Draw a turtle

Start with any subject

Turtle — page 2

Use a pencil, eraser and paper. Draw temporary guides lightly. Green pointers help you; do not copy them.

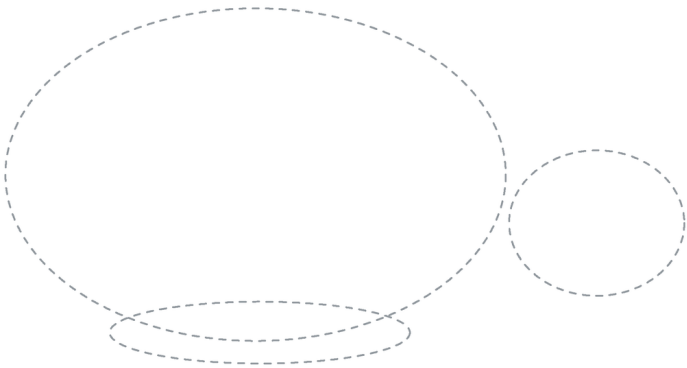
Read each drawing goal from top to bottom. Some pages scroll so the pictures can stay large. Compare the before and after views when erasing.

The lesson tells you when the base animal is complete. Extra details, objects, coloring and another try are optional.

Place the main forms

Gray dashes: light guides. Black: kept outlines. Orange: new outlines. Green helpers are not drawing marks.

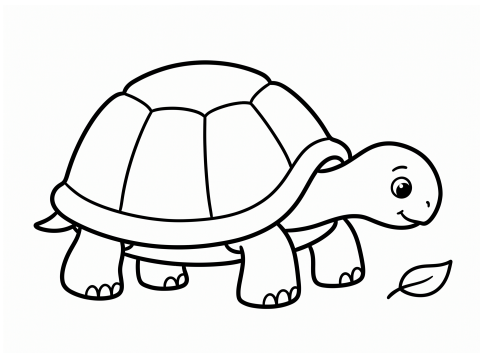
Place the three main forms



Lightly draw a broad shell oval, a head oval to its right and a shallow body oval underneath. Leave space below for four feet.

The head is about a third of the shell width; keep a small gap for the neck.

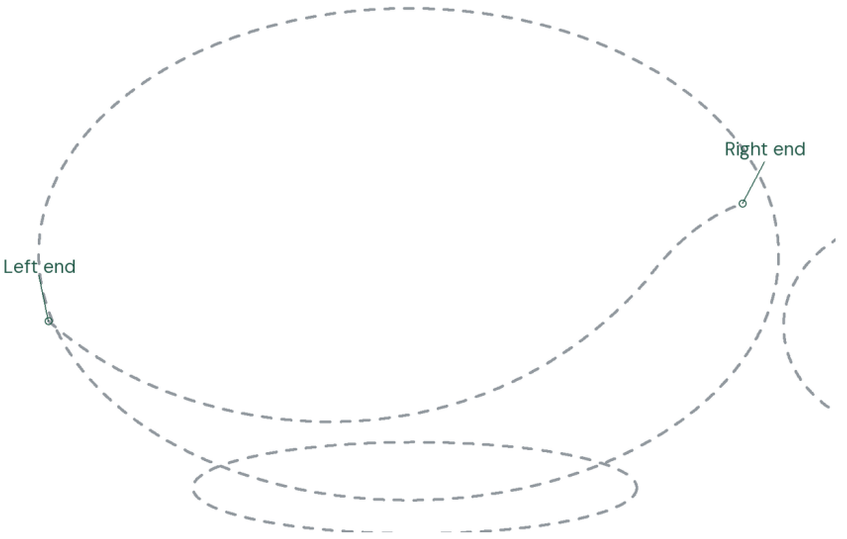
Finished example with optional details



Reshape the shell oval

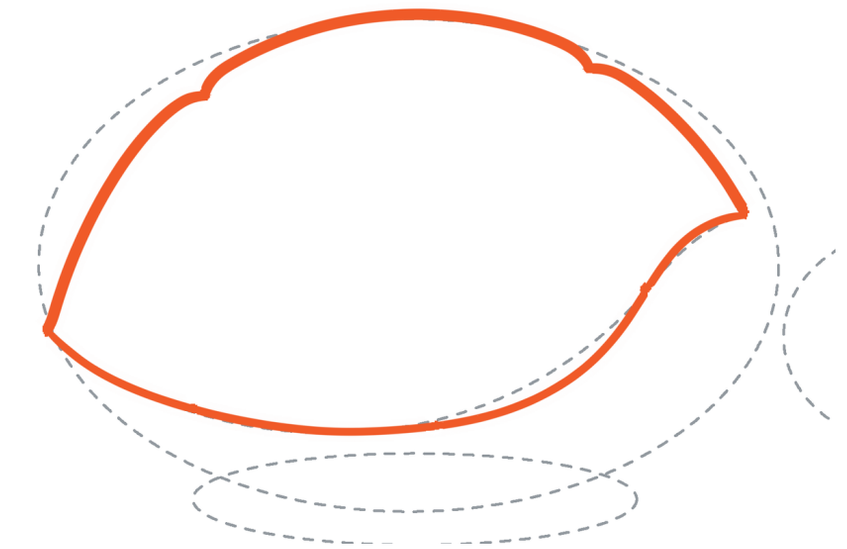
Gray dashes: light guides. Black: kept outlines. Orange: new outlines. Green helpers are not drawing marks.

