

## Alligators and Crocodiles

Alligators and crocodiles are large reptiles. They have some things in common and some differences between them. Like all reptiles, both alligators and crocodiles are cold-blooded, meaning that their body temperature changes with the weather. They stay warming by basking in the sun.

Alligators are scaly and have dark hides. They have long, muscular tails and wide snouts. When they are babies, they have bright stripes and yellow splotches that disappear as the alligator gets older. In contrast, crocodiles have pointed triangular snouts with one tooth that sticks out on either side of their mouths. They are a lighter color than alligators – usually greenish or grayish brown.

American alligators live in the southeastern United States (there are also alligators in China), while crocodiles are found in the southern tip of Florida as well as in Central and South America. Both are freshwater animals that live in rivers, swamps and lakes. Alligators are meat-eaters and will feed on fish, birds, raccoons, turtles, dead animals, and even other alligators. Occasionally, an alligator will eat a human, though this is rare. Crocodiles, on the other hand, eat mostly fish and other sea creatures.

Alligators are slightly smaller than crocodiles. Adult male alligators average between 8 and 12 feet in length while adult male American crocodiles are between 12 and 14 feet long. Females of both species are usually not as long as males. Alligators can weigh up to 1000 pounds, while crocodiles can reach weights of up to 2000 pounds. Alligators live between 30 and 60 years, while crocodiles have somewhat longer life spans and can live 50 to 75 years.

Alligators and crocodiles are both members of the group of reptiles known as crocodylians. Other types of crocodylians include reptiles called caimans, which closely resemble alligators and gharials, extremely long reptiles that live in India. All of these reptiles are sometimes called crocs for short. Crocs keep growing all of their lives, and they store fat in their tails to use for energy when they cannot find prey. Some adult crocs can go two years without eating because of the fat they have stored in their tails. Crocs can also hold their breath under water for up to an hour, and their senses are more powerful than those of most other reptiles.

## Alligators and Crocodiles Questions

On the line next to each number, write “A” if the statement refers to alligators, “C” if the statement refers to crocodiles and “B” if the statement refers to both alligators and crocodiles.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. They are reptiles.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. They have dark-colored hides.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. They have teeth that stick out of either side of their mouths.

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. They usually eat only fish and other sea creatures.

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. They have very powerful senses.

6. Which statement is not correct?

- a. Alligators are longer than crocodiles.
- b. Alligators weigh less than crocodiles.
- c. Alligators have broad snouts.
- d. Both crocodiles and alligators are freshwater animals.

7. Which statement is not correct?

- a. Crocodiles are longer than alligators.
- b. Both crocodiles and alligators are warm-blooded.
- c. Crocodiles have a longer life span than alligators.
- d. An alligator might eat another alligator.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Alligators and Crocodiles Questions (Cont'd)

8. Alligators and crocodiles are both
  - a. reptiles.
  - b. crocodilians.
  - c. cold-blooded.
  - d. All of these
  
9. How long can a croc hold its breath under water?
  - a. 10-15 minutes
  - b. up to an hour.
  - c. up to two hours.
  - d. Reptiles cannot hold their breath under water.
  
10. Because crocs store fat in their tails, they can
  - a. swim very fast.
  - b. hold their breath under water.
  - c. climb onto rocks easily.
  - d. go for up to two years without eating.

Name \_\_\_\_\_



Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Alligators and Crocodiles Answers

1. b
2. a
3. c
4. c
5. b
6. a
7. b
8. d
9. c
10. d