What Do We Need for a Family of Elephants?

INSTRUCTIONS FOR Living with an Elephant Family BRAINSTORMING PACK

Overview  Investigate how much and what kind of food and water and care will be needed for a family of elephants to live in the circus.

Why?

By the end of this activity, child will be able to:

- Investigate what kind and how much food and water is needed for elephants
  - Find expert resources that know about elephants’ nutritional needs
  - Food, water, medical care and daily routine for captive elephants

- What special care will the circus staff will need to provide to the elephants?
  - What changes to the Dogs & Cats Circus will be needed?
  - Elephant needs: housing, food, water, health care, exercise, socializing, training
  - What are the benefits to having elephants in the circus?

- Report to the circus owner your findings about elephant care
  - Is it possible to have healthy and happy elephants in the circus?
  - What do elephants do for fun? Do they play games?

  Make your final suggestions to the circus owner about elephant care

What?

- Explore resources for information on elephants in captivity: library, books, teachers, web quest, YouTube.
- Make a list of what elephants eat. How much water do they drink?
- Write (or dictate) or tell a story to the circus owner about your findings
- Make your own drawing of an elephant being fed its favorite food
- Revise and make final version with a table listing food and water facts

TIME ESTIMATE

Min. 1 – 2 hrs.

MATERIALS

- Elephant science website and books.
- Paper, printer, etc.
- Art materials. Crayons, markers, paints, Graphics program.
My Multiple Intelligences engaged. . .

- **Logical** – logical investigation; gather data; Use reasoning in letter that is logical, practical with arguments supported with evidence
- **Naturalist** – understand the physical and mental needs of elephants
- **Interpersonal** – show awareness of the circus owner’s views and needs.
- **Linguistic** – word choice, expression, grammar, elements of a letter
- **Spatial** – visual organization of information (data) or illustration of important idea

Preparation

- Do elephants have special social needs when held in captivity?
- Search for information about elephants in captivity: housing, food, water, health care, exercise, socializing, training

Project Plan

Get Ready! Read letter from the circus owner of Cats & Dogs Spectacular. Review the Brainstorming Packet for Wild Elephants.

**Step 1.** With your previous research notes, list the kind of foods that elephants eat and what they drink. How much per day for adult and young elephants?

**Step 2.** What kind of activities do elephants like? Research and make a list. What do they do for fun? Do elephants play games?

**Step 3.** Use your research notes and visuals to write a letter back to the circus owner of Cats & Dogs Spectacular. The owner needs to know:

1. How much food and water the elephants need everyday.
2. Give the animal care team a few advice on how to take care of them.
Step 4. Make your final report (a letter or story) so it is factual and sounds interesting and persuasive. Consider the limits of what the circus can do.

Conclusions and Suggestions: What are the totals for food and water per week. Finalize your report in writing or notes for an oral presentation.

Important & Factual

Because this is a serious topic, it might not be a good idea to add anything fun. You might be able to include powerful images or illustrations or stories to show the most important information and ideas about elephant care.

FINAL Reflections

The parent should not provide an evaluation or grade of the child’s performance but instead the child can be queried on the difficult process of learning to juggle balls and twist balloons:

- What did you do?
- What stands out for you about this activity?
- What surprises you?
- What would you do differently, if you were to do it again?
- What would you like to do next?
Resources

**Websites:** What do captive elephants need? What do elephants do in the wild that needs to be considered when held in captivity? What does a circus need to do to keep them healthy?

**IN THE WILD**

- [World Wildlife Fund](https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/elephant)
- [National Geographic, African Elephant](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/a/african-elephant/)
- [Why elephants are important](https://www.savetheelephants.org/about-elephants-2-3-2/importance-of-elephants/)

**IN CAPTIVITY**

- [Zoos care about elephants](https://www.stlzoo.org/animals/abouttheanimals/mammals/asianelephant/helpingelephantsinthewild)
- [Science Project – Elephants in Captivity, grades 4 – 8](https://www.uft.org/get-involved/union-committees/academic/humane-education/humane-science-curricula/elementary-school-units/elephants-wild-and-captivity)
- [7 Facts About Elephants and Why They Don’t Belong in Captivity](https://www.worldanimalprotection.us/blogs/facts-about-elephants)

**Tip:** Community Connections. Is there anyone in your family, neighborhood or community child can talk with about elephants?

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**Class Equivalents / Main Skills**

- Language Arts (persuasive language, grammar, sentence structure, coherence)
- Animal Science

**RESOURCES**

**Letter from Dogs & Cats Spectacular Circus Owner**

Dear Animal Care Team Member:

We are planning to “baby sit” a family of elephants who have been
rescued from a zoo that is threatened by fire. We need to know what
to feed them and how much food and water they will need everyday.

In addition, I want to be sure that our care team is well informed
and trained to take care of the elephants.

There are three adult elephants (a mother, father and an uncle) and
one juvenile who is about 6 months old.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

The Owner,  
*Dogs and Cats Spectacular Circus*

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**Guiding Questions for Topic 9**

1-What do captive elephants eat? Are adult needs different from
young elephants? How much food do they eat everyday?

2-How much water do elephants need everyday?

3-What sort of special training will the staff need to care for
elephants?