

Hermit Crab Island

LIVE HERMIT CRAB HABITAT



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Table of Contents

Tau Ará!	3
Setting Up Your Habitat	4
Getting Hermit Crabs	6
Habitat Care Basics	7
Feeding.....	8
Watering.....	9
Bathing.....	10
Exercising.....	10
Molting.....	11
Shell Swapping.....	12
Hermit Crab Behavior.....	13
Handling.....	13
Hermit Crab Care Checklist	14
Glossary	15
Questions and Answers	15
Further Reading	18
Ordering Crabs and Supplies	19

Your Hermit Crab Island includes:

- Habitat with Base and Lid
- Rock Hideaway
- Water Tray
- Food Dish
- Bag of Sand
- Shell Decorating Kit
- Hermit Crab Coupon

Tau Ará!

That's Taino for "hello people." You've made the exciting decision to adopt your very own hermit crabs! The friendship you are about to develop will be rewarding and long lasting if you follow these simple instructions for caring for your new friends. Proper feeding and care habits will help your hermit crabs live long and healthy lives and ensure that your experience will be both fun and educational. But first, a little background about hermit crabs...

Taino is a language spoken by a group of people who live in the Caribbean. That is where our hermit crabs come from: warm, humid, tropical areas of the Caribbean, South America, and Florida. The native people, who live in the same places as the hermit crabs, called them "tree crabs," the "purple pincer land hermit crab," or "soldier crabs." They were called "soldier crabs" because people in the Caribbean tell stories about hermit crab migrations saving them from enemies. Invaders would come to take over the islands and they would hear so much noise, from all the chirping and movement of thousands of hermit crabs on the beaches, that they were actually frightened away.

The scientific name for your hermit crab is **Coenobita clypeatus**. It's easy to pronounce if you say it like this: "**seen-oh-BEET-ah cly-AIT-us.**"

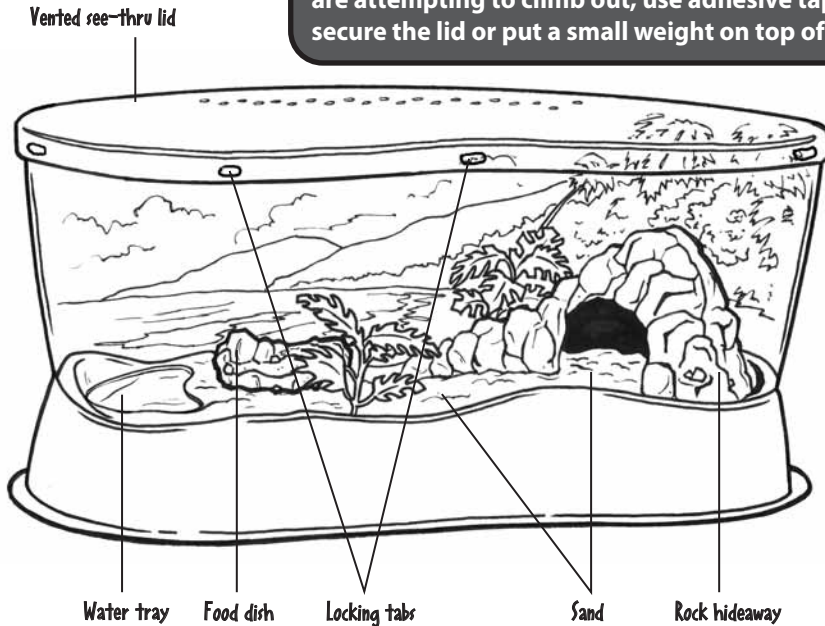
A hermit crab's body is very different from other crabs! It has ten legs and four antennae, and it's the only kind of crab that can walk forward, while other types of crabs can only walk sideways. The two front legs are claws and the left one is always bigger than the right one. The hermit crab uses its bigger claw for climbing, for tearing off pieces of food, and for defending itself. It uses its smaller one mainly for eating and drinking. It has four legs that it uses for walking and four more that you can't see because they are kept inside the shell to anchor it onto the crab's back.

