

ALLIGATOR AND CROCODILE

Objective:

1. Learn the difference between alligators and crocodiles.
2. Reinforce map-reading skills

Need:

World map on which to color, per student (see www.theodora.com/maps for printable maps for coloring)
World atlas

The alligator and the crocodile share many characteristics and are easily confused. Both have long, powerful bodies carried close to the ground on their short legs. Their tails have lots of strong muscles to help them swim; they also use them as weapons to defend themselves. Their thick scaly hides also help protect them from the attacks of other animals. Their long jaws are lined with sharp teeth to grab prey. Their eyes, ears and nostrils are located on the tops of their heads so that they may hide under water but still be able to see, breathe and hear above the surface of the water.

Alligators and crocodiles both lay eggs; mother crocodiles and alligators usually carry their newly hatched young to the water by carrying them in their mouths. Both alligators and crocodiles eat small animals such as reptiles, amphibians, fish, birds and mammals. Sometimes they catch larger animals but they cannot swallow them whole.

How can you tell an alligator from a crocodile? An alligator has a rounded snout at the end of its face; the crocodile's face is pointed. When an alligator is grown up, you cannot see any of its teeth when its mouth is closed; you can see the crocodile's fourth tooth on either side of its jaw when its mouth is closed. In other words, you can "C" the crocodiles teeth!

GEOGRAPHY - WHERE DO ALLIGATORS AND CROCODILES LIVE?

1. The Chinese alligator lives around the Yangtze River in China. Color in China on your map; write in the name of the country and the reptile's name.
2. The American alligator lives around the lowland bayous of Louisiana and the everglades and waterways of Florida. They also live in Central America, from Mexico to Panama, and on the large islands in the Caribbean. Color in these areas, label with the name of the geographical area, then write in the reptile's name.
3. The Nile crocodile is named after the longest river in the world. While the river is found in Northern Africa, crocodiles can be found throughout Africa's rivers. On your

map, color in all of Africa except the large desert areas of the Kalahari and the Sahara. Label the continents and write in the reptile's name.

4. There is a great saltwater crocodile that lives around the coasts of India and northern Australia. Color these areas in on your map, label the countries, and write in the reptile's name.

5. Have you ever heard of a Siamese cat? There is also a Siamese crocodile. Siam is the old name of a country in southeast Asia, between Burma and Laos. Find the country on your map, color and label it with the new name of the country, and write in the crocodilian's name.

6. Look at your map, paying close attention to the areas you colored in. Two main types of climates are shown in the colored areas of your map: temperate, with cooler weather and changes of season from warmer to cooler, and tropical, always hot and humid, with lots of rain all through the year. Which climate does the crocodile prefer? In which climate can the alligators be found?

For more information on crocodilians, see crocodile researcher Dr. Adam Britton's website, www.crocodilian.com.