

## Terrific Trunks

Elephants are unique. One of their most distinctive features is their trunk. It's unlike any other animal appendage on earth.

An elephant's trunk acts as both a nose and an upper lip. It also acts like a tongue. Trunks have two nostrils. Asian elephants have one finger at the end of their trunks. African elephants have two fingers. The fingers can pick up a single blade of grass.

In addition to having good fine motor skills, elephant trunks are strong. An elephant's trunk has over 150,000 muscles. Using their trunks, elephants can push over trees and lift 700,000 pounds.

An elephant's trunk can reach over 20 feet. This extension allows them to drink water on the ground without bending down. It also lets them reach leaves in tall trees.

Nose-like trunks have an amazing sense of smell. Scientists say elephants are better at tracking scents than hound dogs. Elephants can smell water several miles away. They can also sense vibrations in the ground. In this way they can feel far-off elephant herds as well as approaching thunder.

Elephant nose-trunks can also act like a snorkel. They stick their trunk above the water and can breath as they cross rivers and lakes. While they are

in the water, elephants can suck up to 10 gallons a minute through their trunks. They can store two gallons of water inside.

With the water in their trunks, elephants can drink, spray, or splash. They spray to keep themselves cool. They don't drink directly through their trunk, but they use their trunk to bring water to their mouths.

Finally, trunks are used for social reasons. Mother elephants comfort their babies by petting them with their trunks. They sometimes raise their trunks in greeting and they use their trunks to give hugs. Elephants also pet themselves with their own trunks when they are feeling nervous.

Can you imagine doing all these things with your nose? Elephants are lucky to have their awesome trunks!



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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

1. An elephant trunk is like a human \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Nose
  - b. Upper lip
  - c. Tongue
  - d. All of the above
  
2. Which of the following do elephants NOT do with their trunk?
  - a. Smell
  - b. Sense vibrations
  - c. Drink
  - d. Give hugs
  
3. Which human tool is like a trunk?
  - a. Snorkel
  - b. Hammer
  - c. Spoon
  - d. Swim fins
  
4. What does the author mean by “social reasons”?
  - a. To interact with other elephants
  - b. To comfort themselves
  - c. To sense approaching thunder
  - d. A and B

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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