Plan the lifted lower edge



Mark the two shell ends. Sweep a light curve between them, above the oval's bottom, and lift it toward the right end.

Round the dome



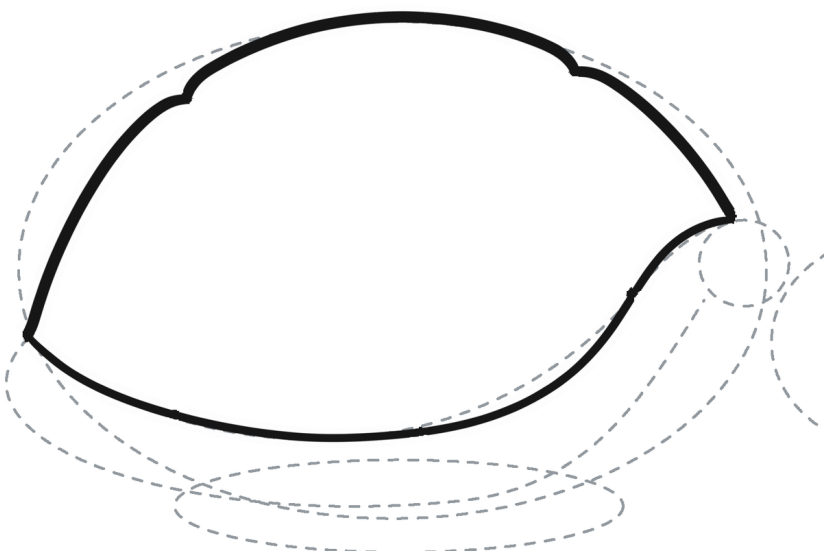
Curve from the left end over the oval's crown to the right end. Join them along the lifted lower curve.

Keep one open space inside. A smooth arch is enough; tiny bumps are optional.

Build a rim below the dome

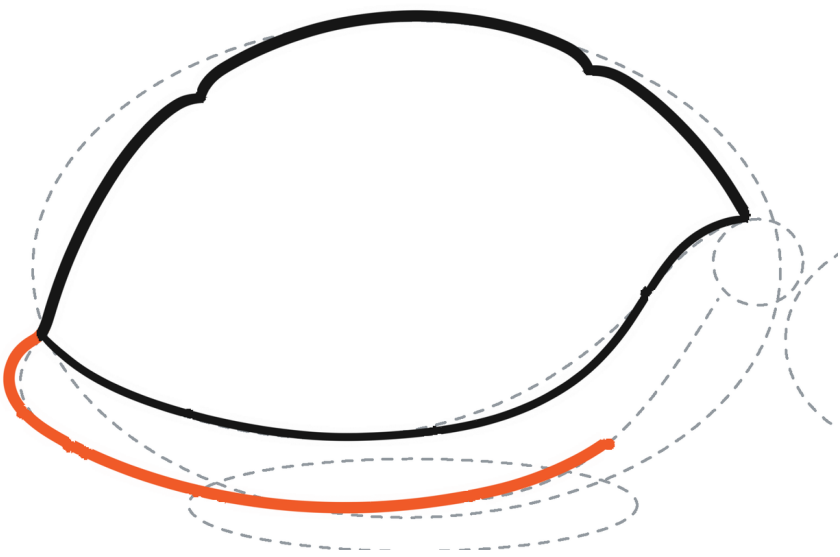
Gray dashes: light guides. Black: kept outlines. Orange: new outlines. Green helpers are not drawing marks.

Plan the rim and its turn



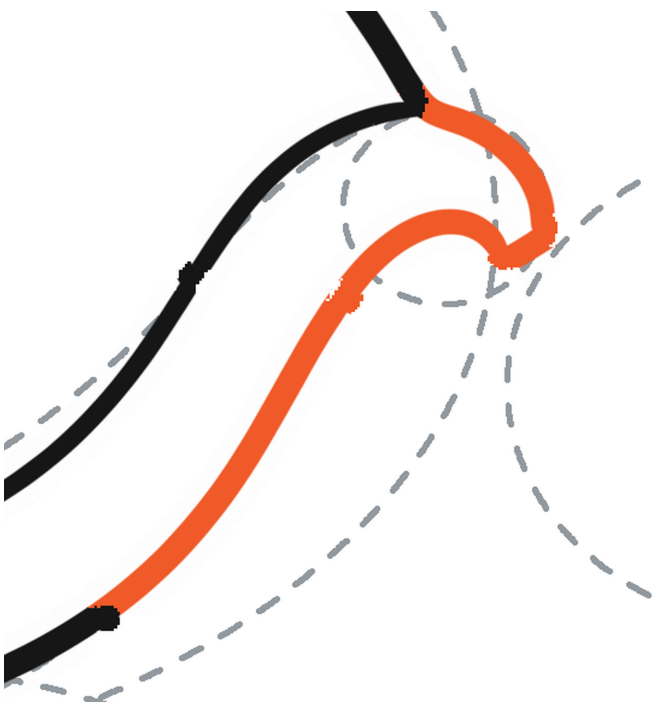
Draw a light curve below the dome. Add a small oval at the head side to place the rim’s curled end.