The name "hermit crab" is sort of funny because it's not 100% right. While it is true that they find homes to hide away in, they are actually very social creatures. They often hang out together in large groups. When a mom hermit crab has babies, she can lay anywhere from eight hundred to fifty thousand eggs (depending on how big of a momma she is). The mom carries the eggs under her body and inside her shell. A month after the eggs develop, the mother crab will go down to the beach and begin gathering the eggs from under her body in little balls and throwing them into the water. The eggs hatch on impact with the water and the baby hermit crabs are born.

A hermit crab's life is mobile. As a baby, it finds an empty mollusk shell to call home. As it grows, it leaves its shell behind and finds a larger, more comfortable one to move into. It does this many times during its life.

Now, let's set up your Hermit Crab Island!

FIG. 1



Always keep the lid on the habitat. If your crabs are attempting to climb out, use adhesive tape to secure the lid or put a small weight on top of it.

IMPORTANT: Adult supervision is required when handling hermit crabs. Use caution when handling them. They can pinch if held incorrectly. Please read and follow handling instructions on page 14.

Setting Up The Habitat

It is recommended you have an adult help you set-up the habitat and care for your hermit crabs. Always remember: Hermit crabs are living creatures and they deserve to be treated with love and respect.

You will not need to set up your Hermit Crab Island until you get your hermit crabs. Be sure you have bottled spring water on hand.

When you receive your hermit crabs, they will probably be hungry and thirsty from their journey, so you will want to put them in their new home as soon as possible.

1. Remove food dish and rock hideaway from the Hermit Crab Island. Leave the water tray in. Place only the water tray into the Hermit Crab Island. Locate as shown in Fig. 1 (Do not fill the water tray yet).

2. Open the packets of sand and pour them into one large bowl. Slowly pour 3 table spoons of water into the bowl as you mix the sand with a large spoon
3. Carefully pour the sand into the habitat. (Tip: Pour most of the sand in the area labeled "Sand" in Fig.1. This will prevent the sand from getting into the water tray, and will give your crabs a place to dig.)
4. Place the rock hideaway inside the habitat. Push down and twist the rock hideaway to bury it as deep as possible.
5. Using a small cup, pour room temperature spring water into the water tray. Water level should be 1/4" deep. DO NOT pour more than 1/4" of water into the water tray.
6. Put 1/4" of crab food into the food dish and place the food dish into the habitat. (See page 8 for feeding instructions.) Locate as shown in Fig. 1.
7. Before you put your new pets into their home you need to bathe them first (see page 10 for bathing instructions). Your hermit crabs will need this water after their long trip and it will also help clean them if they have mites. (See Q&A page 18 about mites.)
8. Gently place your hermit crabs into their habitat. (You will find a cotton ball in the container they arrived in. This can be discarded because it was only needed to give them moisture during shipment.) They will begin to explore their new home and, after eating and drinking, they may retreat to the rock hideaway and bury themselves in the sand. It's normal and healthy for hermit crabs to bury themselves, especially after they've just been shipped. They will need a couple of days to get used to their surroundings and should not be disturbed during this time. After a few days, you may want to start to get to know them.
9. Replace the lid on the habitat, making sure it is secured with the locking tabs. Always keep the lid on the habitat secured with the locking tabs. If your crabs are attempting to climb out, use adhesive tape to secure the lid or put a small weight on top of it.
10. Be sure to place your habitat in a low traffic area, some sunlight can be okay, but make sure not to put them in direct sunlight. Once you find a spot for the habitat it's best to keep it in that spot.

Important information about your hermit crabs:

If your hermit crab does not come out of it's shell, even after you bathe it, don't assume that it's not alive. Instead, put it in your habitat, as usual, and wait a few days. If the hermit crab is not alive you will start to smell a very strong fishy odor. If your

hermit crab still does not come out of its shell after a few days, but there is no odor, it's possible that it's molting. (See Pg. 9 for details on molting.) Keep in mind though, even when they're not molting, most of them prefer to come out only at night.

