

# All About Elephants

Elephants are the largest land animals in the world. They are an impressive sight across Africa and parts of Asia. There are two main **species** of elephant and these are the African elephant and the Asian elephant.

## African Elephants

African elephants are the largest of all elephants. There are two different types of African elephant: the forest elephant and the savannah elephant (also known as the bush elephant).



We know a lot about savannah elephants because they live in wide, open areas which makes them easier to study. They live in herds which contain female elephants and their children. Amazingly, herds of over 100 savannah elephants have been recorded. These herds are led by a matriarch who is usually the oldest and largest female elephant.

The forest elephant is more difficult to study because they live in areas that are full of trees. To work out how many forest elephants there are in one area, researchers count the number of elephant droppings on the ground.

## Asian Elephants

Asian elephants are smaller than African elephants. They have smaller ears and the shape of their head is different; Asian elephants have two small bumps at the top of their head. There are several types of Asian elephant which include the Sumatran elephant and the Indian elephant.

Unlike African elephants, female Asian elephants do not grow long tusks. They also live in smaller herds which contain around seven female elephants.



### Did You Know..?

An Asian elephant's footprint is so big that it can become a home for tadpoles when filled with rainwater.

## Are Elephants Endangered?

Over the years, many places have seen a drop in the number of wild elephants. This is for a number of reasons, such as losing their habitat and illegal **poaching**. As a result, Asian elephants are listed as an endangered species. This means that they are thought to be at risk of becoming extinct. African elephants are listed as vulnerable. Although this means that they are less likely to become extinct, there is still some worry about their future.

## Elephant Tusks

Most elephants grow tusks. These are long teeth that continue to grow throughout their entire life. Elephants use their tusks to help them with lots of different tasks. For example, tusks can be used to scrape bark from trees or to lift heavy objects. These impressive tusks are made of ivory, which is incredibly strong and hard-wearing. Unfortunately, this makes their ivory tusks a tempting product for poachers to collect or sell. Recently, many countries have passed laws that ban the buying and selling of ivory. It is hoped that these laws will help to protect elephant populations before they become extinct.



Just like humans can be left-handed or right-handed, elephants can be left-tusked or right-tusked. Take a look at the photo above. Can you see that one of the elephant's tusks is shorter than the other? This is because they are right-tusked and their right tusk has been worn down with use.

### Glossary

**species:** A group of living things that are very similar.

**poaching:** Illegally hunting or catching animals.

# Questions

1. Which type of elephant is more difficult to study? Tick one.

- the savannah elephant
- the forest elephant
- the Sumatran elephant
- the Indian elephant

2. Draw **four** lines and complete each sentence.

Indian elephants are...

do not grow tusks.

African elephants are...

a type of Asian elephant.

There are two...

listed as vulnerable.

Female Asian elephants...

different types of African elephant.

3. Fill in the missing words.

Recently, many countries have passed \_\_\_\_\_ which  
ban the buying and selling of \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Look at the first paragraph.

Find and copy one word which means the same as **spectacular**.

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5. Why is it easier to study savannah elephants?

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6. Explain how Asian elephants are different from African elephants.

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7. Do you think that the author of this text likes elephants? Explain your answer.

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8. Would you like to study forest elephants? Explain your answer.