Sweep beneath the shell



Start at the left end, round its short turn and sweep below the dome toward the small oval.

Round the curled end



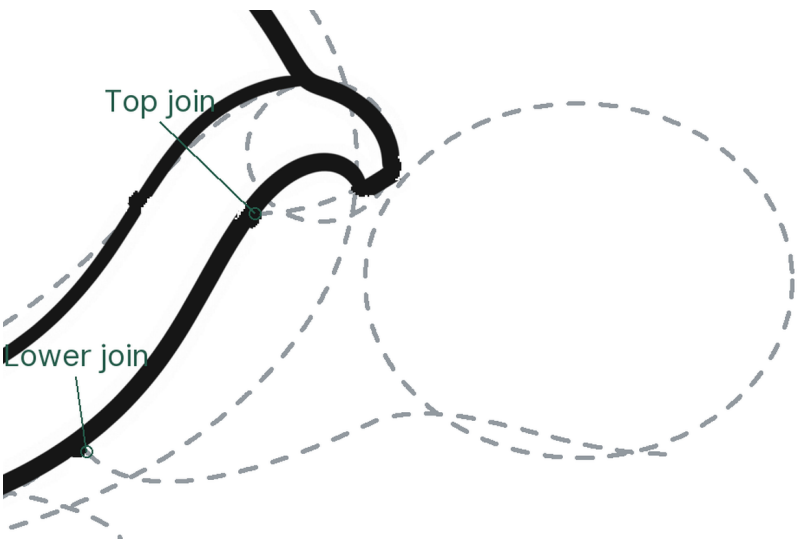
Follow the small oval upward and around its top, then curve back into the band.

Keep the small white opening inside the curl.

Connect the head to the shell

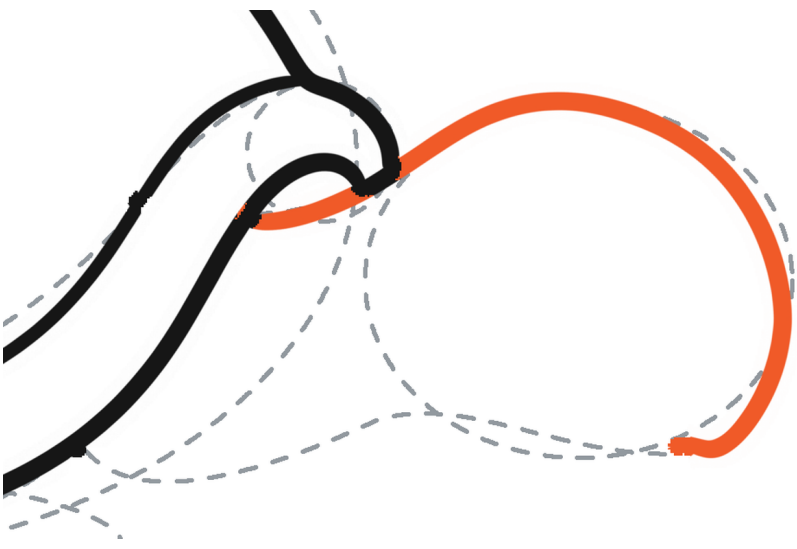
Gray dashes: light guides. Black: kept outlines. Orange: new outlines. Green helpers are not drawing marks.

Place the neck connections



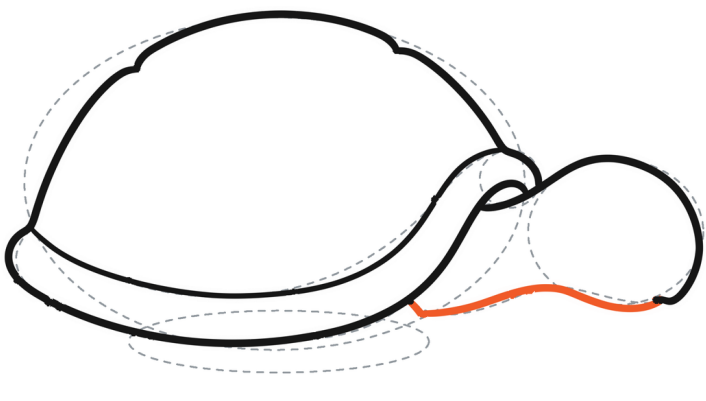
Plan a short upper curve from the curled rim to the head oval. Plan a longer lower curve from the lower rim to the head's underside.