If your crab comes out of its shell completely this is called a "naked crab." Once again, don't assume that your crab is not alive. There are specific things you can do to help a naked crab (see Q&A page 19 about naked crabs.)

Caution: Tap water will harm your hermit crabs! Always give your crabs fresh, clean, room temperature spring water.

Do not use soap or detergent to clean your habitat. You can use warm tap water to clean your habitat and supplies. However, you should always rinse with clean spring water afterwards to remove any tap water residue.

Getting hermit crabs

Hermit Crab Island is designed to keep 2 small to medium sized hermit crabs (no bigger than 3" each). With the included order form, you can receive hermit crabs by mail. The type we provide is the Caribbean land hermit crab. Two shells and food are included with each hermit crab. If you prefer, many pet supply stores sell hermit crabs, shells and related supplies.

Ordering hermit crabs by mail: You can order hermit crabs through the mail by sending in the Hermit Crab Coupon included with your habitat. Just fill it out and mail it along with a check or money order in the envelope provided. We do not accept photocopies of order forms. We only honor coupon prices through the mail but not over the telephone.

Hermit crabs are shipped only within the continental limits of USA (the 48 contiguous states). Please allow 3 to 6 weeks for delivery. Please note that shipment may be delayed depending on weather conditions. To better ensure healthy live delivery, crabs are shipped only to areas in which temperatures are between 50°F and 85°F (during the day and night).

Habitat Care Basics

Hermit crabs require certain environmental conditions in order for them to become comfortable in their new habitat.

1. Substrate

Your habitat contains sand as the main substrate, which most closely resembles their natural habitat. They will spend a large portion of their day walking, sitting, eating and burrowing in their substrate so you will want to make sure it is kept clean.

2. Humidity

Remember that your hermit crabs, are used to a constant level of humidity, and that this is necessary for their health and survival. Without proper humidity, it is possible for your hermit crabs to die. The water dish provides necessary humidity for your crabs. Make sure to keep 1/8" to 1/4" of water in the water tray at all times. Make sure to only use **room temperature bottled spring water**.

To improve humidity, you can add a small natural sponge about 1" diameter to the water dish. Rinse well with spring water. You may find it helpful to pick up a humidity gauge at your local pet store to help you keep a better eye on it. The humidity should be kept between sixty and eighty percent.

3. Hiding places

Your hermit crabs are social creatures, but they require hiding places in order to maintain low levels of stress (or they will constantly retreat into their shells). Burrowing in sand or in rock hideaways are their preferred way of hiding, but they will hide in pretty much anything they can in order to feel comfortable.

4. Temperature

Remember that your hermit crabs are tropical creatures and it is necessary to maintain a consistent temperature of at least 75° and no more than 85° F. Take care to keep your Hermit Crab Island away from cold areas or direct sunlight. You may place your Hermit Crab Island in the warmest part of the house that receives indirect sunlight.

5. Climbing

Hermit crabs love to climb. Yours will climb on the rock hideaway and plants in the habitat. Be sure to keep the lid on your habitat secured with the locking tabs, or your hermit crabs just might climb out! Do not place any large objects inside your Hermit Crab Island that would allow your crabs to climb out. Always keep the lid on the habitat. If your crabs are attempting to climb out, use adhesive tape to secure the lid or put a small weight on top of it.

6. Shells

Your hermit crabs need to have a variety of shells available, should they feel the need to move into different shelter. It is difficult to know which shell your hermit crabs will choose. They may move into a new shell and then back into their original shell depending on their mood. If a hermit crab needs a new shell and does not have one available it might steal one from another crab by force. Placing 2 to 3 extra shells in your habitat should be adequate for one or two similar-sized hermit crabs. Just make sure the new shells are a bit bigger than the ones they came in. Your hermit crabs will need a shell with an opening about the size of their big claw. They use this to shut themselves up in their shells for protection, as well as an almost air tight seal for storage.

Shell decorating kit: Hermit Crab Island comes with a shell decorating kit. If you are ordering your hermit crabs directly from us, you will also receive shells. If you get your hermit crabs from a store, be sure to purchase a few extra shells. Using a little bit of non-toxic white glue, you can customize your shells with the decorations provided. Make sure the glue is completely dry before putting the shells into the habitat. With supervision, you can also use non-toxic permanent markers to create other cool designs and themes.

