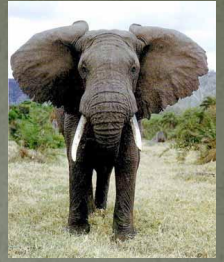


Animals

African elephants



- When you think elephant, you probably think trunk. An adult African elephant's trunk is about seven feet (two meters) long! It's actually an elongated nose and upper lip. Like most noses, trunks are for smelling. But they're also for touching and grasping.
- When an elephant drinks, it sucks as much as 2 gallons (7.5 liters) of water into its trunk at a time. Then it curls its trunk under, sticks the tip of its trunk into its mouth, and blows. Out comes the water, right down the elephant's throat.



- Since African elephants live where the sun is usually blazing hot, they use their trunks to help them keep cool. First they squirt a trunkful of cool water over their bodies. Then they often follow that with a sprinkling of dust to create a protective layer of dirt on their skin (think elephant sunscreen!). Elephants pick up and spray dust the same way they do water—with their trunks.
- Elephants also use their trunks as snorkels when they wade in deep water.
- An elephant's trunk is controlled by many muscles. Two fingerlike parts on the tip of the trunk allow the elephant to perform delicate maneuvers such as picking a berry from the ground or plucking a single leaf off a tree.

- The elephant can also use its trunk to grasp an entire tree branch and pull it down to its mouth. Elephants also use their trunks to yank up clumps of grasses and shove the greenery into their mouths. When an elephant gets a whiff of something interesting, it sniffs the air with its trunk raised up like a submarine periscope.
- If threatened, an elephant will also use its trunk to make loud trumpeting noises as a warning.
- Elephants are social creatures. They sometimes hug by wrapping their trunks together in displays of greeting and affection.

- Elephants also use their trunks to help lift or nudge an elephant calf over an obstacle, to rescue a fellow elephant stuck in mud, or to gently raise a newborn elephant to its feet. And just as a human baby sucks its thumb, an elephant calf often sucks its trunk for comfort.



FAST FACTS

- The scientific name for the African elephant is *Loxodonta Africana*.
- African elephants live in the wild on much of the African continent south of the Sahara.
- One elephant can eat 300 pounds (136 kilograms) of food in one day.

- Elephants use their tusks to get food by digging up roots and prying bark off trees.
- Of all animals, elephants have the longest pregnancy—it lasts 22 months.
- Poaching and habitat destruction threaten African elephants throughout their range.

- People hunt elephants mainly for their ivory tusks.
- Because of their size, adult African elephants have no enemies other than people. Calves, however, may fall prey to lions, crocodiles, and other meat-eaters.
- Elephant tusks are ivory teeth that grow throughout the animals' lives.

- African elephants eat mainly roots, leaves, fruit, grasses, and bark.
- Adult females and young travel in herds, while adult males generally travel alone or in groups of their own.
- Elephants can live to be about 70 years old.

- An African elephant can weigh more than 6 tons (5,443 kilograms) and stand as tall as 12 feet (4 meters) at the shoulder.
- African elephants roam great distances to find enough food.