Round the head from the upper join



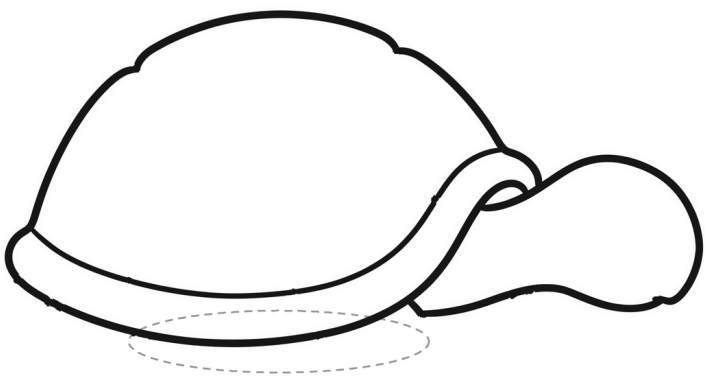
Follow the short upper guide into the head oval. Continue over its top, down its front and around the chin.

Return to the rim, then choose the guides



Follow the lower guide from the chin back to the lower rim. Erase the shell and head ovals, lifted shell curve, rim guides and both neck guides. Keep the solid outlines and shallow body oval.

Keep the joined shell and head



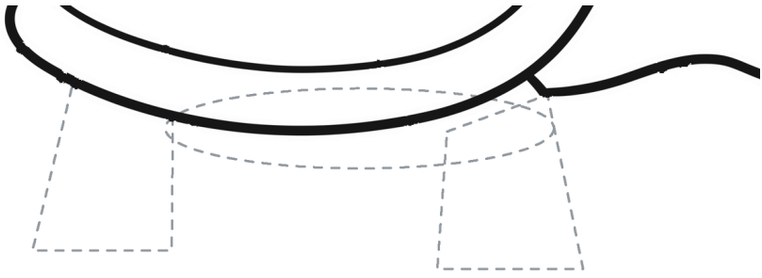
Compare after erasing: the shell, curled rim and head stay in the same places. Keep the shallow body oval for the legs and belly.

A short missing join needs only a short extension; a rounder head is fine.

Round the nearer feet and belly

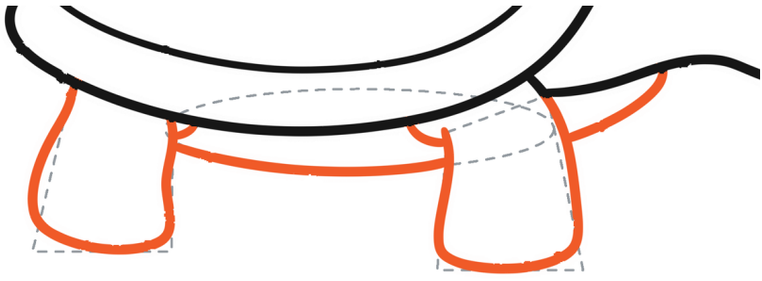
Gray dashes: light guides. Black: kept outlines. Orange: new outlines. Green helpers are not drawing marks.

Place the two nearer legs



Draw a light slanted block below the back rim and another near the neck. Give each a broad bottom for its foot.

Round the feet and join the belly



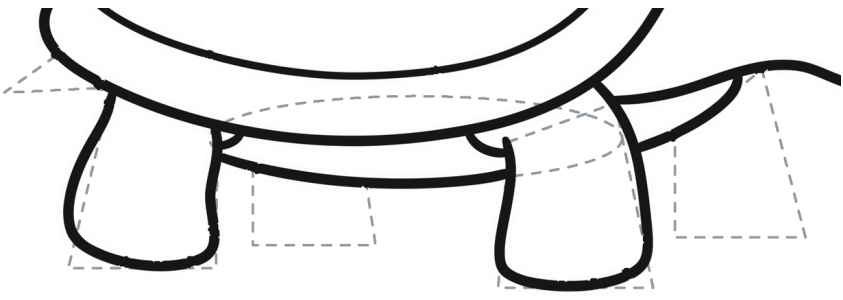
Round the lower corners of both blocks into broad feet. Follow the shallow body guide between them; stop its belly lines where the nearer legs hide them.

Keep the foot outlines. Do not carry the belly through either nearer leg.

Finish the farther feet and tail

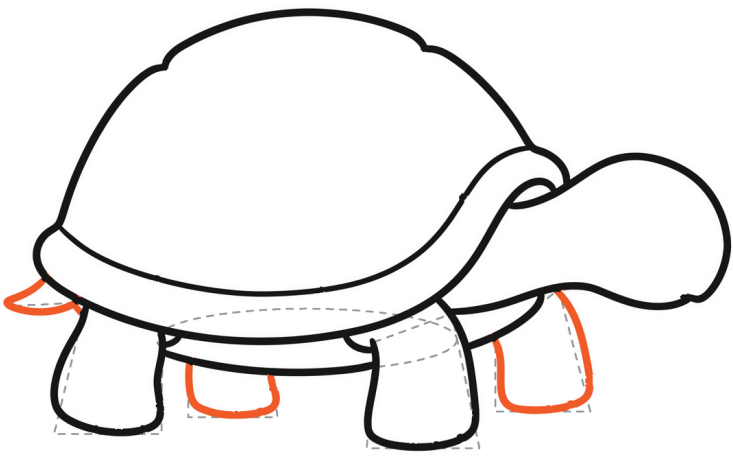
Gray dashes: light guides. Black: kept outlines. Orange: new outlines. Green helpers are not drawing marks.