Feeding

Feed your hermit crabs 1 or 2 hermit crab food pellets per day. Your hermit crabs' diet is vital to keeping them healthy and happy. While the hermit crab food provided is a complete source of the nutrients your hermit crab needs, it is important to offer a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts and other foods on a rotating basis. Hermit crabs have individual tastes which will develop, and which you will learn over time.

A hermit crab's body, just like yours, needs a variety of minerals and vitamins that it can get by eating a lot of different foods. Hermit crabs are omnivorous, which means they eat many kinds of food. They love fresh fruits and vegetables, and sometimes they even like peanut butter or salty chips and crackers. Just like you and your friends, hermit crabs all have different tastes in food, so each hermit crab will have their favorites. Part of the fun is figuring out what kind of foods your new pets like best.

It is perfectly normal not to see a lot of eating activity. Your hermit crabs prefer to eat at night, and tend to eat very little when they do. It is important to keep track of the fresh food you give your hermit crabs because if left in their habitat too long, it will spoil and can make them sick. So make sure you change your crab's food and water daily.

Some good foods are:

Apple	Mango	Raisins
Applesauce	Melon	Spinach
Banana	Nuts (unsalted)	Papaya
Broccoli	Watercress	Strawberry
Carrot	Crackers/tortilla chips (salty)	Grapes
Leafy green lettuce (no iceberg/head lettuce)	Commercial crab food	Coconut

Salt: Your hermit crabs require a small amount of salt in their diet. This can be provided by feeding them plain crackers or tortilla chips once a week. Alternatively, you can add ocean salt to their water once a week (available at pet and aquarium stores; follow directions on the back of the box). **Never add table salt to your hermit crabs' diet.**

Calcium: Make sure your hermit crabs have an adequate supply of calcium. Occasionally offer them pieces of eggshell or add calcified sand to their substrate. This is especially important during their molting period. While they will usually eat their shedded exoskeleton, their needs for calcium are increased during this period, so it is important to provide an alternate source.

Watering

Your hermit crabs need a constant supply of fresh water, and their water should be changed every 1 - 2 days. Chemicals and additives in tap water can harm your hermit crab, so make sure to only use bottled spring water in your habitat. Keep 1/8" to 1/4" of water in the water tray at all times. DO NOT overfill, or your hermit crabs can drown!

Remember that they are used to living in tropical places where it rains a lot and they are never far from the ocean. It's important to maintain the water level in the habitat so it resembles the environment they are used to.

IMPORTANT: Adult supervision is required when handling hermit crabs. Use caution when handling them. They can pinch if held incorrectly. Please read and follow handling instructions on page 13.

Bathing

Remember that in the wild, a hermit crabs environment is very wet. They are often subjected to rainfall, and they have constant access to the ocean. Therefore, in your home, you need to bathe your hermit crabs every two weeks, at the most.

Bathing has three purposes:

1. It keeps your hermit crabs' gills wet. Hermit crabs have stiffened gills which they use to breathe. If their gills dry out they can suffocate.
2. It keeps debris out of your hermit crabs' shells. Your hermit crabs can get sand in their shells. If it builds up it can irritate their exoskeletons.
3. It maintains your hermit crabs' water supply. Hermit crabs keep a small supply of water in their shells. By bathing them every 2 weeks you will help them refill their water reserves.

Bathe your hermit crabs in bottled spring water only. Simply fill a shallow bowl, that will not be used for any other use, with room temperature spring water (enough for your hermit crabs to just be submerged) and place your hermit crabs upside down in the water. As they come out of their shells, water will fill the shells, flushing out any debris inside. Do not let them stay submerged for more than one minute, as they can drown.

Allow your hermit crabs to dry off before placing them back in their habitat. This is a good time to exercise your hermit crab. (Yes, they do need exercise!)

