

REPURPOSED ALLIGATOR

TIME & AUDIENCE LEVEL

- 45 minutes
- 1st-3rd grade

VOCABULARY

Reptile
Osteoderms
Snout
Tail
Carnivore
Mammal
Nictitating membrane
Apex predator
Pollution
Repurposing

MATERIALS

2 egg cartons
2 toilet paper rolls or 1 paper towel roll
Green and red paint
White paper
Large googly eyes (optional)
Scissors
Hot glue gun (adults only)
Glue
Paint brush
Black marker

SUMMARY

Alligators are the largest reptile in North America and have many characteristic that make them unique. While alligators are at the top of the food chain, they do face a major threat—humans. Pollution, such as trash, affects freshwater ecosystems and their animal inhabitants. This craft activity will help children practice reusing items that end up in the trash as one way to help animals like alligators.

OBJECTIVES

- Child will learn how to repurpose items for crafts
- Child will give an example of pollution and the importance of keeping waters clean
- Child will name features of alligator (osteoderms, snout, tail, nictitating membrane)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

American alligators are the largest **reptile** in North American. Their long back is made of bony plates called **osteoderms**. They have short powerful legs and a long rounded **snout** (nose or mouth of an animal). Alligators can have up to 80 teeth in their mouth at one time. Overtime the teeth may wear down or fall out, but they are replaced with new teeth. Alligators also have a long, powerful **tail** used for locomotion and steering in their freshwater homes. Female alligators can grow to be nine feet in length while males can reach 14 feet in length.

Alligators are **carnivores** meaning they mostly eat meat. They will eat turtles, fish, snakes, and small **mammals** (warm-blooded animals). Alligators have a **nictitating membrane**, a clear protective lens over their eye, which allows them to open their eyes under water. Nictitating membranes are essential since alligators do most of their hunting in the water.

Alligators play an important role in the environment. As **apex predators** (predator at the top of the food chain that is not preyed upon by other animals) they help balance other animal populations in an ecosystem.

Alligators can be very sensitive to pollution. **Pollution** is any substance, like chemicals or trash, that is added to the environment that is harmful or poisonous to living things. It is often caused by humans and can be very harmful to animals and their environment. People throw away pounds of trash each day.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

Are there other items around you that you can repurpose?

What would happen to an alligator if they mistake pollution for food?

GEORGIA STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

- S1L1 Comparing and contrasting basic needs of animals
- S3L2 Obtain, evaluate and communicate information about the effects of pollution
- S4L1 Communicate information about the roles of organisms and the flow of energy within an

Many items we toss in the garbage can be repurposed. **Repurposing** is the use of something for a purpose other than its original intended use. This can range from modifying the item for a new use, or by using the item as is but in a new way. By repurposing items, we are helping to eliminate excess waste that might make it's way into habitats where animals like alligators live.

SET UP

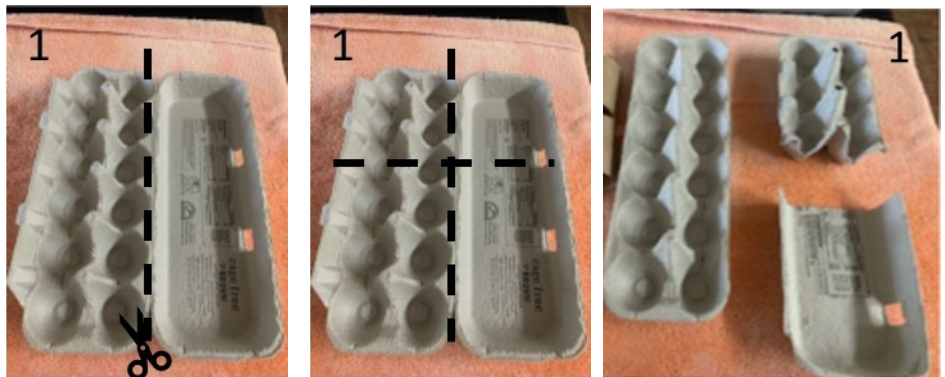
Gather and organize your materials on a flat surface. If necessary, lay down a protective cover and have a wet rag ready to clean any spills as you begin. Start by painting the egg cartons and paper rolls green. While the child is painting, explain to them that they are repurposing for this craft.