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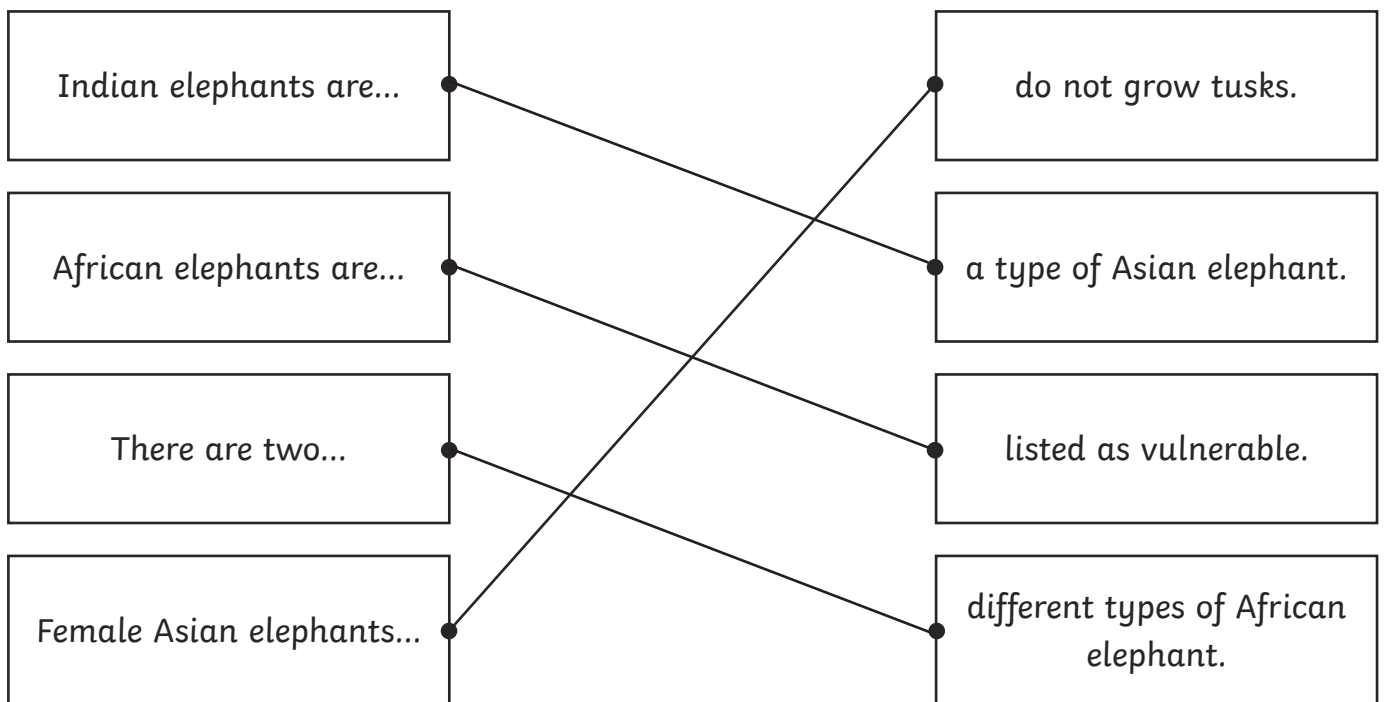
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# Answers

1. Which type of elephant is more difficult to study? Tick one.

- the savannah elephant
- the forest elephant**
- the Sumatran elephant
- the Indian elephant

2. Draw **four** lines and complete each sentence.



3. Fill in the missing words.

Recently, many countries have passed **laws** which  
ban the buying and selling of **ivory**.

4. Look at the first paragraph.

Find and copy one word which means the same as **spectacular**.

**impressive**

5. Why is it easier to study savannah elephants?

**It is easier to study savannah elephants because they live in wide, open areas.**

6. Explain how Asian elephants are different from African elephants.  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: Asian elephants are smaller than African elephants. Their head is shaped differently and they have smaller ears.**
7. Do you think that the author of this text likes elephants? Explain your answer.  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the author of this text does like elephants because they use words such as 'impressive' and 'amazingly' to describe them.**
8. Would you like to study forest elephants? Explain your answer.  
**Pupils' own responses, such as: No, I would not like to study forest elephants because instead of seeing the elephants, you would have to count their droppings. I would not enjoy that.**

# All About Elephants

Elephants are the largest land animals in the world. With their distinctive long trunk and large ears, they are a spectacular sight across Africa and in parts of Asia. It is widely believed that there are two main **species** of elephant. These are the African elephant and the Asian elephant.