Place the farther feet and tail



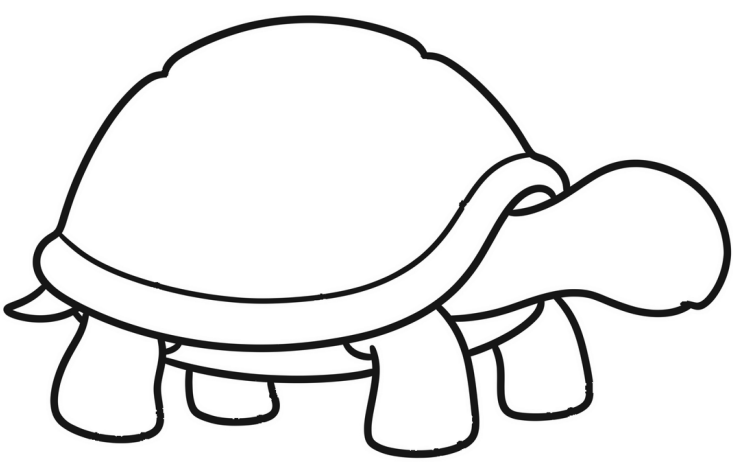
Add two smaller blocks under the belly and neck for the farther feet. Place a small tail wedge behind the back rim.

Round the visible parts, then erase



Round the visible bottoms of both smaller blocks. Round the tail wedge into two curves. Erase the shallow body oval, four leg blocks and tail wedge; keep the solid edges.

Check the four-foot pose



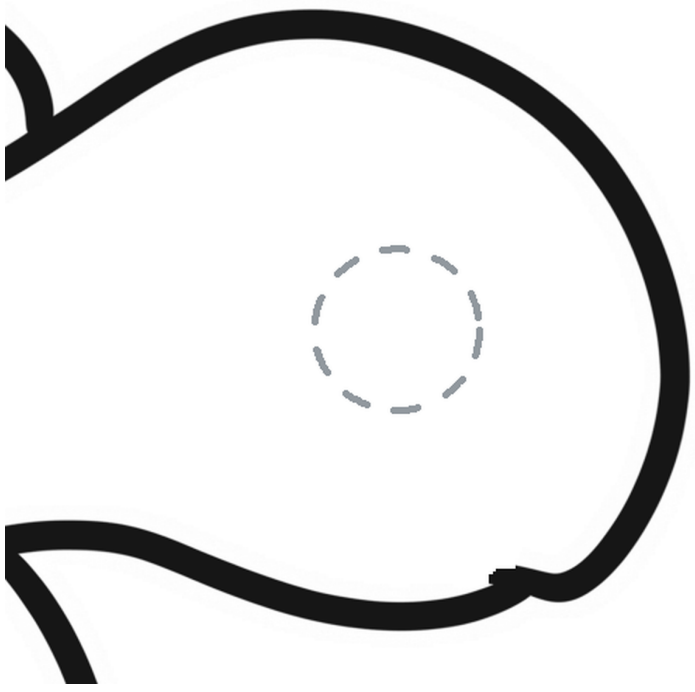
The temporary body and leg shapes are gone. The belly stops at the nearer legs, and the smaller feet stay behind.

Count two larger nearer feet and two smaller farther feet.

Add the face and finish the turtle

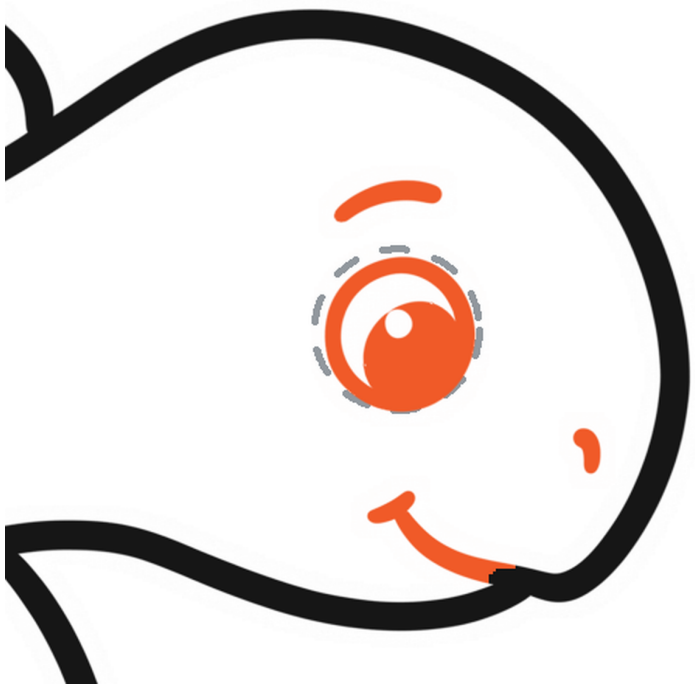
Gray dashes: light guides. Black: kept outlines. Orange: new outlines. Green helpers are not drawing marks.