Exercising

Exercising your hermit crabs is a great way to “bond” with them and get them used to their surroundings. An easy way to do this is to take your hermit crabs out of their habitat and let them walk around on a clean table or floor. Keep an eye on them though: they can get away from you very easily and will accidentally fall off of the table if you don't stop them. You can also create a play area in a box or other large container. Hermit crabs love to climb, hide and explore new areas.

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When letting your hermit crabs exercise, be sure not to let them climb on any surface with loose threads or fibers that can snag onto their exoskeleton. They may harm themselves if they become attached to a surface and try to break free. Also, do not place your hermit crabs in any area containing chemical residues (such as disinfectants, cleaning agents, chemicals released in carpet, detergents, etc.). They may absorb or ingest these chemicals and become sick.

Molting

Hermit crabs are from a group of animals called crustaceans (pronounced “crust-AYE-shens”). Crustaceans, as well as a lot of insects and some reptiles, have an exoskeleton. That's like if you had your bones on the outside of your body. The exoskeleton acts as a very tough skin to protect the softer body underneath.

The exoskeleton is made up of a material called chitin, and contains 90% of the crab's calcium. Just like calcium helps give you strong bones, it's important to hermit crabs too. Calcium gives their exoskeleton the strength it needs to protect their bodies. Since it's so tough, it can't grow with them. So anywhere from once a month, to once a year, depending on their size, hermit crabs go through a process called molting.

Molting goes something like this: First your crabs will take in a lot of water, drinking it, as well as absorbing it, from their humid environment. They may eat a lot at this time as well, because they then bury themselves for 2-4 weeks with out any additional food or water than what they've already taken in. All that water will make their bodies swell up and their exoskeletons will crack, revealing the fresh skin underneath. The water is then used in the circulatory system to make the crabs bigger. And they can actually grow back any claws or legs that might be missing or broken.

Your hermit crabs will be rebuilding their exoskeleton during molting, so make sure they have an adequate supply of calcium. While they will usually eat their old exoskeleton in order to regain lost calcium, their needs for calcium are increased during this period. So it's important to provide an alternate source. Give them pieces of eggshell or add calcified sand to their substrate. (For other calcium alternatives see page 9). Leave the old exoskeleton for your crab to munch on after the molting. The calcium in the discarded shell will then be recycled into their systems.

When your crabs molt you can see just how important the substrate (in your case, sand) can be. You want your substrate to be one to two inches taller than your tallest crab. This way, when they are molting they can bury and protect themselves. Crabs come completely outside of their shells to molt, but they remain protected because they are under the sand. Sometimes if there isn't enough sand your crabs may do what is called a "surface molt." When this happens your crabs shed their exoskeleton above the sand, instead of underneath. This can be a very vulnerable time for your crabs. If you have two crabs, and this happens, you may want to separate the two by making another habitat for the one that's not molting.

Molting can be scary because when your hermit crabs get their new skin, it's still soft and easy for them to get hurt or infected. So when they molt they tend to hide away to protect themselves. It is important to make sure they are monitored closely and cared for delicately while they are molting. Your hermit crabs may become very inactive and dig into the sand (perhaps for 2 to 6 weeks at a time). Make sure you don't dig them up while they are molting, or they may not live. Don't worry though. Just give them a little time for rest and recuperation and they'll be up and ready again in no time.

Shell Swapping

In the world of crabs, hermit crabs are pretty special. Most crabs live in water, in either the ocean or in fresh water. Hermit crabs mostly hang out on the beach but also like to dig themselves under the sand and climb on things. They take their homes right on their backs, and what better way to travel around than with your house right on your back? When they outgrow their house they simply move out and find a bigger one to move into.

This is why it's a good idea to provide a variety of shells for your crabs. Two or three shells, each a bit larger than their existing shells, should be enough. You want the opening of the shell to be about as big as their big claw. A shortage in shells can sometimes lead to fights between hermit crabs. When no new shells are available, one crab might try to pull another right out of its shell!

