



CAPTAIN CURIOSITY'S GUIDE TO THE UNIVERSE

Topic: Crocodylians

EVER WONDER HOW YOU CAN TELL AN ALLIGATOR FROM A CROCODILE?

Alligators and crocodiles both have four legs, a long tail and lots of teeth. They can grow to be more than 15 feet long! The best way to tell an alligator from a crocodile is by its snout: the alligator has a rounded, U-shaped snout, while the crocodile has a longer, pointier snout. Other ways to tell them apart: adult alligators are a darker, blackish color while crocodiles are a lighter greenish brown, and alligators usually hide their lower teeth when their mouths are shut while a crocodile shows both its upper and lower teeth.

EVER WONDER WHAT A REPTILE IS? Alligators and crocodiles are both reptiles. Turtles, snakes and lizards are also reptiles. Reptiles are cold-blooded (they do not make their own body heat like we do) and have rough, scaly skin.

EVER WONDER WHAT A CROCODYLIAN IS? Crocodylian is a fancy name for the group of animals that look and act like alligators and crocodiles. There are 23 different species in this group, which can be divided into three main groups: alligators and caimans, crocodiles and gharials. Scientists commonly refer to all of these animals as “croc.”

EVER WONDER WHERE ALLIGATORS AND CROCODILES LIVE? Alligators and crocodiles live all over the world in warm places where there is both land and water, though alligators prefer fresh inland water while crocodiles prefer salty ocean water. In the U.S., crocodiles live only on the southern tip of Florida, but alligators can live as far north as North Carolina. The Florida Everglades swamp is the only place in the whole world where both alligators and crocodiles live!



EVER WONDER WHERE BABY ALLIGATORS AND CROCODILES COME FROM?

Alligators and crocodiles hatch from hard-shelled eggs in a nest just like baby birds do! Alligator and crocodile moms are great mothers – they are among the few species of animals that look after their young until they are old enough to be on their own. These mothers sometimes even swim with their babies on their backs or in their mouths!

EVER WONDER WHAT ALLIGATORS AND CROCODILES USE THEIR TAILS FOR? Alligator and crocodile tails are huge – close to half their body length! They use them for swimming, self-defense, and to store body fat for food during the winter.

You Can Do It!

Make an alligator tail out of a big piece of green foam or posterboard. Clip it on with a clothespin, or tie it on with a ribbon. Rock out to Swamp Stomp Boogie with your favorite grownup. Can you use your tail to knock down a tower of paper cups?