

The African Crocodile



St. Aidan's Home School, South Africa

Cover photo: Nile crocodile, taken at the Le Bonheur Crocodile Farm near Stellenbosch, South Africa licensed under Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike 2.0

A **crocodile** is a large reptile that lives in water. Crocodiles live in rivers, lakes and dams in parts of America Asia, Africa and Australia. Some of the crocodiles from Australia live in salt water. These saltwater crocodiles are normally bigger than the ones that live in fresh water. While crocodiles spend most of their time in water, they can come out and move around on the land.

Crocodiles cannot breathe underwater: they breathe air, just like people. They can hold their breath for a long time underwater.

Crocodiles eat other animals as food. These other animals include fish and animals that come to drink at the river, like buck and cows. Crocodiles can and do eat people.

Crocodiles often ambush the animals that they eat, lying in wait and then catching them by surprise. They grab them with their long, powerful jaws and drag them into the water. While in the water they roll over and over, so that the animal is disoriented and finds it difficult to fight back. When the animal has drowned, they begin to eat.

The difference between an alligator and a **crocodile** is, that you can not see the fourth tooth in the lower jaw of an alligator when the alligator's mouth is closed. You can see the fourth tooth in the lower jaw of a crocodile when its mouth is closed. Sometimes it is said, that alligators have as wide a snout as crocodiles have a narrow snout, but there are also some crocodiles with wide snouts.

The name "Crocodile" can also sometimes be used for any member of the order *Crocodylia*.



Sweetheart; large saltwater crocodile. Scanned. This image is of a scan of a newspaper page or article, and the copyright for it is most likely owned by either the publisher of the newspaper or the individual contributors who worked on the articles or images depicted. It is believed that the use of low-resolution images of newspaper pages

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While often confused with each other, alligators and crocodiles belong to two quite separate families, and are as different from one another as humans are from gorillas. As for appearance, one generally reliable rule is that alligators have U-shaped heads, while crocodiles' heads are V-shaped.

The crocodile gets its name from the Greeks who observed them in the Nile river. The Greeks called them *krokodilos*, a compound word from *kroke*, which means "pebbles" and *drilos*, which means "worm". To the Greeks, this "worm of the stones" was so named because of the crocodiles habit of basking in the sun on gravel-covered river banks.



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The **Nile crocodile** (*Crocodylus niloticus*) is one of the 3 species of crocodiles found in Africa, and the second largest species of crocodile. Nile crocodiles can be found throughout most of Africa south of the Sahara, and on the island of Madagascar. The Nile crocodile can, and sometimes will, easily snatch and devour a human. While it is no longer threatened with extinction as a species, the population in many countries is in danger of vanishing.

Can you list some differences between the Crocodile and the Alligator?

ALLIGATOR	CROCODILE



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Handwriting practice lines consisting of fifteen horizontal dashed lines.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 18 horizontal dashed lines on a white background.



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