Handling Reptiles Safely (Part 2): Tips for Proper Handling

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tips for **handling reptiles**

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Tips for Handling Certain Kinds of Reptiles

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Snakes:

Smaller snakes should be supported in your hand or around your arm. Larger snakes will require that you also use your torso or a helper to support their body weight. Snakes that are over 6 feet long will require two people to hold them.

If you are putting the snake over your shoulders, place the middle of the body, bowed slightly downwards so it's not right against you, around your neck. This will balance the weight out, and make it less likely that the snake will tighten around you. When you are holding a snake in your hands, allow it to move through your hands freely rather than grabbing it and holding it tightly.

Lizards:

Lizards are going to feel threatened if you reach down from above and pick them up, so always use the palm of your hand to scoop them up from underneath. Put your fingers towards the lizard's head with your index finger between its front legs, and use the palm of your hand, wrist, and arm to support its hind end. If the lizard is large, use two hands - one hand to support the front of the body, and the other hand to support the lower abdomen, hips, and the base of the tail. If the lizard has a tail that thrashes about, hold the lizard along your arm, and gently pin the tail between your arm and ribcage. If the lizard itself starts to thrash and roll around, don't hold it tightly or you may injure it. Instead, allow it to roll around in your hands or put it back in its enclosure.

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Turtles & Tortoises:	Turtles and tortoises can be handled, but we recommend that you do not handle them extensively. They like to have their feet on the ground, and though they will tolerate being held, it is stressful for them. When you see a turtle flailing around, or "swimming," in midair, it's a sign that the turtle is frantically looking for solid ground. When you do pick them up, hold them securely with two hands and always make sure that there is some surface under their feet, even if it is just your hand. Never hold them by the edge of the shell. They can easily be dropped if they move too much, and a fall can injure or kill them.
Frogs & Amphibians:	Most frogs and amphibians should be handled only when necessary. Many have toxins in their skin that can cause reactions in humans, and we also have toxins on our skin that can be dangerous to them. Over-handling can also dry their skin out. When you handle them, make sure to wash your hands very thoroughly beforehand and either wear latex gloves or make sure your hands are moist. Limit handling to moving them in and out of the cage for cleaning or to other enclosures for eating.

Part 1: Proper Handling

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