

Kids:  
Steal these  
tips from a  
professional  
artist



# Art Thief

Heist #7

## DRAW AN ALLIGATOR

1 2 3 4 5  
DIFFICULTY METER

by AMY RAUDENBUSH • art@phillynews.com

### What you need

Pencil, eraser, felt-tip and watercolors. Markers can substitute for watercolors.

### Smile!

No animal alive has a stronger bite than the American alligator. Today, we're going to take our pencils and pens deep inside those choppers.

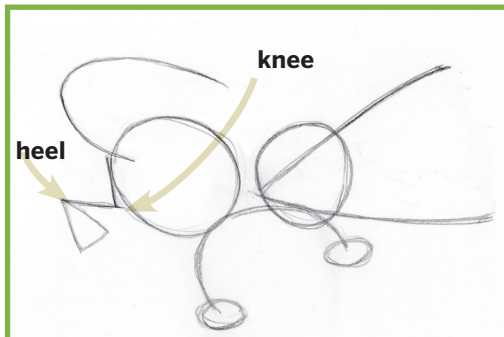
### Gators at a glance

- Alligators have been around for 200 million years, or three times as long as dinosaurs have been extinct!

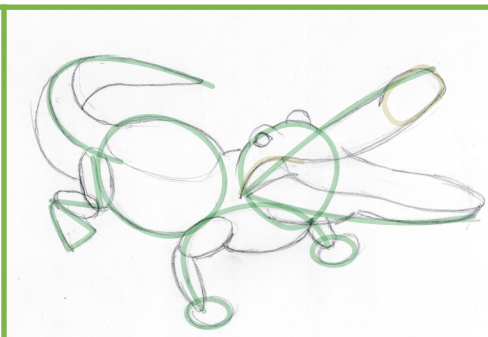
- Gators can weigh up to 1,000 pounds, run at speeds up to 20 mph and can jump up to 5 feet out of the water.

- One difference between the gators and crocodiles is that alligators can't stick out their tongues.

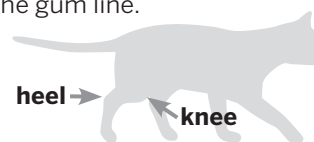
- "Mighty Mike," the largest alligator outside the state of Florida, can be seen this summer at the Adventure Aquarium in Camden.



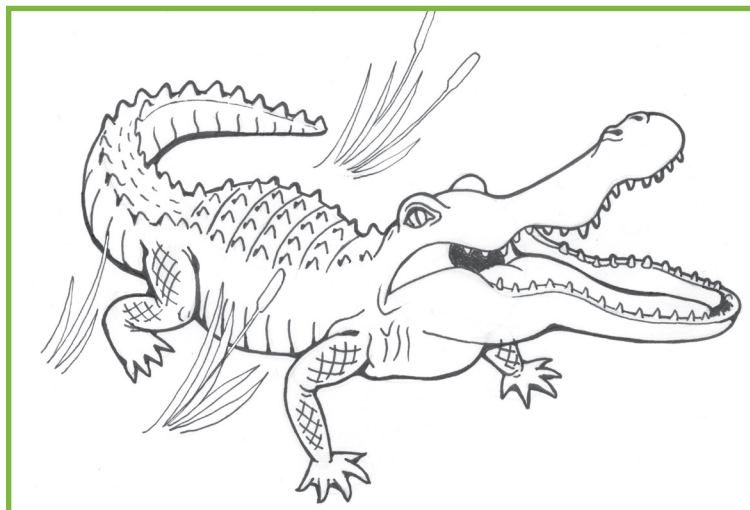
**1** Start with the oval that will become the alligator's belly. Add the circle and wishbone shape for the head. The front legs need a wide stance to support the animal's large head. Its front feet are similar to hands and get round buds for guidelines. Another curved line will become the tail. Notice the back leg and foot. Like humans, the heel is on the ground. Many other animals have heels midway up the leg and knees up close to the body.



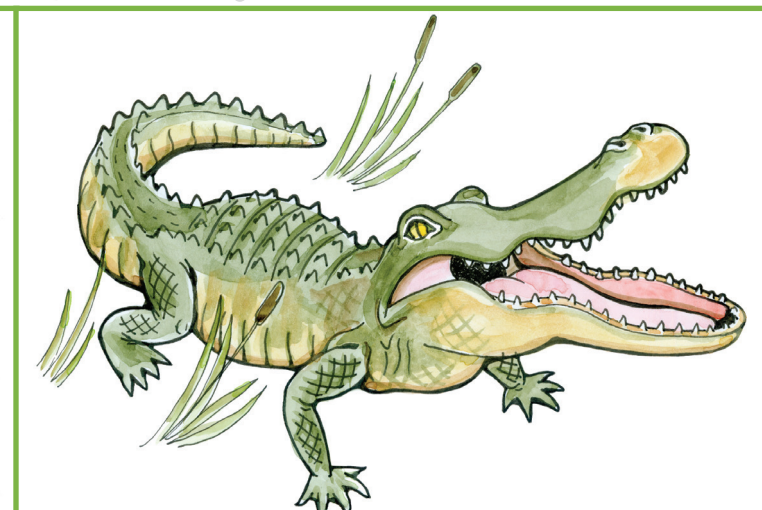
**2** Flesh out the legs and tail. Notice how the top of the tail is flat, with two long ridges. Place the eyes on top of the head and then very carefully observe the complex construction of the mouth. Strive to capture the overall shape of the mouth before you add all of the wavy curves along the gum line. Gently erase guidelines.



**3** Now is the time to really refine the mouth. The tongue sits *inside* the lower jaw and the throat is visible behind the tongue. The nostrils face up to allow breathing while submerged. Horizontal bands wrap across the back and belly of the gator. Draw spikes between the bands and down the tail along the ridges. The animal's front feet have five toes, while the back feet have only four.



**4** Begin inking with your fine-point felt-tip. You may want to beef up the lines on the gator's underside because these areas would fall in shadow. Add some reeds to the background and foreground. After the ink has dried thoroughly, gently erase the pencil lines.



**5** Add color to your alligator with either watercolors, markers or colored pencils. This drawing was finished in watercolors in shades of dull green (green and brown), ochre (yellow and brown) and pink. The fishnet patterns simulate scales. Soon we will explore the use of watercolors more thoroughly.

**Next week:** We draw an easy sailboat.