Hermit crabs aren't just interested in impressing their neighbors with bigger homes. They need to be able to keep all of their stuff in their house, just like we all do. They are able to seek out and find fresh water and then store some in their shells for drinking. (They can tell the amount of salt in water, and although they need salt in their diets, they don't always need it in their drinking water.) Hermit crabs can actually catch and collect fresh water from rain and dew on their claws and move the water back along their bodies and into their shells. If the shells fit nice and snug, then they won't spill or lose any water to evaporation.

Hermit Crab Behavior

Your hermit crabs are social creatures. They are much happier and healthier when they have a friend. They must, however, keep their stress level down in order to function properly in social environments (this includes when they are interacting with their owners). When your hermit crabs are scared, they retreat into their shells to defend themselves from any perceived threats. Shadows, loud noises, sudden movements or strong vibrations can frighten your hermit crabs.

Your hermit crabs are nocturnal by nature. That means they are mostly active at night. They will interact with you and with each other during the day, but for the most part they can be inactive. They prefer to do their eating, climbing, exploring and digging at night because they have to keep their gills moist and evaporation occurs less at night.

Hermit crabs may climb on each other, examine each other with their feelers, and flick their legs at each other. This is normal behavior — the crabs are getting to know each other. However, crabs can sometimes fight with each other. One crab might grab another by its shell, pull on its front legs, and try to remove it from its shell. Hermit crabs will do this when they feel threatened or when they need another shell and no one is available. For this reason, always provide 2 to 3 extra shells for your hermit crabs. If both of your hermit crabs are approximately the same size, you will only need 2 to 3 extra shells for each of them. The extra shells should be a little larger than their existing shells. The opening of the shell should be about the size of their big claw.

IMPORTANT: Adult supervision is required when handling hermit crabs. Use caution when handling them. They can pinch if held incorrectly. Please read and follow handling instructions on page 13.

Handling

Caution: A hermit crab can be aggressive and will defend itself by pinching with its large claw if it feels threatened. Also, a hermit crab may pinch if you are holding it by its shell and it needs something to grab onto in order to steady or balance itself.

Even a small hermit crab can pinch hard and a large hermit crab is able to break a pencil in half with its large claw. If a hermit crab pinches you, do not panic or try to shake it off — that could harm both you and your hermit crab. Instead, place the hermit crab on a table top or run lukewarm water over it. It will soon release you from its grasp.

Tip: Before your hermit crabs get to know you well enough to feel comfortable, handle them very gently and do not be nervous. Hermit crabs can sense fear. While you are still getting acquainted with your new hermit crabs, handle them only over soft surfaces and close to the ground. This safety precaution will protect your hermit crabs in case they fall.

Do not hold your hermit crabs by their shell for long periods of time. Their inner legs are holding their bodies in their shell and they will have to strain to maintain this while they are being held in this way. Instead, after picking up your hermit crab, allow it to crawl in a supervised and appropriate area (see Exercising section on page 9). If you are worried about your hermit crabs pinching you, you can wear gloves while handling them. As your hermit crabs get to know you, you will feel more comfortable being around them without the gloves.

Additionally, you can hand-feed your hermit crabs by holding a piece of food for them (crackers work best). They will break off a small piece and eat it. They may not eat at first, either because they are not hungry or because they are frightened. Keep trying, however, and eventually they will eat right out of your hand.

Hermit Crab Care Checklist

Daily: Clean out old food

- **Do not use any soaps or detergents.** Use warm water only. Rinse with spring water before placing dish back into the habitat.
- Add fresh food.
- Add fresh water.
- Remove any visible hermit crab waste.
- Exercise your hermit crabs.

Weekly: Remove and clean water dish

- Remove and clean water tray using warm water. **Do not use any soaps or detergents.** Rinse with spring water before placing dish back into the habitat.
- Remove and rinse sponge, if you are using one. Rinse with warm water and allow to air dry before placing back in water dish..
- Sift sand to remove any solid waste.
- Bathe your hermit crabs use bottled spring water only.

Every 1 to 2 Months: Clean out the sand

- Change the sand if necessary
- Bathe your hermit crabs about every two weeks. Use bottled spring water only.

Glossary

Crustacean: An arthropod from the class Crustacea, with several pairs of jointed legs, a hard protective outer shell, two pairs of antennae, and eyes at the end of their stalks.

