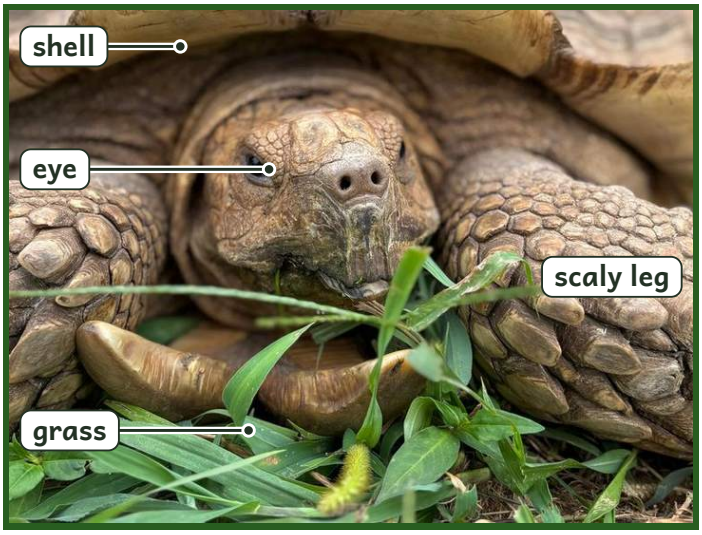
SULCATA TORTOISE

Centrochelys sulcata

GRADES K–2

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · © 2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.
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Teachers: read this page aloud, one part at a time (about 5 minutes). Children follow along and say the bold words.



A sulcata eats grass at our zoo.

Its body

It is a very big tortoise.
It has a hard **shell**.
The shell is part of its body.
It has big scales on its legs.

Its home (habitat)

It lives in Africa.
It lives in dry grassland.
This kind is **endangered**.
Tank and Baby live at our zoo.



■ Lives in parts of this area ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

Its food

It eats grass and other plants.

Its babies (life cycle)

A mother digs a nest.
She lays about 15 to 20 eggs.
The warm ground heats the eggs.
A **hatchling** can walk and eat right away.

Fun facts

It digs a **burrow** up to 50 feet long!
It can cool off with spit on its arms!

Words to know

burrow: a tunnel dug in the ground
endangered: at risk, so it needs help
hatchling: a baby just out of its egg
shell: the hard cover on its back

Talk about it

1. How long can a burrow be?
2. How does a sulcata cool off?
3. What can a hatchling do?

Learn more: plumptonparkzoo.org/reptiles-and-amphibians/sulcata-tortoise/ · **Sources:** IUCN/SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group (Petrozzi et al. 2020); IUCN Red List (2021); CITES Species+; Animal Diversity Web
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: K-LS1-1 (3.1.K.A)
Plumpton Park Zoo · 1416 Telegraph Rd, Rising Sun, MD 21911 · (410) 658-6850 · plumptonparkzoo.org · a 501(c)(3) nonprofit zoo · Photo: Plumpton Park Zoo

SULCATA TORTOISE

Before and after your visit

GRADES K–2

Page 2 of the sulcata tortoise fact sheet for grades K–2 · © **2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
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Name _____ **Date** _____

Before you visit · 5 minutes

What do you think? Circle **YES** or **NO**.

1. A sulcata digs burrows. **YES** **NO**
2. Its shell comes off. **YES** **NO**
3. A hatchling can walk right away. **YES** **NO**
4. A sulcata eats meat. **YES** **NO**

At the zoo · with a partner

Check each one you see.

- ☐ shell
- ☐ scaly legs
- ☐ eyes
- ☐ burrow
- ☐ grass

What is it doing? Circle one.

eating · walking · digging · resting

After your visit · 10 minutes

Draw a tortoise digging a long burrow.

Draw here

A tortoise has a _____

I learned that _____

ADJUST IT Kindergarten: read everything aloud; children talk and draw, and an adult writes their words. **Grade 2:** children read page 1 on their own. **Grades 3–5:** use the regular sulcata tortoise sheet on Teacher Resources. **Second source:** read about this animal in your class database or a library book too, then ask what both said and what was new. **No zoo trip?** Check off what you can find in the photo on page 1. **Answers:** 1 yes, 2 no, 3 yes, 4 no.

Learn more: plumptonparkzoo.org/reptiles-and-amphibians/sulcata-tortoise/ · Page 1 of this sheet has the words and picture this page refers to.
Science, grades K–1: Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): K-LS1-1 · Pennsylvania (STEELS): 3.1.K.A
Reading and writing, grade 1: Maryland and Delaware: RI.1.1 · RI.1.7 · RI.1.9 · W.1.8 · Pennsylvania: CC.1.2.1.B · CC.1.2.1.G · CC.1.2.1.I · CC.1.4.1.W
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