## **Point-by-Point Compare and Contrast Essay**

Attention-grabbing opener

Thesis sentence indicating pattern

First point of comparison

Second point of comparison

## Alligators and Crocodiles

A journey back into prehistoric times is only as far away as the local zoo. Here, visitors can see alligators and crocodiles, relics of the dinosaur age. The alligator family includes the caiman, and the crocodile family includes the gavial; they are found in many parts of the world. Alligators and crocodiles are strong, agile creatures that have striking similarities, yet they also have differences.

First of all, alligators and crocodiles share many of the same physical features, yet there are a few distinctive differences. They both have a long tail, thick bumpy skin, sharp teeth, short legs, and webbed feet like a duck. However, alligators tend to be darker in color. Adult alligators are grayish black while adult crocodiles are light tan to brown in color. Young alligators can be more colorful with yellow or white highlights on a black body. Another difference is that most crocodiles tend to have green eyes, while alligators have brown ones. Alligators also have U-shaped heads, while crocodiles are V-shaped. Crocodiles have a longer narrower snout or nose, with eyes farther forward.

Also, if one looks at an alligator and then at a crocodile, he or she will notice a difference in their mouths: In both alligators and crocodiles, the fourth tooth on both sides of the mouth is exceptionally long. When an alligator closes its mouth, those long teeth slip into the mouth and disappear. When a crocodile closes its mouth, the long teeth remain visible, and they stick outside the upper jaw. In general, if one can still see a lot of teeth even when the animal's mouth is closed, he or she is looking at a crocodile. Alligators have plenty of teeth, but fewer show until the mouth is open.

Like sharks, alligators and crocodiles never run out of teeth. Sharp new ones grow in as old dull ones fall out throughout the animals' lives. A crocodiles' jaws are much more narrow and are used to tear and grip on prey, so a crocodile's teeth serve only for catching, not chewing. Crocodiles swallow their food in large chunks and rely on powerful stomach acids to break the food down, so they can digest it properly. In contrast, alligators' jaws are meant to crush bones and can deliver a forceful bite.

In addition to physical features, the two animals can be compared according to the way they kill their prey or food. Both alligators and crocodiles are carnivores, which means they eat meat. Alligators and crocodiles are feared by humans because they are very dangerous. However, they differ in the way they kill. American ccrocodiles can be dangerous to humans. Attacks in areas such as Costa Rica, Mexico and Guatemala are not uncommon. These attacks rarely make international news, and therefore this species is

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not as well-known a man-eater like its Nile or saltwater relatives. In May of 2007, there were two separate instances of children being attacked and killed by the American crocodile in Mexico and in Costa Rica. In contrast, alligator attacks on humans are typically a result of feeding of alligators. Once a human feeds an alligator, it expects food whenever it sees someone. Also, alligators are protective parents, and a very young alligator may have a mother nearby who will protect her young by attacking anything that comes too close. They are best appreciated at a safe distance for the protection of both persons and alligators.

The final aspect for comparison and contrast is the creatures' habitat. Both alligators and crocodiles live near water. They are both reptiles, so they live in water and on land. However, alligators are freshwater reptiles, and they like rivers, lakes, swamps, and marshes of the coast. On the other hand, crocodiles prefer coastal or salt water habitats,

To conclude, while at first glance, alligators and crocodiles appear similar, they are, in fact, two quite different species. The color of their eyes and skin – as well as the shape of their heads – differs despite the fact that they both have a long tail, thick bumpy skin, sharp teeth, short legs, and webbed feet like a duck. Furthermore, although they are both carnivores, their powerful jaws and mouths are not the same. Another difference is that crocodiles are aggressive whereas an alligator is afraid of humans. Although the habitat of both is in water and on land, alligators choose to live near freshwater while the crocodile lives near seawater.

Third point of comparison

Conclusion (paraphrase of thesis sentence)

Summary of main points