

Lesson Plan

Alligator Anatomy

Book: American Alligators

Series: Animals of North America

Level: Beacon

Objective

To help students practice taking notes and sorting information into categories, and to help them explore how an animal's specialized body parts can help it survive.

Supplies

- *American Alligators*
- Paper and pencils

Before the Activity

Read through the *American Alligators* book, or assign it to the students to read on their own.

Activity

Give each student a piece of paper. Have the students make a thin column on the left side of their paper and a wide column on the right side of their paper. Ask the students to write the words "Body Part" at the top of the thin column. Then ask them to write "What It Does" at the top of the wide column.

American alligators have many specialized body parts that help them survive in their swampy habitats. Ask the students to read through the *American Alligators* book again and take notes about these body parts. The students should write down each body part mentioned in the text in the thin "Body Part" column on their paper. In the wide "What It Does" column, they should write what this body part allows the alligator to do. There will be a total of 10 body parts.

Evaluation

Using the attached answer key, give students 1 point for each body part they find in the text, and 2 points for explaining how that body part helps the alligator survive, for a total of 30 points.

Answer Key

1. Scales: An alligator's greenish-brown or black coloring allows it to hide in murky water or grassy banks (p. 9). Baby alligators are black with yellow stripes, which helps them hide (p. 25).
2. Jaws: Strong jaw muscles and sharp teeth help alligators catch and hold prey (pp. 10–11).
3. Teeth: An alligator's sharp teeth continue to grow back, which helps it bite prey (p. 10).
4. Tail: An alligator uses its long, powerful tail to swim (p. 12), to swing like a weapon (p. 12), and to jump out of the water (p. 15).
5. Feet: An alligator's webbed feet help it swim quickly (pp. 12–13).
6. Legs: An alligator's short legs (p. 9) are not very fast on land (p. 13), but they can be used to jump out of the water (p. 16) and stalk prey (p. 17).
7. Ears: An alligator's ears are on top of its head, which helps it hear while hiding underwater (p. 20). Its good hearing also helps it hunt (p. 15).
8. Nose: An alligator's nose is on top of its head, which helps it smell while hiding underwater (p. 20). Its good sense of smell also helps it hunt (p.15).
9. Eyes: An alligator's eyes are on top of its head, which helps it see while hiding underwater (p. 20). Its good eyesight also helps it hunt (p. 15).
10. Eyelids: Alligators have two sets of eyelids, including a clear set that work like goggles. This allows the alligator to see prey underwater (pp. 20–21).

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' writing standards, grade 3 (W 3.8) and the National Science Education Standards' Content Standard C, grades K–4.