



Making Your Burrow Snug

Make the burrow channel the right width

It is important to make the burrow channel the right width for your tortoise. Measure the width of the shell. A burrow should be snug with very little air circulation. This strategy helps keep the tortoise cool in the summer and warm in the winter. The tortoise should not be able to turn around in the channel.

Example: Your tortoise might be 4" wide x 7" long, or 8" wide x 10" long. The width of the channel should be the width of your tortoise plus about 1½" to 2". That extra 1½" to 2" allows for growth, legs and walking room. (Leave more extra space for large tortoises than small ones.)

Figure the channel size			
Channel Width		Channel Height	
Shell Width (SW)	Channel Width	Walking Height (WH)	Channel Height
4"	SW + 1"	2"	WH + ½"
6"	SW + 1½"	3"	WH + ½"
8"	SW + 2"	4"	WH + ½-1"
10+"	SW + 2½"	6-9"	WH + 1"



Unless your tortoise's shell is 11-12" wide, plan to decrease the width of the channel with growboards that can be removed as the tortoise grows. Each board decreases the width by 1½". The channel is 14".

- Insert a board parallel to the long edge of the channel.
- Use a finishing nail to hold the board in place at the turnaround end of the channel. Hammer into the back board, flush with the 2" x 10", head of nail as close to roof as possible. This nail will stay in place later when the board is removed, so be sure it's out of the way.
- Repeat for each board or 1½" you want to decrease the width of the burrow.



Make the burrow channel the right height

Measure the height of your tortoise when walking. Refer to the chart above. Give your tortoise ½" to 1" of clearance depending on its size. Put several inches of rock-free soil in the channel. If you are building for a small tortoise, you may require a lot of soil.

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