

Mother of the Year

The swamps and rivers of the southern United States are home to a large reptile— 15
 the American alligator! When you think of an alligator you might think of a long, 29
 green body and mouth full of teeth. But it may surprise you to know that as mean 46
 as a female alligator looks, she is a great mom. A mother alligator makes a nest on 63
 the ground. She gathers plants with her mouth then uses her tail to push the plants 79
 and dirt into a pile called a mound. Here she lays her eggs. The alligator doesn't sit 96
 on her nest like a bird, but she stays nearby to guard the eggs. After more than two 114
 months, soft chirping sounds come from inside the mound. The mother hears her little 128
 ones' peeps and knows the eggs are hatching. It's time to uncover the babies! Then 143
 she gently carries the young—in her mouth—down to the water. The hatchlings are 158
 about 7 inches long. That's a little shorter than this paper. Unlike humans, they can 173
 swim and catch their own food as soon as they're born. No bottles for these babies! 189
 But they're not ready to fend for themselves just yet. The hatchlings still face a lot 205
 of danger from raccoons, birds, and other alligators who want a tasty gator snack. 219
 For their protection, the babies don't stray too far from their mother. If a hatchling 234
 is in danger, it cries out. This brings the mother right away. Any animal that messes 250
 with a baby alligator must be willing to face mama alligator, too! The young 264
 alligators stay with their mother for up to two years. Once they are about four feet 280
 other animals can't eat them and it is safe for the alligators to live on their own. 297

	day 1	day 2	day 3	day 4
words read in 1 minute				
– number of mistakes				
= total words read correctly				
adult initials				

Parent Tips

It may be helpful to think of reading fluency as a bridge between the two major components of reading – word decoding and comprehension. At one end of this bridge, fluency connects to accuracy and automaticity in decoding. At the other end, fluency connects to comprehension through prosody, or expressive interpretation.

-- Timothy V. Rasinski, Ph.D., *Assessing Reading Fluency*

1. What is the main idea of this article?

- Alligators look mean and scary.
- Alligators live in rivers and swamps .
- Alligators are gentle mothers.



2. What is a *mound*?

- a river
- a pile
- a mouse

3. Why do baby alligators stay with their moms for two years?

- Because their mothers find food for them to eat.
- Because their mothers protect them from danger.
- Because their mothers teach them to swim quickly.

4. How is this passage different than the stories about Two-Toed Tom?