

Lizard or Skink: What do you think?



Eastern Fence Lizard



Northern Coal Skink (juvenile)

Is a lizard a skink or is a skink a lizard? The truth is that a skink is a type of lizard. However, they differ in a few ways.

Unlike other lizards, skinks have shorter legs and elongated bodies. They appear snake-like and are often described as a snake with legs. Yet, their external ear openings, moveable eyelids and four legs set them apart from snakes. Their smooth, shiny scales make them appear wet and slimy, similar to salamanders, but skinks are reptiles and not amphibians.

All lizards have the capability to lose their tail when a predator bites down on it, but the skink goes one step further. When they are young, they have a bright blue tail, which draws attention away from their body. Predators will attack the blue tail. When they do, the tail will detach, allowing the skink to escape unharmed.

Vocabulary *(Watch for these words!)*

- Candidate species
- Endangered species
- Ectothermic
- Metamorphosis
- Endothermic
- Venomous

Who has Reptile Style?

Are lizards and salamanders the same? Not quite. Although the untrained eye commonly confuses adult lizards and salamanders, they are very different.



salamander front foot



lizard front foot

	Lizards and Skinks	Salamanders
Reptiles or Amphibians?	Lizards and skinks are reptiles. They do not go through metamorphosis . When hatched, the young are fully developed and resemble their parents.	Salamanders are “amphibians,” which means “double life.” They live part of their life in water and part of their life on land. To become adults, they transform through a series of life stages called metamorphosis .
Skin	Dry, rough skin covered in scales.	Smooth slimy skin with no scales. Some salamanders can absorb oxygen through their thin skin.
Feet	Five fingers and toes with claws.	Four fingers in the front and five toes on the back without claws.
Eggs	Eggs have a hard or nearly hard leathery shell. They are laid on land.	Eggs have a soft, gel surrounding them. Usually found in water or in damp areas.
Ear openings	Have ear openings.	Do not have ear openings.