

Lizard or Salamander?

Don't always trust your eyes! Scientists dig deeper into creature details.

Summary:

Explore how scientists identify lizards versus salamanders. Learn to tell a lizard from a salamander by looking at their features.

Guiding Questions:

What do you notice about this animal?

How are lizards and salamanders different?

Why might scientists want to tell the difference between a lizard and a salamander?

Experience Goals:

- Look for clues to tell the difference between a reptile (lizard) and amphibian (salamander).
- Learn what makes salamanders unique from lizards.
- Play a game to practice your identification skills.

Supplies:

- "Lizard Looks" and "Salamander Sights" Fact Sheets (pp 5-6)
- Lizard and Salamander Cards (pp 7-10)
- Scissors
- Glue or tape

Steps:

1. Explore Fact Sheets

- a. Learn about the features of lizards and salamanders.
- b. Explore how lizards and salamanders are the same and different using Guiding Questions (above).
- c. Talk about a time you have seen a lizard, and a time you have seen a salamander. Where did it live? How did it move? What did it do?

2. Create a Puzzle!

- a. Print out the salamander and lizard cards (pp 5- 8). Either print each page separately, or print pages 5-6 and 7-8 double-sided. If you print double sided, skip to step “e” below.
- b. Glue or tape the large salamander to the back of the small salamander pictures.
- c. Do the same for the lizards (these can both also be printed double-sided).
- d. Let the glue dry before you cut.
- e. Carefully cut out the four pictures on each sheet
- f. Scramble up all 8 cards, then lay them out with small pictures up.
- g. Sort out the salamanders from the lizards. Flip them over and do your puzzle. If you can create complete pictures of a salamander and a lizard from your two piles of cards, you got it!

Extensions:

- Draw your own salamander and lizard! Make sure to include all the important features from the Fact Sheets! Give your lizard scales! Does your salamander have eggs?
- Challenge family and friends to finish your puzzle. Give them hints as they go. Ask them the Guiding Questions (above). Teach them—you're the pro!
- Look online or in books for pictures of lizards and salamanders. How many kinds can you discover? Are they different from the ones on the cards?
- Lizards and salamanders are not commonly seen in the Chicago area but they do live in the Field Museum's "backyard"! Check out our Field Museum Field Guides at fieldguides.fieldmuseum.org to see what kinds live around you!
- Create a "Mystery Box! Challenge your family or friends to guess what's inside. Here's how:
 1. Find a small box to use as your Mystery Box. An empty tissue box works well!

Create a Mystery Box continued:

2. Cut a hole in the box if it doesn't already have one. Make the hole is big enough for an adult to fit their hand through.
3. Find a small square piece of cloth to cover the hole. Glue only one side of the cloth so it covers the hole, but you can still put your hand inside.
4. Decorate your Mystery Box!
5. Now the best part! Find things around the house that would feel like part of a lizard or salamander (or their eggs!). Review the fact cards to remember what important features make them unique.
6. Challenge your family or friends. Are they brave enough to reach into the box?! Remember, the biggest rule is "No peeking!" Ask them, "What do you feel? Do you think it belongs to a lizard or a salamander?"

Here are some ideas of what you might use:

- Salamander Eggs: Cherry tomatoes, grapes, or water beads in a dish of water
- Lizard Eggs: Ping pong balls, plastic easter eggs or marbles (dry, of course)
- Salamander Skin: A Ziploc bag (top cut off) with dish soap on it
- Lizard Skin: A piece of leather, a rough leaf from a plant, or beadwork

Lizard Looks



I am a lizard called an Anole.

Look carefully. Lizards...

- Have scaly skin. See the scales on my body and face?
- Have toes with claws. Nice and sharp for climbing!
- Have dry skin. You might have to touch me to feel that.
- Lay eggs with dry shells. We lay our eggs on land.
- Have five front toes. (Except for legless lizards!)
- Are reptiles. I'm related to snakes, turtles, and crocodiles.

Salamander Sights

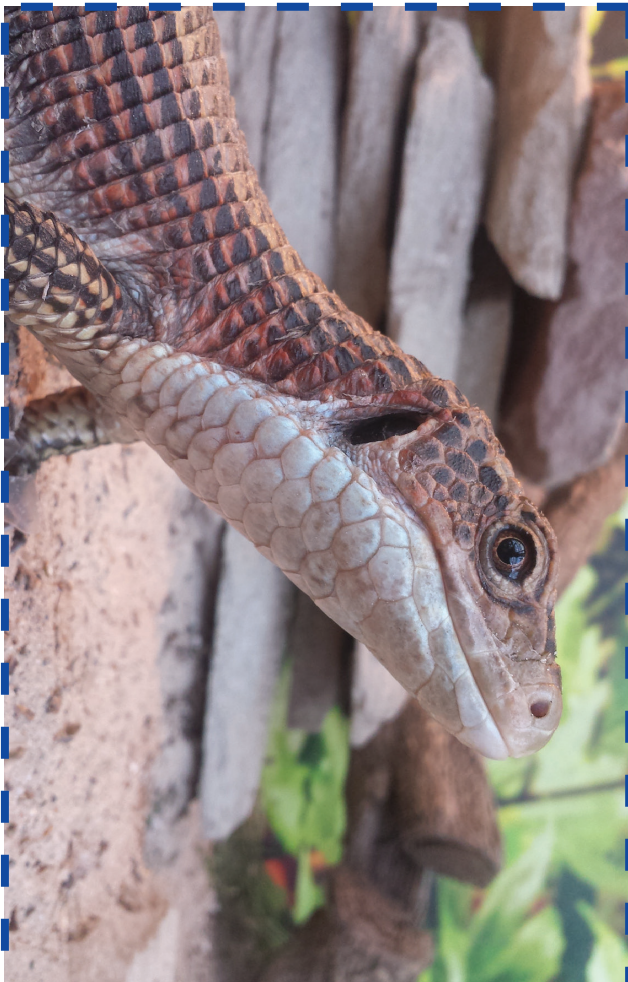


Hello! I am a Red Salamander...

What do you see? Salamanders...

- Have smooth skin. Scales? Nope, those are skin folds.
- Have stubby toes. They look kind of like your fingers!
- Have moist skin. It feels like a frog who just got out of the water!
- Lay eggs with no shells. We have to keep our eggs wet too.
- Have four front toes. (Unless we don't have legs!)
- Are amphibians. I'm related to frogs, toads, newts, and caecilians.

lizard cards





salamander cards



salamander cards back



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Salamanders

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