INTRODUCTION

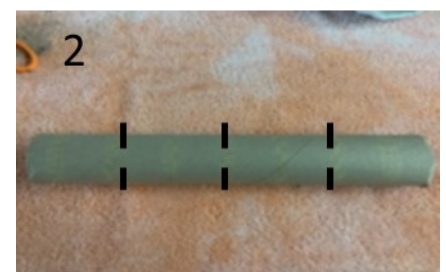
Begin by asking children if they know what an alligator looks like. Where do they live? What do they eat? Explain that alligators need a healthy ecosystem with clean water and abundant prey to survive. Talk about how our trash sometimes ends up in nature and can have a negative impact. Ask if they know the word repurpose and what it means. Begin to explain how repurposing items is a great way to ensure that they do not end up in the ecosystems that alligators need to survive.

ACTIVY PROCEDURES

1. Cut both egg cartons in half lengthwise along the hinge, so that the bottom becomes separated from the top. One of the bottom pieces will become the body. Cut the other bottom piece in half crosswise. One of these halves will be used for the bottom part of the snout. Take one of top pieces and cut it in half cross-wise. One of these halves will become the top part of the snout.



2. If you have two toilet paper rolls cut them in half and if you have a paper towel roll cut it into fourths (this is going to be the legs). Cardstock or construction paper will also work in place of cardboard rolls.



- Cut 5 zig-zags (toes) on the bottom of two of the paper rolls for the front legs and 4 zig-zags (toes) on the other two paper rolls for the back legs
- Paint the outside cartons and paper rolls green and let dry. Once the outside dries paint the inside of the bottom part of the snout red
- While paint is drying, get the white paper and cut into a zig-zag pattern for the teeth of the alligator and a long triangle shape for the tail and paint the tail green



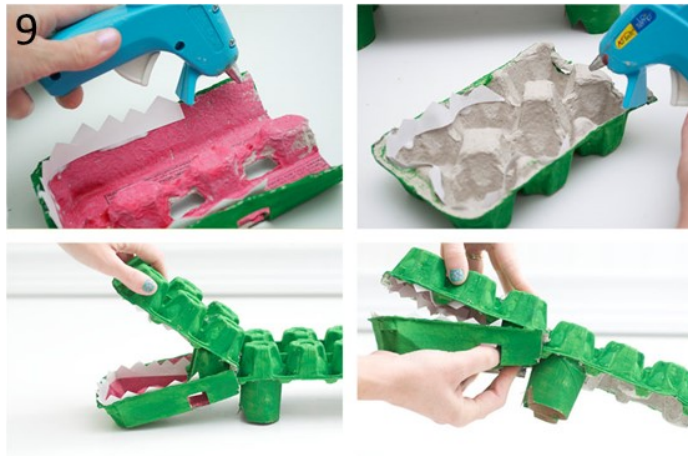
- You can now glue the teeth into the top and bottom of the half egg carton
- Now hot glue (adult only) the paper rolls (legs) to the bottom of the egg carton



- Glue the tail on the back end of the alligator



9. Hot glue (adult only) bottom part of the mouth to the bottom of the egg carton. Next, hot glue (adult only) the top part of the mouth to the top of the egg carton



10. Lastly, cut out white paper into quarter size circles, draw on the eyes with a black marker, and glue the eyes onto the snout of the alligator.



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WRAP UP/CONSERVATION MESSAGE

After the child has finished, ask them if they can remember what repurposing means. Ask them if there are other items around the house that can be repurposed. Invite them to discuss the different features of an alligator. Explain to them the importance of reusing materials and how it helps the environment.