A crocodile is any [species](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Species" \o "Species) belonging to the [family](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family_(biology)" \o "Family (biology)) Crocodylidae (sometimes classified instead as the [subfamily](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subfamily" \o "Subfamily) Crocodylinae). The term can also be used more loosely to include all extant members of the [order](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_(biology)" \o "Order (biology)) [Crocodilia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crocodilia" \o "Crocodilia): i.e. the true crocodiles, the [alligators](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alligator" \o "Alligator) and [caimans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caiman" \o "Caiman) (family [Alligatoridae](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alligatoridae" \o "Alligatoridae)) and the [gharials](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gharial" \o "Gharial) (family [Gavialidae](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gavialidae" \o "Gavialidae)), as well as the [Crocodylomorpha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crocodylomorpha" \o "Crocodylomorpha) which includes prehistoric crocodile relatives and ancestors.

Member species of the family *Crocodylidae* are large aquatic [reptiles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reptile" \o "Reptile) that live throughout the tropics in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Australia. Crocodiles tend to congregate in freshwater habitats like rivers, lakes, wetlands and sometimes in brackish water.

They feed mostly on [vertebrates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vertebrate" \o "Vertebrate) like fish, reptiles, and [mammals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mammal" \o "Mammal), sometimes on [invertebrates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invertebrate" \o "Invertebrate) like [molluscs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mollusc" \o "Mollusc) and [crustaceans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crustacean), depending on species. They first appeared during the [Eocene](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eocene) epoch.