Place the eye



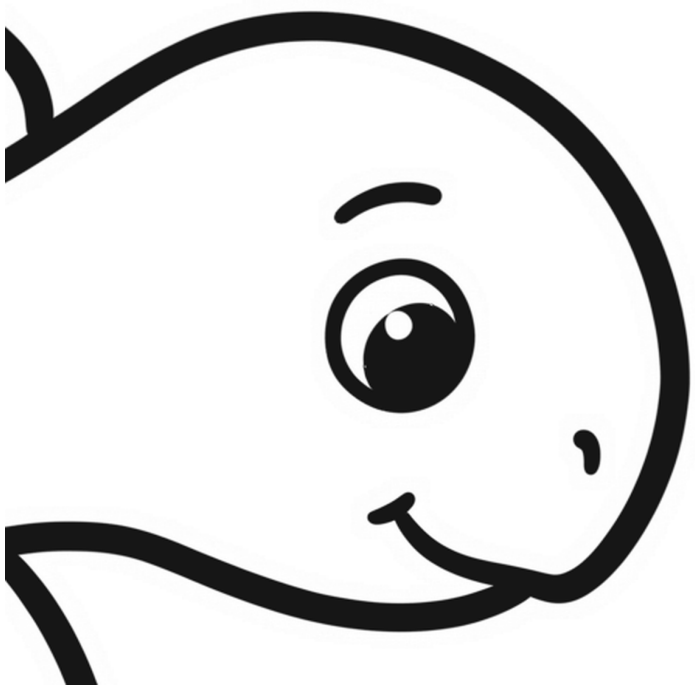
Lightly place a small upright oval inside the head, leaving space above for an eyebrow and below for a smile.

Add the expression and erase the eye guide



Draw the rounded eye just inside its light oval. Add a smaller pupil with a white highlight, then a short eyebrow, nose mark and smile. Erase the light oval; keep the solid face.

Your base turtle is complete



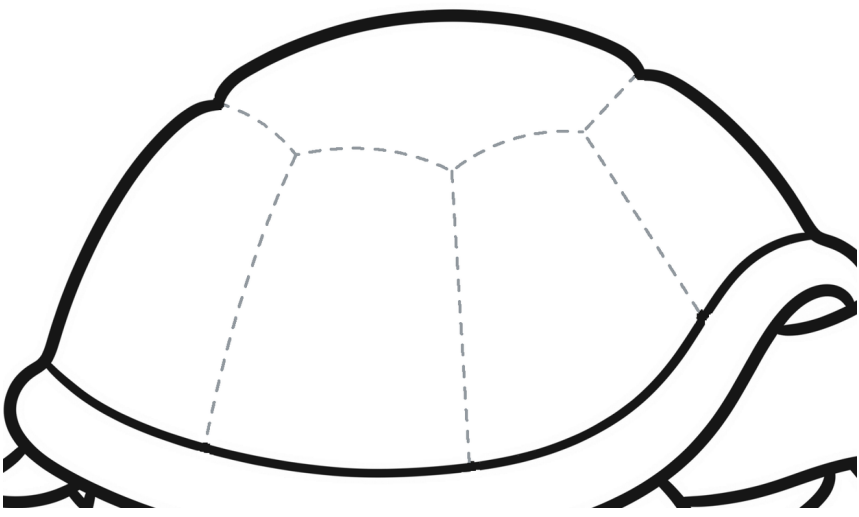
The eye guide is gone. Your turtle has a shell and rim, attached head, belly, tail and four feet. You can stop here.

Shell patterns, toe marks, a leaf and coloring are optional.

Optional: make a shell pattern

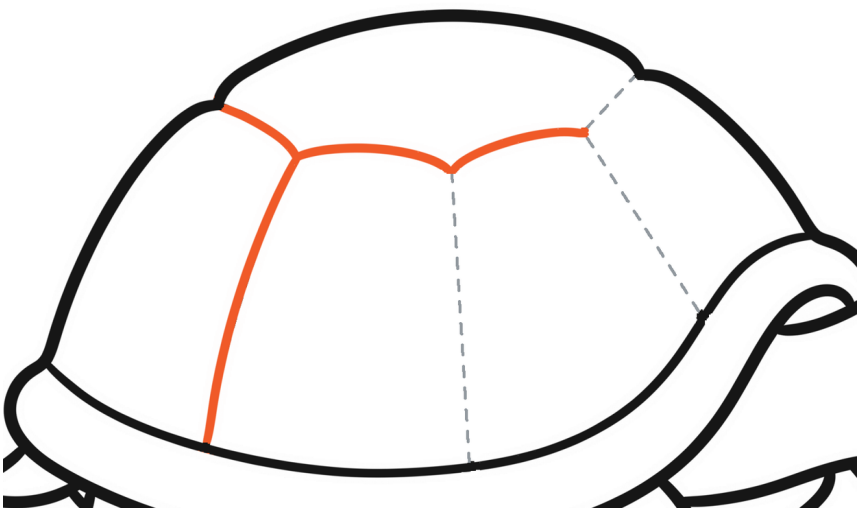
Gray dashes: light guides. Black: kept outlines. Orange: new outlines. Green helpers are not drawing marks.

