ANIMAL LEARNING CENTER · NOT CURRENTLY AT THE ZOO

AFRICAN ELEPHANT

Loxodonta africana

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · © **2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
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Fast facts

ANIMAL GROUP	Mammal — elephant family (Elephantidae)
NATIVE REGION	Mostly East, Central and southern Africa
HABITAT	Grasslands, woodlands, forests, scrub, wetlands and some deserts
DIET	Herbivore — trees, shrubs, grasses, bark and fruit
SIZE	Savanna males about 10.5 ft at the shoulder
WEIGHT	Males about 13,000 lb; females about 6,600 lb
LIFESPAN	Females about 40 years, males 24, on average
STATUS	Savanna: Endangered; forest: Critically Endangered



An African savanna elephant. Photo: Udara Karunarathna on Unsplash.

Did you know?

- There are two species of African elephant: the savanna elephant and the smaller forest elephant.
- An elephant pregnancy lasts about 22 months, and a newborn savanna calf weighs about 200 to 265 pounds.
- About 70 percent of the air an elephant breathes passes through its trunk, which has two finger-like tips.
- Elephants walk on tiptoe, on big cushions of fat, and their feet can pick up vibrations.
- Elephants spread seeds in their dung, sometimes up to 40 miles from where they ate them.

Words to know

Matriarch: the older female who leads an elephant family.
Herbivore: an animal that eats only plants.
Tusk: a very long upper incisor tooth. African elephants use tusks to dig, strip bark and defend themselves.
Endangered: a conservation status meaning a species faces a very high risk of dying out in the wild.

Where it lives in the wild



Lives in the wild ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

Think about it

1. How do an elephant's big ears help it stay cool?
2. Name three different ways an elephant uses its trunk.
3. What are tusks, and what do elephants use them for?
4. Who leads an elephant family, and how can her experience help during a drought?
5. How can you tell a savanna elephant from a forest elephant?

Draw it

In the box below, draw an elephant family on the savanna. Show the matriarch in front, a calf, and an elephant using its trunk to drink or spray water. Label the trunk, tusks and ears.

STANDARDS · GRADES 3–4 **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 3-LS2-1**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.3.B**

Draw here

Learn more: plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/african-elephant/ · **Sources:** IUCN Red List; IUCN African Elephant Specialist Group; Animal Diversity Web; South African National Parks; Dagenais et al. (2021); University of Cape Town; Wittemyer et al. (2013).
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: 4-LS1-1 (3.1.4.A) · 3-LS2-1 (3.1.3.B)
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ANIMAL LEARNING CENTER · RESEARCH WORKSHEET

AFRICAN ELEPHANT

Before and after your research

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Before you research · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Predict: where in the wild does the African elephant live?

Circle one (or more if it lives on more than one):

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

2. Predict: what does it eat?

☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.

☐ Matriarch ☐ Herbivore ☐ Tusk ☐ Endangered

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

_____

_____

4. My question: one thing I want to find out about the African elephant.

_____

_____

While you research

Read the animal page:

plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/african-elephant/

Write two facts you did not know before.

_____

_____

_____

Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.

Draw here

After your research · talk it over

1. Check your prediction. Native region: Mostly East, Central and southern Africa. Was your guess right?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: Herbivore — trees, shrubs, grasses, bark and fruit. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

_____

_____

3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.

• Name three different ways an elephant uses its trunk.

_____

• What are tusks, and what do elephants use them for?

_____

4. Exit ticket.

One thing I learned: _____

One thing I still wonder: _____

ADJUST IT

Grades K–2: talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** add evidence from the fact sheet and the animal page to every answer.

Learn more: plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/african-elephant/ · Fact sheet page 1 has the fast facts, map and vocabulary this page refers to.

Grades 3–4 · Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 3-LS2-1** · Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.3.B**

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