

Komodo Dragon Facts

(August 2019)

What do you know about Komodo dragons? There are many stories about Komodo dragons, the largest living species of lizard, which grow up to 10 feet in some cases, although this is rare. They can also weigh up to 150 pounds. However, some Komodo dragon stories seem quite fantastical—more like tall tales, to be exact. As a result, it can be difficult to separate myth from reality. Here is a list of surprising facts that will finally set the record straight.

Komodo dragons are lizards that dwell on the Indonesian islands of Komodo, Rinca, Flores, and Gili Montang, but, believe it or not, they are originally from Australia. They moved out of the Land Down Under and somehow made their way to the islands. They likely landed on the island of Flores around 900,000 years ago. That doesn't mean there weren't any left in Australia. Komodos vanished from that continent 50,000 years ago. This disappearance corresponds with humans arriving to the continent. Today, the Komodo is vulnerable to extinction.

As if Komodo dragons aren't scary looking enough, they're also venomous. Until 2009, the bite of a Komodo was thought to be incredibly dangerous because of the huge quantities of bacteria living in its mouth. Because it is a scavenger, its bite was considered to be filled with countless microorganisms of

rotting flesh that could infect and kill its victims. This is not the case, though. Instead, Komodo dragons are actually venomous. They're one of the few venomous lizards on the planet. The Komodo dragon's venom seeps into the wounds it creates by biting its victims.

The Komodo dragon was the inspiration for the film "King Kong." A man named W. Douglas Burden visited some islands belonging to Indonesia with the goal of catching a dozen of the lizards for the American Museum of Natural History. Burden even wrote a memoir about his experience. Called *Dragon Lizards of Komodo*, it served as the basis for "King Kong."

Despite Komodo dragons being quite large, they can eat 80% of their weight in one sitting. This ample amount of food, combined with a relatively slow digestion, lead Komodo dragons to lounge in the sun. The heat helps keep their digestion working. After a while, they regurgitate a gastric pellet, which is similar to an owl pellet. It typically contains horns, hair, teeth, and other bits and pieces that can't be easily digested.

Komodo dragons are scary, sure. And perhaps a bit mean. However, they're also quite sweet and playful—at least once in a while. Captive Komodos have been seen playing with shovels, shoes, and frisbees. What's really important is that they did so without any aggression or food motivation. They played much the same as a pet cat or dog would.

Komodo dragons are big, venomous, and they eat an awful lot, but they also have a softer side—one that will play tug of war with you or bite your shoelaces. However, we don't recommend getting close enough to find out if this particular fact is true or not.

Teacher Resources – Vocabulary

Potential Words for Further Study: These words not only help with comprehension of the passage, they also appear more frequently in a wide spectrum of reading, especially in academic text. Therefore, further study of the meaning of these words may be beneficial. The words on this list can be incorporated into subsequent lessons.

Wilson Reading System Vocabulary Level: AB

bacteria (n) very small organisms. Some bacteria can cause disease.

continent (n) a very large area of land, such as Africa or Asia, that consists of several countries.

digest (v) to change (food), esp. in the mouth, stomach, and intestines by the action of gastric and intestinal juices, enzymes, and bacteria, into a form that can be absorbed by the body

impressive (adj) having or tending to have a strong effect on the mind or emotions; eliciting wonder or admiration

Words for Quick Discussion: Consider discussing these words as they are encountered to help students comprehend the passage. A quick discussion in student-friendly language while reading the text is best.

Wilson Reading System Vocabulary Level: B

gastric (adj) of, in, or near the stomach

regurgitate (v) to cause to surge or flow back; specif., to bring (partly digested food) from the stomach back to the mouth

scavenger (n) any animal that eats refuse and decaying organic matter

vanish (v) to cease to exist; come to an end

venom (n) the poison secreted by some snakes, spiders, insects, etc., introduced into the body of the victim by bite or sting

vulnerable (adj) easily harmed or affected by something bad

Definition Source: Collins English Dictionary. Retrieved from <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english>

Text Easability:

Text Easability Scores

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1. Visit the Coh-Metrix Text Easability Assessor website at <http://tea.cohmetrix.com/>. If you do not already have a login and password, create one. It is free and easy to sign up for access to the website.
2. Once you have created an account and sign in, you will be taken to a page with an empty, white text box. Copy and paste the text from this passage into the empty, white text box. Make sure you are only copying and pasting the body of the passage. Do not include the title, date, or any of the resources present in the passage.
3. When you have pasted the passage into the text box, click on the red button beneath the text box that says "Analyze." There will be a short delay and after a few seconds, you will see a bar graph appear to the right of the screen.
4. The bar graph will give you the percentages for several text characteristics including: narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion.
5. Below the bar graph, the Flesch Kincaid Grade Level is also included for your benefit.
6. Lastly, a paragraph is provided that explains the meaning of the measurements of the text characteristics for your particular passage.
7. Once you have completed measuring your passage, you can click on the "Clear" button below the text box and measure another passage, if you wish.

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