Evaporation: A process by which something is changed from liquid to vapor without its temperature reaching boiling point.

Genus: In biology, a category in the taxonomic classification of related organisms, comprising one or more species.

Molting: To shed the exoskeleton periodically to allow replacement by new growth.

Nocturnal: Term used to describe animals that are mostly awake and active at night rather than during the day.

Omnivorous: Eating any kind or many different kinds of foods consisting of both meat and vegetation.

Species: In biology, the most basic subdivision of a genus. Characterized as organisms that resemble one another and that may interbreed.

Substrate: The base on which an organism lives (the soil is the substrate of most seeded plants).

Questions and Answers

Q: Do you ship hermit crabs throughout the year?

A: Yes. We ship Hermit Crabs weather permitting. (see next question for more details.) Hermit crabs, shells and supplies are also available at many pet shops.

Q: How long will it take to receive my hermit crabs and shells I ordered?

A: Normally it takes about 3 to 6 weeks to receive your hermit crabs. However, there may be a delay in shipping if the temperature in your surrounding area is too hot (over 85° F) or too cold (under 50° F). It is best to send the Hermit Crab Order Form any time except during the very hot or cold seasons. For special shipping arrangements call 888.742.2484.

Q: How many hermit crabs can live in my Hermit Crab Island?

A: Hermit Crab Island is designed to safely and comfortably support no more than two small to medium sized hermit crabs (about 3" in size).

Q: Does a hermit crab live alone? Isn't that why it's call a "hermit"?

A: It can live alone, but it prefers company. It is not recommended to keep only one hermit crab in your Hermit Crab Island. Hermit Crabs are social creatures. In the wild they have been known to roam in packs of 100 or more! Your hermit crabs will be happier with a companion.

Q: What should I feed my hermit crabs?

A: Feed your hermit crabs $\frac{1}{4}$ of a pellet, per hermit crab, per day. You can augment their diet by adding fresh fruit and vegetables. (See page 8 for feeding instructions.)

Q: Why isn't my hermit crab eating?

A: Hermit crabs tend to eat very little and usually at night. Your hermit crab is probably eating when you aren't watching.

Q: How warm do my hermit crabs like their habitat to be?

A: Your hermit crabs' home should stay relatively warm, preferably between 75° and 80°F at all times. If your home gets colder than that during the night, make sure that your hermit crabs are placed somewhere they can stay warm. But don't place the habitat in direct sunlight, or it will get too hot.

Q: How important is the humidity of my Hermit Crab Island?

A: Your hermit crabs' health and comfort depend heavily on the humidity of their environment. Without relatively high humidity, your hermit crabs will have trouble breathing. They breathe through stiffened gills which must stay moist to function properly. Therefore, it is vital that your hermit crabs have the proper humidity. (See page 7.)

Q: How many extra shells should I keep in my hermit crabs' habitat?

A: If your hermit crabs are different sizes, you will need a minimum of 2 shells for each. If your hermit crabs are about the same size you will only need a minimum of 2 shells for both of them. As they grow, your hermit crabs will need to move into bigger shells. From time to time, they might also move into other shells simply because they feel like doing so. The extra shells should be slightly larger than existing shells.

Q: My hermit crab's shell is cracked. Will it be okay?

A: Your hermit crab will be fine if its shell is cracked. However, it may want to switch shells soon, so make sure you have extra shells for it to move into.

Q: My hermit crab is missing a limb. Will it be okay?

A: Yes. When your hermit crab molts it will re-grow most broken or missing limbs. See page 11 for information about molting.

Q: Why does my hermit crab spend all day sleeping or hiding?

A: Hermit crabs are nocturnal, meaning they mostly sleep during the day and are active at night. You can, however, make them more active by taking them out of their habitat and exercising them during the day. Eventually, they will get used to spending more of the day awake and more of the night asleep.

Your hermit crabs will need to get used to their new surroundings and will tend to hide until they are more comfortable with you and with their new home. Bathing or misting your hermit crabs, as well as regular exercise, may coax them out of their shells.