## African Elephants

Weighing up to 8,000kg, African elephants are the largest species of elephant. African elephants can be found in 37 countries within Africa. It is thought that there are two different **subspecies** of African elephant: the forest elephant and the savannah elephant (also known as the bush elephant).



We have a lot of information about savannah elephants as they are easy to observe across large, open planes. These elephants live in herds which contain female elephants and their offspring. Although often made up of elephants from the same family, herds of over 100 savannah elephants have been recorded. These herds are led by a matriarch who is usually the oldest and largest female elephant.

The forest elephant is more difficult to observe as they live among dense trees and rainforests. To estimate forest elephant populations, researchers look at the number of elephant droppings found in a particular area. Interestingly, some studies have found that the forest elephant may be a third species of elephant rather than a subspecies.

## Asian Elephants

Asian elephants are smaller than African elephants. They can be recognised by their smaller ears and by the shape of their head. There are a number of subspecies of Asian elephants which include the Sumatran elephant, the Indian elephant and the Sri Lankan elephant.

Unlike African elephants, female Asian elephants do not grow long tusks. Asian elephants also live in smaller herds which contain around seven female elephants. Some studies have found that an Asian elephant's footprint is large enough to provide a home for tadpoles when filled with rainwater.



## Elephants in the Wild

Over the years, elephants have faced a number of threats to their survival. These threats include a loss of habitat and illegal **poaching**. As a result, Asian elephants are listed as an endangered species. This means that they are thought to be at risk of becoming extinct. On the other hand, African elephants are listed as vulnerable which means that they are thought to be at a lower risk of extinction. Although their numbers are increasing in some areas, there is still some concern for them as illegal poaching continues to be an issue.

## Elephant Tusks

Most elephants grow tusks. These are long teeth that continue to grow throughout their lifetime. Elephants use their tusks for a variety of different tasks. For example, tusks can be used for defence, to scrape bark from trees or to lift heavy objects. This is very similar to most humans preferring to use either their left or their right hand. Many elephants will have one tusk that is shorter than the other: the shorter side will be the tusk that they use more often.

Elephant tusks are made up of ivory which is a type of dentine. The dentine found in elephant tusks is incredibly strong and hard-wearing. While this is excellent for an elephant, it also makes their ivory tusks a tempting product for poachers to acquire. In recent years, many countries have passed laws that ban the trading of ivory. It is hoped that these laws will help to protect elephant populations before they face extinction.



## Glossary

**species:** A group of living things that are very similar.

**subspecies:** A group within the same species. Subspecies have different characteristics and are often found in different areas.

**poaching:** Illegally hunting or catching animals.



# Questions

1. Which of the following statements is not true? Tick one.
  - Elephants are the largest land animals in the world.
  - Savannah elephants are also known as bush elephants.
  - Elephant tusks are made from a weak material.
  - Elephants can be left-tusked or right-tusked.
2. How many elephants does a herd of Asian elephants contain? Tick one.
  - over one hundred
  - around ten
  - around seven
  - it is impossible to count
3. Why are sub-headings used in this text?

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4. Look at the paragraph beginning **The forest elephant is more...**  
Find and copy one word which means the same as **thick**.

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5. What does the phrase 'at risk of becoming extinct' tell us about elephants?

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6. Summarise what you have learnt about African elephants using 30 words or fewer.

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7. Look at the section called **Elephants in the Wild**.  
Why do you think that the author chose to include this section?

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8. What do you think will happen to elephant populations in the future? Explain your answer.

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9. Would you like to see an elephant in the wild? Fully explain your answer.

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# Answers

1. Which of the following statements is not true? Tick one.

- Elephants are the largest land animals in the world.
- Savannah elephants are also known as bush elephants.
- Elephant tusks are made from a weak material.**
- Elephants can be left-tusked or right-tusked.

