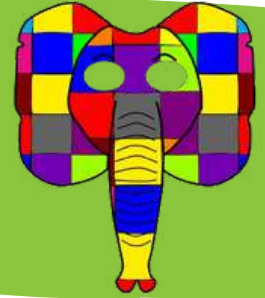




Elmer the Elephant



Elmer, the Patchwork Elephant was created by David McKee over 30 years ago. He wrote and illustrated 30 picture books which have led to novelty spin offs, an animated TV series and merchandise.

Sadly David McKee died last year. His publisher described him as:
'A singular voice and a shining light in children's books that highlighted inclusivity, diversity and parts of our world that are not always present in publishing for children. We are fortunate that his rich legacy will be enjoyed by children for many generations to come.'



[Elmer - official site](#)



KEY

CL = Communication and language

PSED = Personal, social and emotional development

PD = Physical development

L = Literacy

M = Mathematics

EAD = Expressive arts and design

UW = Understanding the world



Elmer the patchwork elephant

Elmer wants to be the same as the other elephants, but comes to realise that being different is a good thing and to be celebrated. Each year this message is remembered and promoted as part of 'Elmer Day'. This year Elmer Day, on May 27th, celebrates the themes of inclusivity and friendship that run throughout the Elmer books.

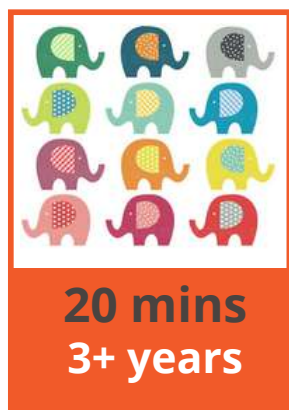
Listen to the author, David McKee, read the original Elmer story with the children, and watch the excerpt from the stage show together. What are the main themes of the story?

Encourage the children to join in with the song and actions. Can they move like an elephant and swoop like the birds?

AREAS OF LEARNING



• The Elmer story



Being different

Talk to the children about what the other elephants loved about Elmer and how he was valued for his differences. Talk to the children about what makes each one of us different and what we value about each other.

AREAS OF LEARNING



Ask the children to say something about each other that they value and write these down to create a display or place the comments in a special jar.

Extend with further discussions that help children explore their similarities and differences. For example what's their favourite food, colour, TV programme, what makes them laugh or sad, their aspirations?



• All About Me book suggestions



10+ mins
18+ MTHS

Looking different

Children can experiment with making themselves look different.

Provide colourful hats, scarves and other dressing up resources.

How about Elmer inspired patchwork face or body painting? (Check with parents and consider a patch test first, in case of allergic reaction).



Draw around each child as they lie on or stand up against large sheets of paper (wall-lining paper works well) and provide coloured squares of paper or tissue that the children can stick onto their paper body, to make Elmer versions of themselves.



- [Elmer Face Painting](#)
- [Patchwork people](#)

AREAS OF LEARNING

PD

PSED

M

EAD



15+ mins
18+ MTHS

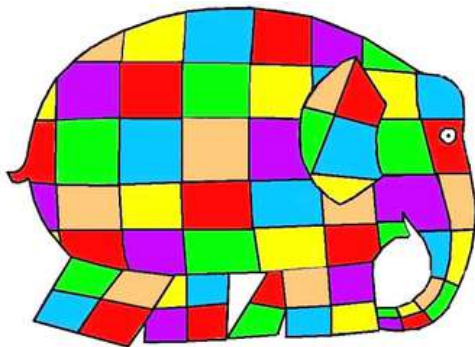
Design an elephant

Children can decorate their own elephants using different materials, including beads and sequins, pasta, paint, tissue paper, paper squares, mosaic tiles, etc.

Their designs could be on templates, or freestyle. Try offering different backgrounds, such as the picture frame glass idea from the OT Toolbox in the links.

Make 3D models to decorate, using plastic milk bottle jugs.