Plan a shell pattern



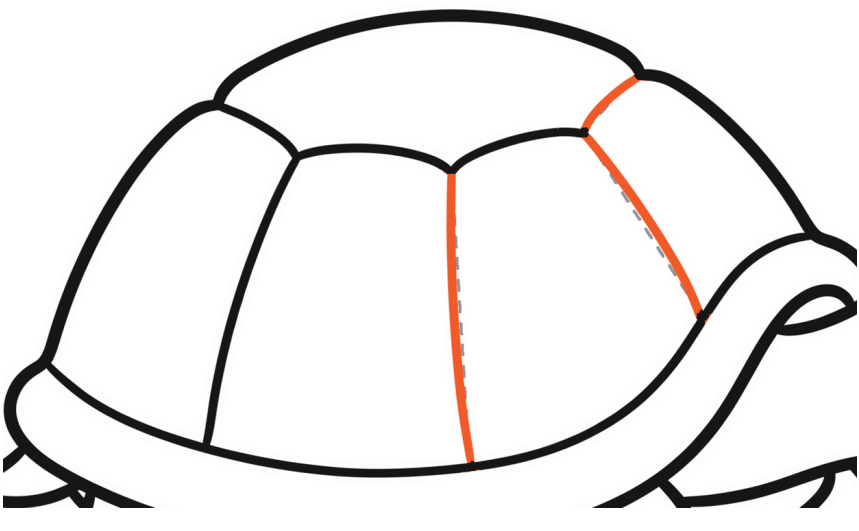
Lightly place a curved row across the dome. From its meeting points, plan long curves to the shell edges.

Draw the row and one divider



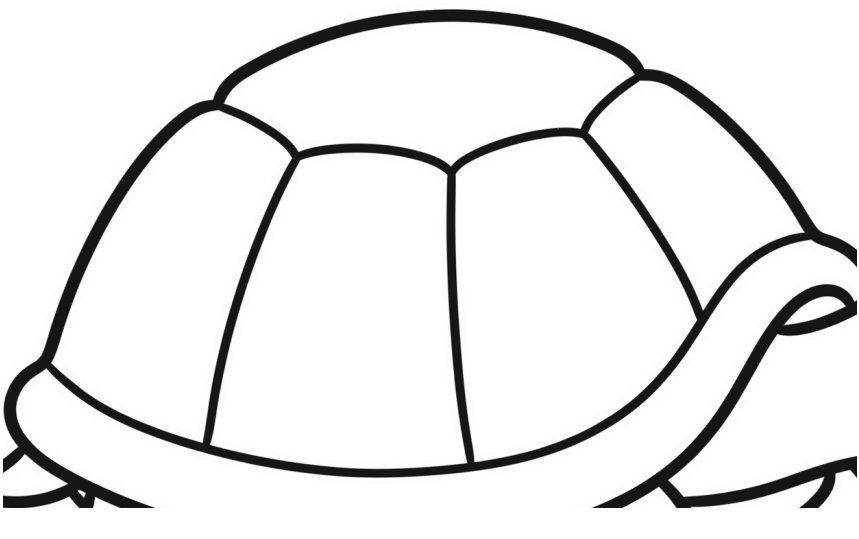
Follow the row's three curves, then follow the left long guide down to the shell edge.

Repeat the divider method



Follow the other long guides and the short upper connection. Erase the light row and divider guides, keeping the solid pattern.

Keep the finished pattern



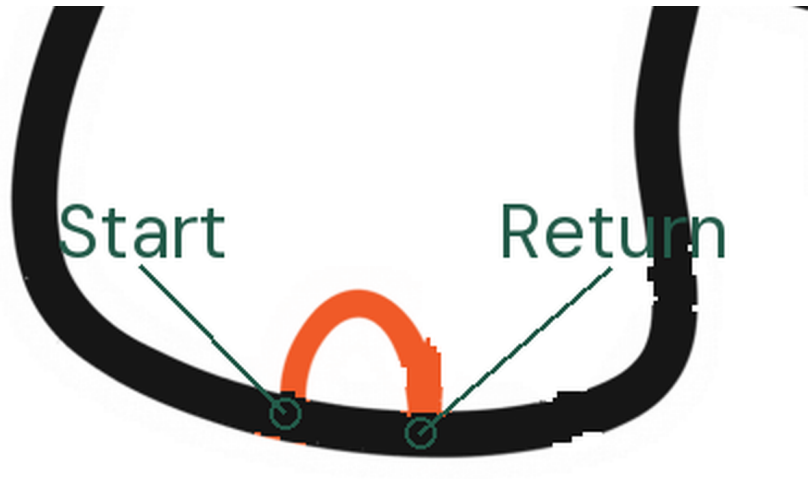
The light pattern guides are gone; the solid lines still meet at their junctions.

Choose this detail only if you want it. Your base turtle is already complete.