2. How many elephants does a herd of Asian elephants contain? Tick one.

- over one hundred
- around ten
- around seven**
- it is impossible to count

3. Why are sub-headings used in this text?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Sub-headings are used in this text because they are a feature of non-fiction texts. This is a non-fiction text and the sub-headings help us to find information quickly.**

4. Look at the paragraph beginning **The forest elephant is more...**

Find and copy one word which means the same as **thick**.

**dense**

5. What does the phrase 'at risk of becoming extinct' tell us about elephants?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: The phrase 'at risk of becoming extinct' tells us that there might not be any wild elephants in the future.**

6. Summarise what you have learnt about African elephants using 30 words or fewer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: African elephants are the largest species of elephant. They live in 37 different countries in Africa and form large herds.**

7. Look at the section called **Elephants in the Wild**.

Why do you think that the author chose to include this section?

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the author chose to include this section because they wanted to share information about elephants needing to be protected to try and stop them from going extinct.**

8. What do you think will happen to elephant populations in the future? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that elephant populations will begin to increase because lots of countries have banned the trading of ivory. This means that fewer elephants will lose their lives each year.**

9. Would you like to see an elephant in the wild? Fully explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I would like to see an elephant in the wild because they sound amazing and the text says that they are 'an impressive sight'. I would also like to see them using their tusks because that sounds like it would be interesting to watch.**

# All About Elephants

Elephants are the largest land mammal in the world. With several distinctive features (including a lengthy trunk and large ears), they are a spectacular sight across Africa and some areas of Asia. It is widely accepted that there are two main species of elephant and multiple subspecies. These are the African elephant and the Asian elephant. Although the forest elephant is mainly considered to be subspecies of the African elephant, recent studies have been conducted which suggest that it may be a separate species of elephant altogether.

## African Elephants

Weighing up to 8,000kg, these elephants are the largest species to roam the Earth. In order to maintain their impressive size, elephants need to eat a substantial amount – consuming up to 100kg of food each day. As their name suggests, African elephants can be found in 37 countries within Africa. It is thought that there are two different subspecies of African elephant: the forest elephant and the savannah elephant (also known as the bush elephant).



A significant amount of information has been collected about savannah elephants; they are easy to observe as they wander across large, open plains. These elephants live in herds which contain several female elephants and their offspring. Although often made up of one family unit, herds of over 100 savannah elephants have been previously recorded. These herds are led by a matriarch who is usually the oldest and largest female elephant.

In contrast to the savannah elephant, the forest elephant is more difficult to observe as they live among dense trees and rainforests. To estimate forest elephant populations, researchers and scientists record the number of elephant droppings found in a particular area.

## Asian Elephants

Asian elephants are smaller than their African counterparts and can be recognised by their smaller ears and by the shape of their head. There are multiple subspecies of Asian elephant, including the Sumatran elephant, the Indian elephant and the Sri Lankan elephant.

Unlike African elephants, female Asian elephants do not grow long tusks. Asian elephants also form smaller herds which contain around seven female elephants.

These magnificent creatures are vitally important to the wildlife around them. Due to their large stature, elephants are able to create pathways through wooded areas that are used by other creatures. Amazingly, some studies have even found that an Asian elephant's footprint is large enough to provide a home for tadpoles when filled with rainwater.



### Elephants in the Wild

Over the years, elephants have faced a number of threats to their survival. Such threats include habitat loss and illegal poaching (elephants are hunted for their tusks). As a result of a loss of habitat and human conflict, Asian elephants are listed as an endangered species. They are thought to be at risk of extinction. Although African elephants are listed as a vulnerable species and their numbers are increasing in some areas, there is still concern for them as illegal poaching continues to be an issue.

