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**Level 5 – 16th February 2026**

## **Elephants have a sixth sense from their whiskers**

**FREE online quizzes, mp3 listening and more for this lesson here:**

<https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2602/260216-elephant-whiskers-5.html>

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**Please try Levels 4 and 6. They are (a little) harder.**

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# THE READING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2602/260216-elephant-whiskers-5.html>

Zoologists have uncovered a previously unknown sense ability in elephants. It explains why the elephant trunk is so dexterous. The scientists found that the whiskers at the end of the trunk are sensitive enough to feel very small and delicate objects. The scientists are from the Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems. They say the incredible sensitivity of the whiskers makes up for the elephant's poor eyesight. The whiskers are essential for navigating, finding food, and communicating. The researchers say the whiskers are "smart" and give elephants an added sense of intelligence.

Scientists believe their research will help advance robotics and neuroscience. A study co-author said: "Each whisker on elephants' trunks acts as a tactile sensory organ." This means elephants can pick up a delicate potato chip without breaking it. The research could help increase dexterity in robots. Another researcher is excited about how her research could advance neuroscience. She said her findings could increase our understanding of "tactile perception". She says the study will help us to understand how the brain's neurons process information to think, feel, and act.

Sources: <https://phys.org/news/2026-02-elephant-trunk-whiskers-material-intelligence.html>  
<https://www.popsoci.com/environment/elephant-whiskers-smart/>  
<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/an-elephants-trunk-is-covered-in-whiskers-and-theyre-unlike-those-on-any-other-animal-a-new-study-suggests-180988199/>

# PHRASE MATCHING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2602/260216-elephant-whiskers-5.html>

## PARAGRAPH ONE:

- |                                  |                         |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. uncovered a previously        | a. and delicate objects |
| 2. why the elephant trunk        | b. for navigating       |
| 3. the whiskers at               | c. is so dexterous      |
| 4. feel very small               | d. of the whiskers      |
| 5. the incredible sensitivity    | e. of intelligence      |
| 6. the elephant's poor           | f. unknown sense        |
| 7. The whiskers are essential    | g. eyesight             |
| 8. give elephants an added sense | h. the end of the trunk |

## PARAGRAPH TWO:

- |                                      |                        |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Scientists believe their research | a. and neuroscience    |
| 2. advance robotics                  | b. information         |
| 3. a tactile sensory                 | c. in robots           |
| 4. pick up a delicate potato chip    | d. organ               |
| 5. increase dexterity                | e. us to understand    |
| 6. her research could advance        | f. will help           |
| 7. the study will help               | g. without breaking it |
| 8. the brain's neurons process       | h. neuroscience        |

# LISTEN AND FILL IN THE GAPS

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2602/260216-elephant-whiskers-5.html>

Zoologists have uncovered (1) \_\_\_\_\_ sense ability in elephants. It explains why the elephant trunk (2) \_\_\_\_\_. The scientists found that the whiskers at the end of the trunk are (3) \_\_\_\_\_ feel very small and delicate objects. The scientists are from the Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems. They say the incredible sensitivity of the whiskers makes up for the (4) \_\_\_\_\_. The whiskers (5) \_\_\_\_\_ navigating, finding food, and communicating. The researchers say the whiskers are "smart" and give elephants (6) \_\_\_\_\_ of intelligence.

Scientists believe their research will (7) \_\_\_\_\_ and neuroscience. A study co-author said: "Each whisker on elephants' trunks acts as a (8) \_\_\_\_\_." This means elephants can pick up a (9) \_\_\_\_\_ without breaking it. The research could help increase dexterity in robots. Another researcher is excited about how her research could advance neuroscience. She said (10) \_\_\_\_\_ increase our understanding (11) \_\_\_\_\_. She says the study will help us to understand how the brain's (12) \_\_\_\_\_ to think, feel, and act.

# PUT A SLASH ( / ) WHERE THE SPACES ARE

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2602/260216-elephant-whiskers-5.html>

Zoologists have uncovered a previously unknown sense ability in elephants. It explains why the elephant trunk is so dexterous. The scientists found that the whiskers at the end of the trunk are sensitive enough to feel very small and delicate objects. The scientists are from the Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems. They say the incredible sensitivity of the whiskers makes up for the elephant's poor eyesight. The whiskers are essential for navigating, finding food, and communicating. The researchers say the whiskers are "smart" and give elephants an added sense of intelligence. Scientists believe their research will help advance robotics and neuroscience. A study co-authors said: "Each whisker on elephants' trunks acts as a tactile sensory organ." This means elephants can pick up a delicate potato chip without breaking it. The research could help increase dexterity in robots. Another researcher is excited about how her research could advance neuroscience. She said her findings could increase our understanding of "tactile perception". She says the study will help us to understand how the brain's neurons process information to think, feel, and act.

# ELEPHANTS SURVEY

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2602/260216-elephant-whiskers-4.html>

Write five GOOD questions about elephants in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.  
When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

|      | STUDENT 1<br>_____ | STUDENT 2<br>_____ | STUDENT 3<br>_____ |
|------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Q.1. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.2. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.3. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.4. |                    |                    |                    |
| Q.5. |                    |                    |                    |

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

## WRITE QUESTIONS & ASK YOUR PARTNER(S)

Student A: Do not show these to your speaking partner(s).

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_
- d) \_\_\_\_\_
- e) \_\_\_\_\_
- f) \_\_\_\_\_

*Elephants have a sixth sense from their whiskers – 16th February 2026*  
More free lessons at [breakingnewsenglish.com](http://breakingnewsenglish.com)

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## WRITE QUESTIONS & ASK YOUR PARTNER(S)

Student B: Do not show these to your speaking partner(s).

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_
- d) \_\_\_\_\_
- e) \_\_\_\_\_
- f) \_\_\_\_\_

# WRITING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2602/260216-elephant-whiskers-5.html>

Write about **elephants** for 10 minutes. Read and talk about your partner's paper.

[illegible]