



### Objectives

Students will be able to...

- Compare and contrast the lives of wild and captive animals.
- Describe the many physical, social and emotional traits of elephants.

### Time Needed

- 45–60 minutes
- 1 class period

### Materials

- *Elephants Never Forget* video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BF6FENUdfD8>
- “Elephants: Wild vs. Captive” worksheet
- “Different Lives” handout
- (Optional) Pictures of elephants in the wild and in captivity

### Insider Tips

- This lesson can be modified to use a variety of animals. Some suggestions are dolphins, tigers, bears and other animals routinely kept in captivity. To modify the lesson, simply find information on the animal’s life in the wild versus captivity.
- As an extension activity, have students engage in a letter writing campaign to a circus that relies on animals to entertain.
- The last six minutes of the *Elephants Never Forget* video discuss ivory poaching and ways groups like International Fund for Animal Welfare are helping the remaining elephant populations.

**Overview:** After reading short passages and watching a video, students will compare and contrast the lives of elephants in the wild and in captivity. Students will reflect on the reasons that such intelligent, social and emotional animals are being held in captivity.

### Procedure:

#### Introduction

Ask students the difference between an animal that is *wild* and *captive*. Discuss the different types of captivity for animals. To complement the discussion, consider showing pictures of various types of captivity.

#### Elephants Never Forget

1. Inform students that this lesson will focus on elephants. Create a KWL chart on a whiteboard or chalkboard and ask students what they already know about elephants and what they would like to know about elephants. List student responses. (See “Insider Tips for Outside Educators” for an explanation of the KWL chart)
2. View the first 12 minutes of *Elephants Never Forget* video. Prior to viewing, instruct students to pay close attention to the types of exercise elephants get and how they interact with their family and friends.
3. Following the viewing ask students if they have any comments or questions about the video. Discuss.

#### Elephants: Wild vs. Captive

1. Distribute the “Elephants: Wild vs. Captive” worksheet and “Different Lives” handout to students. Allow students to answer sections based on the information from the *Elephants Never Forget* video. (Possible sections: Wild—Food; Exercise; Friends/Family)
2. Read the “Different Lives” handout and complete the “Elephants: Wild vs. Captive” worksheet using the handout’s information. Based on reading level, students can complete this activity individually, in pairs, small groups or as a class.
3. Upon completion, review the “Elephants: Wild vs. Captive” worksheet as a class.

### Wrap Up:

1. Ask students what they learned today. Write responses on KWL chart. Possible answers:
  - Elephants are intelligent, social, and emotional animals.
  - Elephants have extremely close family bonds and form many strong friendships.
  - Captive elephants are not allowed to participate in many of their natural behaviors.

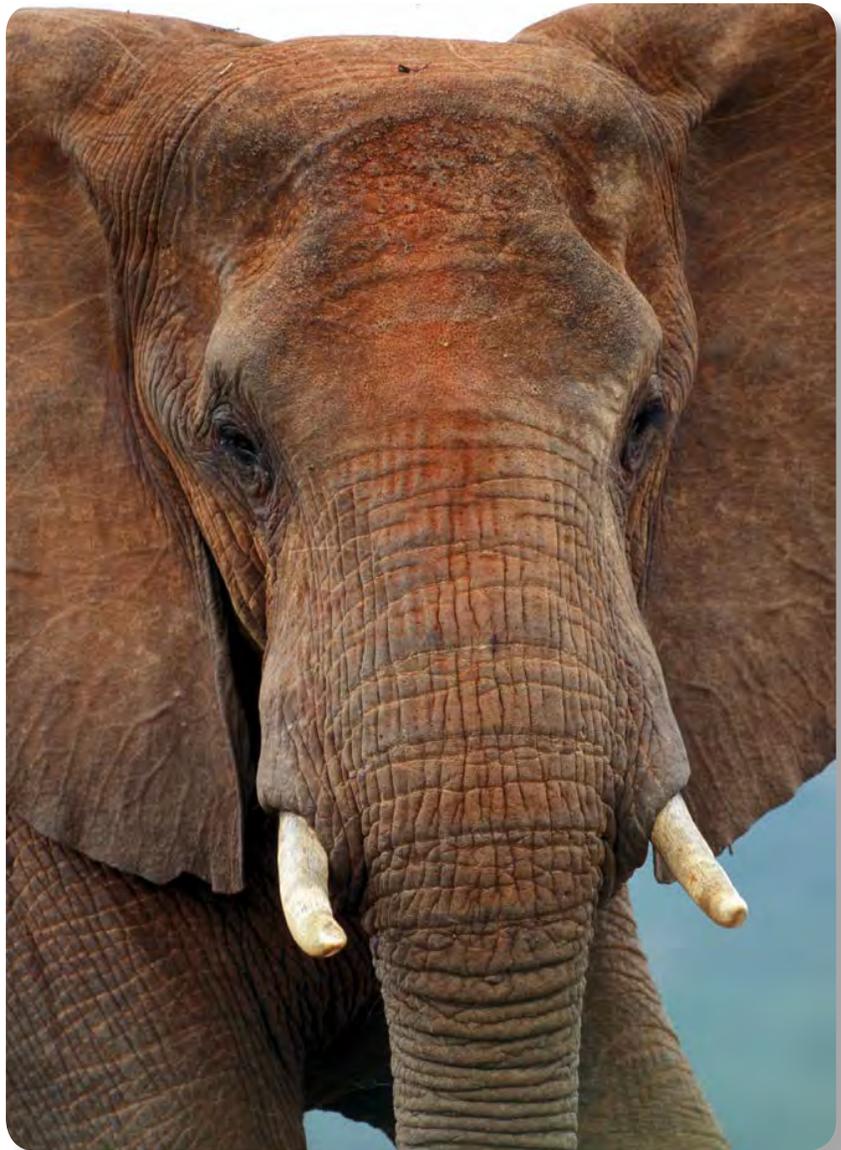
**Insider Tips** (continued)**Classroom Teachers**

