

Elephant Awareness Activity

Some children may have learned about elephants from visiting a zoo or circus. This play-based game allows children to experience elephants by presenting them in their 'natural' setting without human interference. As the children use their imaginations and chat about elephant facts, they will learn about these magnificent animals. They will also develop a healthy respect for them and understand that they belong in the wild.

You will need:

- ✓ Green fabric (for the grass)
- ✓ Blue fabric (for the river)
- ✓ Rocks or pebbles
- ✓ Small branches
(plastic aquarium plants or branches from the garden. You can place them into a lump of plasticine or set them into cup)
- ✓ Several elephant figurines
- ✓ Elephants books and poems*
- ✓ Facts list provided



How to Play:

Set up the natural habitat together. You may also play this game outside on the grass. Read books, poetry, and facts. Discuss and let children play and learn.

*"To Be An Elephant" by Karl Cullen, "Tales & Tails – The Elephant Poetry & Prose Project", edited by Marieke van der Velden, and "Spirit of the Elephant, Majestic Giant of the Animal Kingdom", by Gill Davies

As the children play, chat to them about elephant facts. Some examples:

- *Asian elephants are an endangered species.*
- *The Asian elephant's natural habitat is found in the forests of Asia.*
- *Elephants drink on average 80 – 160 litres of water every day.*
- *Elephants are vegetarians and eat on average 100-200 kilograms each day.*
- *Baby elephants rely on their mother's milk as their main source of food until about 2 -3 years of age. They have 4 teeth at a time, and will have 6 sets of teeth in their lifetime.*
- *Elephants are social animals. An Asian elephant herd usually has 7-8 adult females, moms and 'Aunties' taking care of the babies and young elephants.*
- *Adult male elephants usually keep to themselves.*
- *Elephants have very strong trunks which they use as a nose, a hand, an extra foot, a snorkel, a signalling device and a tool for gathering food, siphoning water, dusting, digging and a variety of other functions.*
- *Elephants like to throw dirt and mud over their bodies. This protects their sensitive skin from the sun and insects.*
- *Elephants love water. They are excellent swimmers.*
- *Elephants like to stay in the shade during the hot part of the day.*
- *Elephants spend 18-20 hours a day eating. They only need 4 hours of sleep.*
- *Some elephants are kept in zoos. Zoo enclosures are very small for elephants, and they are not able to roam long distances or make new friends.*
- *Some elephants are used to entertain people in shows and circuses. This is not natural behaviour for elephants. (If the children are 6 or older, you may mention the training to perform these unnatural 'tricks' is difficult and scary for the elephant. Do not try to discuss this topic with younger children.)*