Q: How often should I exercise my hermit crabs?

A: You can exercise your hermit crabs as often as you like. The more you exercise your hermit crabs, the more they will get to know you. They will feel more comfortable in their surroundings, and this will strengthen the bond between you and your hermit crabs. (See page 10.) Be careful though, not to disturb them while they are molting. (See page 11.)

Q: How can I exercise my hermit crabs?

A: Here are some exercise ideas:

- Let your hermit crabs walk around on a large table. Keep an eye on them though, as they can fall. This is a good way to let them dry off after bath time.
- Create a play box for them with a variety of climbing and hiding places. Household items such as a shoebox, an empty paper towel roll, or toy building blocks can make a fun and exciting "jungle gym" for your hermit crabs. Change it around every few weeks to give them variety.
- Get some plastic chicken wire and build a climbing hill. Make sure it doesn't have any sharp edges that can harm you or your hermit crabs.
- Be creative! Your hermit crabs love to explore new areas, so feel free to create a variety of fun spaces for them to exercise in.

Q: Is there anything I should not expose my hermit crabs to?

A: Yes! DO NOT expose your hermit crabs to any sand, branches or vegetation not designed specifically for hermit crabs. They can contain bacteria or mites which can make your hermit crabs sick.

Q: How often should I bathe my hermit crabs?

A: Bathe your hermit crabs about once every 2 weeks. See page 10 for bathing instructions.

Q: Why does my hermit crab keep burying itself in the sand?

A: Your hermit crab may be getting ready to molt, or it may just like to sleep that way. (See page 11 for information about molting.) Also, if you just received your hermit crab, burying itself is a way it makes itself feel safe in it's new surroundings.

Q: Do my hermit crabs pinch?

A: Yes. Adult supervision is required when handling your hermit crabs. Your hermit crabs will pinch if they feel threatened, if they are hungry and have not had access to food (as they will be trying to grab anything as food), or if they are trying to stabilize themselves (if they are being handled too roughly).

Do not panic if your hermit crab pinches you. Simply place your hermit crab in lukewarm water or place it on a table until it releases. (See page 13 for handling instructions.)

Q: How long will my hermit crabs live?

A: Depending on how well they are taken care of, captive hermit crabs live between 6 to 12 months on average. Treat your pets with love and respect and they will live healthy, happy lives.

Q: What if my hermit crab has little red, white or black dots on it's exoskeleton and/or shell?

A: Your Hermit Crab probably has mites. Don't panic, this happens occasionally if it already had mites when it was collected from the wild. Mites are tiny creatures that attach themselves to other animals. They're pretty easy to get rid of. If you notice that your crab has mites right when you receive it, you are going to want to bathe your crab in a fresh bowl of spring water for about a minute. (See bathing on page 10 for more details.) After that, take him out for a little while and then bathe him again with more fresh water. Do this repeatedly until you don't see any more mites. If you notice your crab has mites after you already put him into his habitat, you will need to dump and replace everything in the habitat and bathe your crab in the same way described above.

Q: What do I do if my hermit crab's completely out of it's shell?

A: If your crab leaves it's shell completely this is called a "naked crab." If it's in the middle of molting (see page 11 about molting) it's best to leave the crab alone, and if possible put your other crab (if you have more than one) in another habitat. If your crab is not molting, but has left his shell, there are some things you can do to help it. Sometimes crabs become naked if they are fighting over another shell with another crab, or if their environment is too hot. If this is the case you should scoop the naked crab into a cup and rinse off any sand that may be stuck to it, then rinse off it's shell. Put the naked crab and it's shell in a glass cup together and put the cup into it's habitat. This way the crab cannot run around frantically (as they often do when they're naked) and it's right next to it's shell and should eventually go back in it.

Further Reading

Don't stop now! Your local library has very interesting books about hermit crabs, crustaceans, sea life and biology in general. The Internet, too, is an excellent source for information on these subjects.

Additional Crabs and Supplies

Visit us at www.unclemilton.com for a list of hermit crab products and supplies. You can reorder by phone at 1-888-742-2484. Prices subject to change without notice.