### Elephant Tusks

Most elephants (including both the male and female African elephants) grow tusks. These are elongated front teeth that grow continuously throughout their lifetime. Elephants who have tusks use them for a multitude of different tasks. For example, tusks can be used to scrape bark from trees, to lift heavy objects and even for digging holes to locate water that is trapped beneath the ground. Like humans can be left-handed or right-handed, elephants can be left-tusked or right-tusked which means that they favour one over the other. Many elephants will have one tusk that is shorter than the other: the shorter tusk is the favoured side and is used more frequently.

Elephant tusks are made up of ivory which is a type of dentine. If you were to look at dentine under the microscope, you would see a pattern in the shape of diamonds. This diamond structure means that elephant tusks are incredibly strong and hard-wearing. While this is excellent for an elephant, unfortunately it is what makes ivory such a tempting commodity for poachers to collect or sell. In recent years, many countries have enacted laws which ban the trading of ivory products. It is hoped that these tougher laws will help to protect elephant populations before they face extinction.



# Questions

1. **These elephants live in herds that contain a number of female elephants and their offspring.**

Which of the following is closest in meaning to the word **offspring**? Tick one.

- children
- friends
- male elephants
- others

2. Which of the following phrases implies that elephants are heavy? Tick one.

- led by a matriarch
- a spectacular sight
- weighing up to 8,000kg
- found in 37 countries

3. Where can African elephants be found?

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4. What can you tell about the author's opinion of elephants?

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5. Find and copy a phrase from the text that tells us that elephants are in danger.

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6. Summarise what you have learnt about elephant tusks using 25 words or fewer.

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7. **It is widely accepted that there are two main species of elephant and multiple subspecies.**

Explain why the author has chosen to use the phrase **It is widely accepted...**

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8. Who do you think was the intended audience for this text? Fully explain your answer.

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9. What do you think will happen to elephant populations in the future? Explain your answer.

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10. Some organisations believe that raising awareness about elephants will help to protect them.

Do you agree with this statement? Tick one.

yes       no

Fully explain your choice.

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# Answers

1. **These elephants live in herds that contain a number of female elephants and their offspring.**

Which of the following is closest in meaning to the word **offspring**? Tick one.

- children**
- friends
- male elephants
- others

2. Which of the following phrases implies that elephants are heavy? Tick one.

- led by a matriarch
- a spectacular sight
- weighing up to 8,000kg**
- found in 37 countries

3. Where can African elephants be found?

**Accept one of the following: African elephants can be found in 37 countries within Africa; African elephants can be found wandering across large, open plains.**

4. What can you tell about the author's opinion of elephants?

**Pupils' own answers, such as: I think that the author likes elephants because they use the word 'unfortunately' when talking about the illegal poachers.**

5. Find and copy a phrase from the text that tells us that elephants are in danger.

**Accept any of the following: they face extinction; endangered species; at risk of extinction.**

6. Summarise what you have learnt about elephant tusks using 25 words or fewer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: Elephant tusks are made up of ivory. They are strong and elephants use them to lift heavy objects and to dig holes.**

7. **It is widely accepted that there are two main species of elephant and multiple subspecies.**

Explain why the author has chosen to use the phrase **It is widely accepted**...

**Pupils' own responses, such as: The author has chosen to use the words 'it is widely accepted' to show that although most people believe that there are two main species of elephant, some people think otherwise.**

8. Who do you think was the intended audience for this text? Fully explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the intended audience for this text was people who know little about elephants. This is because it contains lots of information about the different types of elephants before going into more detail about the threats that they're facing.**

9. What do you think will happen to elephant populations in the future? Explain your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that elephant populations will begin to increase because lots of countries have banned the trading of ivory. This means that fewer elephants will lose their lives each year.**

10. Some organisations believe that raising awareness about elephants will help to protect them.

Do you agree with this statement? Tick one.

yes       no

**Accept either a yes or a no response provided that a full explanation is given below.**

Fully explain your choice.

**Yes, I agree with this statement because some people might not know that elephants are endangered; they might not think that they need protecting. Also, if people know how important and amazing elephants are, they will be more likely to want to look after them.**