Optional: add toe arches

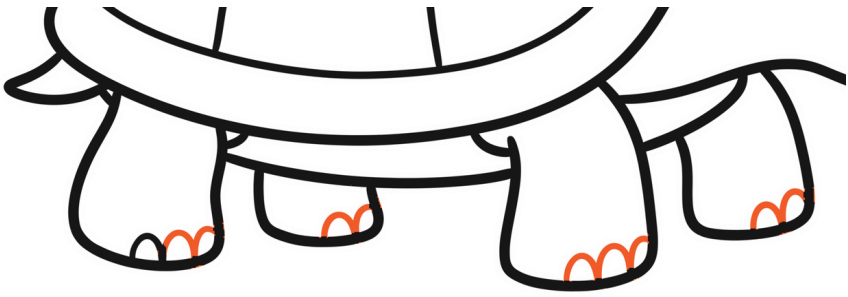
Gray dashes: light guides. Black: kept outlines. Orange: new outlines. Green helpers are not drawing marks.

Make one toe arch



Start on the foot's lower edge, curve upward, then return to the same edge.

Repeat if you want



Use the same arch along other foot edges. You choose how many small toe marks to add.

Choose this detail only if you want it. Your base turtle is already complete.

Optional: add a leaf

Gray dashes: light guides. Black: kept outlines. Orange: new outlines. Green helpers are not drawing marks.

Plan a separate leaf



In the space beside the turtle, draw a light diagonal line. Place two curves around it, meeting at a pointed tip.

Draw the leaf and erase its guides



Follow both edges to the point. Extend a short stem from the base and a vein toward the tip. Erase the light diagonal and two-curve guide.

Keep the separate leaf



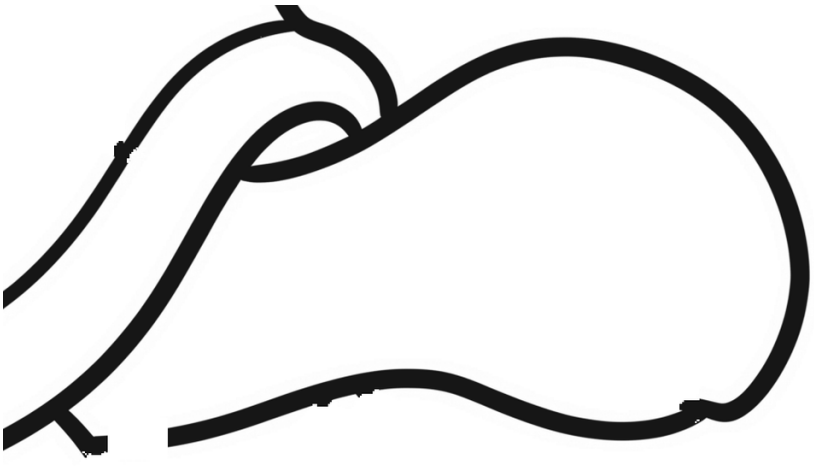
The light guides are gone. Keep the solid leaf, stem and vein.

Choose this detail only if you want it. Your base turtle is already complete.

If the neck stops short

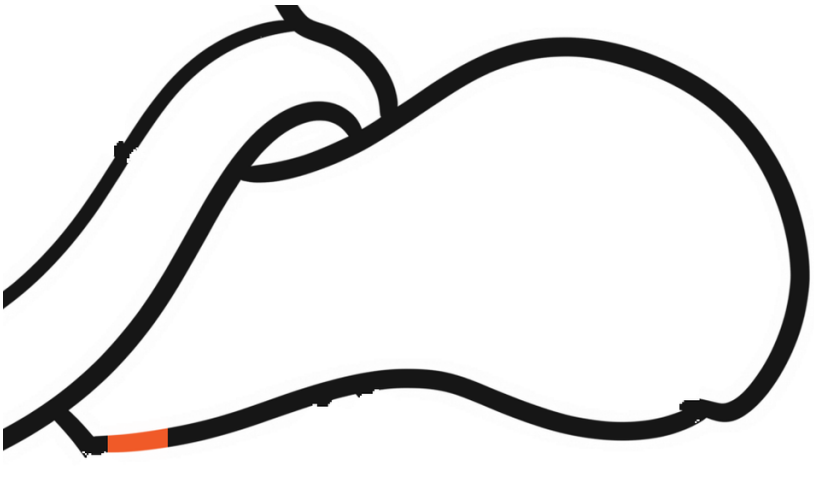
Gray dashes: light guides. Black: kept outlines. Orange: new outlines. Green helpers are not drawing marks.

Before: a small gap



Keep the head and rim in place.

After: extend the same curve



Join only the missing section to the rim.

A short gap needs a short extension, not a new head.

Try it your way

Choose any animal. Cover its detailed pictures and place the main shapes first. Uncover any help whenever you want.

Check room for the limbs, important joins and which shapes sit in front. Move a light guide before adding detail if the placement feels crowded.

Choose your own pattern, object or simple setting. Your curves do not need to match the example exactly.

A helper can point or demonstrate on spare paper while you keep your pencil. Coloring, sharing and another try are optional.

Make another version

Try the main shapes on fresh paper.
Use the lesson to check the difficult joins,
then choose any extra details you want.

Screen guide: fit the page width.

Color Page Prints

More free drawing lessons