

$12 \times ? = 36$

$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline 80 \\ \hline \end{array} ?$

$70 \div x = 10$

$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline 20 \\ \hline \end{array} x$

Amazing Animals

ALLIGATORS

Multiplication



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Table of Contents

Powerful Reptiles	4
Alligator Traits	8
Living the Wild Life.....	14
Hatchlings	16
Adults	20
Helping One Another	22
Doing Our Part	27
Problem Solving	28
Glossary	30
Index.....	31
Answer Key	32

Powerful Reptiles

The air is hot and sticky. You sweat as you walk along a river in Florida. Suddenly, you hear a hiss from off to your left. As you peer through the tall grass surrounding the river, you see a pair of eyes flash in the water. You watch the alligator as you back away slowly. After a few steps, you hear a loud snap and you turn to run!

For teachers' inspection ONLY

A close-up photograph of an American alligator resting on a grassy bank. The alligator's head is in the foreground, showing its textured, scaly skin and small eyes. Its body extends into the background, partially submerged in water. The background is a bright, slightly blurred blue sky.

American alligator



Chinese alligator

Alligators can be scary, but they are amazing creatures. There are two **species** of alligators in the world. American alligators are the largest **reptiles** in North America. Chinese alligators are smaller and can only be found along the Yangtze (YANG-SEE) River.

Alligators are very powerful reptiles. Their size and strength are massive. They use their strong tails to defend themselves. Their tails also help them push through water. They use their teeth and powerful jaws to clamp down on **prey**. Their teeth are specially shaped to rip food into smaller chunks. But, they often choose to just swallow the prey whole!

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Alligators aren't the only reptiles that live in water. Crocodiles lurk there, too. They look very similar at first glance. Most people can't tell them apart. But, they are different in many ways. First, alligators have U-shaped snouts. Crocodiles, on the other hand, have V-shaped snouts. Secondly, an alligator's top jaw is wider than its bottom jaw. When its mouth is closed, you can't see any of its teeth. When a crocodile's mouth is shut, the teeth from its jaw stick out the sides of its mouth. Some people think this makes them look like they are smiling. Finally, the webbing on their back feet is also a clue. Crocodiles have much more webbing than alligators.

Maybe you can't get close enough to check a crocodile's snout and feet. In that case, looking at the color of their bodies might help. Crocodiles tend to look lighter than alligators. But the color of the water they are in can change that. So, the easiest way to tell them apart might be where they live. Crocodiles can be found everywhere except Europe and Antarctica. But alligators are only found in North America and China.

LET'S EXPLORE MATH

Suppose that a scientist studying alligators knows there are about 238 alligators living in a nearby swampy area. If the alligator population doubles, how many alligators will there be?

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crocodile



alligator

Alligator Traits

Alligators may not live all over the world. But, they have been around for over 150 million years. That means they roamed the earth at the same time as dinosaurs! They have special traits that have helped them survive for such a long time.

Many of these traits can be found on their heads. Adults have between 72 and 80 teeth at one time. As old teeth wear out, new teeth grow in. During its lifetime, an alligator can go through almost 3,000 teeth. These teeth are used to rip and tear prey before swallowing. An alligator's eyes, ears, and nose are on top of its head so it can search for its next meal at the water's surface. Alligators also have special valves in their throats called **glottis** valves. These close so they don't swallow water. This comes in handy when they drag land animals underwater to drown them. All of these traits combine to make alligators great hunters.

But alligators do have one limitation. They can only live in freshwater. They do not have salt glands. This means they cannot filter salt from their bodies. So, ocean swimmers can rest easy knowing they won't spot an alligator coming toward them.



An alligator opens wide, showing off its teeth and powerful jaws.

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An alligator swims along the water's surface in Everglades National Park, Florida.

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LET'S EXPLORE MATH

An American alligator can have up to 80 teeth in its mouth at one time. Complete the bar models to help you answer the questions.

1. If there are 3 alligators on a riverbank, how many teeth do they have in all?
2. If there are 2 times as many alligators along a lake as there are on the riverbank, how many teeth do they have altogether?

80

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