- As an extension activity, ask students to read the differing descriptions of elephants. Then, ask them to answer this question: "Every year, people gather in the middle of the night to watch circus elephants walking through New York City's Midtown Tunnel—because the elephants are so large, this is the only way they can enter Manhattan. You are invited to watch them entering the city. Considering these descriptions, do you accept this unique invitation?"
- As an extension activity, have students write a story from the perspective of a baby elephant taken from the wild and brought to perform at a circus.
- This activity aligns to Common Core Reading Standards 1 and 4, Speaking and Listening Standard 1, and Writing Standard 4.

**Outside Humane Educators**

- A "KWL" chart stands for "Know, Want to Know, Learned." It is an organizational and assessment tool to help understand students' foundational knowledge as well as what they learned from the lesson.

2. Ask students if they believe elephants would prefer to be in the wild or in captivity? Ask students if they think elephants should be in the wild or captivity. If students do not believe elephants should be in captivity, ask them what are some things they may do to help captive elephants. Possible answers:
  - Don't support using captive elephants for our entertainment.
  - Write letters to legislators and companies expressing your opinion on captive elephants.



# Different Lives



## Wild Elephants

Elephants are not only one of the smartest animals on the planet, but also one of the most empathetic. They care deeply about one another and have been observed in the wild helping each other when in trouble and wrapping their trunks together to give an “elephant hug.” Wild elephants communicate in a variety of ways. They “speak” by touching one another, gesturing with their bodies, making different sounds like squeaks, trumpeting noises, rumbles and even noises so low that people cannot hear them. In the wild, elephants can live up to 70 years of age, roughly the same life span of many people. Wild elephants are extremely active, walking great distances to find enough food. On the average day, African elephants can walk up to 37 miles and their smaller relatives, the Asian elephants, can walk up to 13 miles a day. Wild elephants not only get their exercise from walking, but also love to forage for food and water, dust bathe, wallow in the mud to cool off from the heat and even go swimming! Being so large and active means that wild elephants need to eat a lot of food. One elephant can eat 300 pounds of food in one day. Elephants’ foods of choice are roots, leaves, plants, fruit, grasses and bark. Wild elephants live in family groups called “herds.” The “matriarch,” or oldest female in the group, leads the herd to the best places to find food and water. When elephants die, their family members grieve just like people. They even return to the site where their kin passed away and touch their bones to mourn.



## Captive Elephants

Elephants in captivity live much different lives than those of their wild counterparts. Many elephants in captivity were born in the wild and taken from their families when they were very young. Instead of being in herds with up to 100 other elephants, captive elephants spend most of their time alone. Elephants are very social creatures and have strong family bonds which they are deprived of in captivity. Also, elephants are very large animals requiring large areas to roam that are rarely provided in captivity. Male elephants born in zoos are quickly removed from their mothers and separated from all the other elephants. When the male elephants get older they are usually sent to other zoos for breeding purposes. Though wild elephants can live to be up to 70 years old, captive elephants usually don't live to be even 40 years old. Captive elephants suffer from many health problems like tuberculosis and foot disease, which is caused by standing on hard floor surfaces for long periods of time and doing unnatural tricks on these hard floors. Many captive circus elephants are forced to learn these tricks by being struck with a bullhook (a pole with a sharp metal point and a hook at the end). Captive circus elephants spend a very large portion of their lives traveling from town to town locked in small cages. Some are even shipped in trucks and railroad cars without heat or air conditioning and often do not have access to food or water for long periods of time. Unlike the wide variety of foods wild elephants eat, many captive elephants are only given dried hay and grains.

Sources: [www.aspcakids.org](http://www.aspcakids.org), [www.elephantsincanada.com](http://www.elephantsincanada.com), [www.lcanimal.org](http://www.lcanimal.org), [www.hsus.org](http://www.hsus.org), [www.elephantvoices.org](http://www.elephantvoices.org), [www.kids.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.kids.nationalgeographic.com)

# Elephants: *In the Wild vs. In Captivity*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## In the Wild

vs.

## In Captivity

**Lifespan**

**Food**

**Exercise**

**Family/  
Friends**