Use the pictures of the elephant parades from the stories for inspiration. Talk about the designs and introduce the concept of abstract art. The original Elmer drawing was inspired by the artwork of Paul Klee. Look at the link to Elmer and Kandinsky – are there other artist's styles or patterns children could explore -E.g. Mondrian?



- [Elmer collage ideas](#)
- [Sponge paint Elmer](#)
- [Elmer on glass](#)
- [Milk jug Elmer](#)
- [Elmer meets Kandinsky](#)

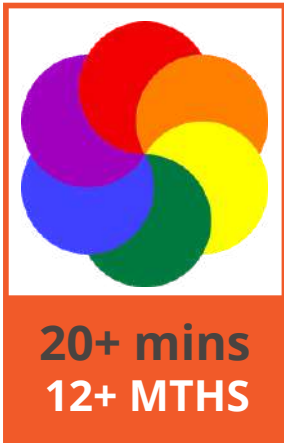
AREAS OF LEARNING

CL

PD

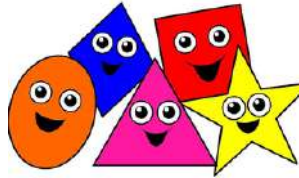
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EAD

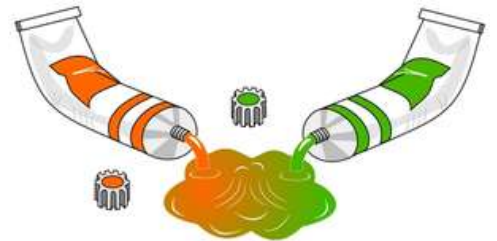


Colour exploration

Can the children name the colours on Elmer's body?
What colours are other animals?



Provide children with the primary colours, plus black and white. Let them mix these to see what other colours they can make. Consider different ways the colours can be offered, including food colouring or ink in pipettes, paint inside a sealed Ziplock bag with shaving foam, playdough, paint splodges, on a palette or other smooth surface, and powder paint.



- Colour mixing ideas
- 'Brown Bear Brown Bear, what do you see?'
- Clip about chameleons
- 'Mixed up Chameleon'

AREAS OF LEARNING





10+ mins
3+ years

Shapes and patterns

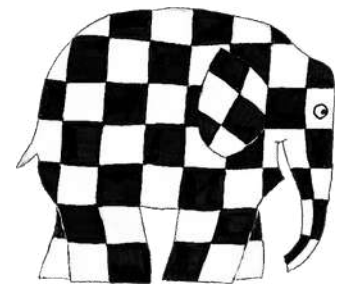
The blocks of colour on Elmer's body can be used to introduce mathematical vocabulary about shape, size, position, tessellation and repeating patterns.

Children can copy these and create their own using Lego bricks, tiles, counters etc.

Set out a repeating pattern of coloured blocks. Can the children predict what colour should come next to continue the pattern?



Not all patterns are colourful. Look at Wilbur, Elmer's cousin, who is covered in a black and white pattern.



Can children spot repeating patterns in the environment. For example: chess boards, bathroom tiles, brick walls, tiled floors and paving stones?



AREAS OF LEARNING





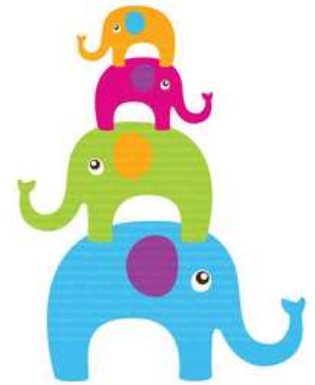
10+ mins
12+ MTHS

Sensory exploration

Create Elmer themed sensory trays, using loose part materials in different colours to explore. Add jungle animal small world figures to extend the play. Don't forget to include a selection of elephants!



AREAS OF LEARNING



20+ mins
2+ years

Elmer biscuits

Bake elephant shaped biscuits with the children to decorate. Cover them with a thin layer of icing then add coloured sprinkles or create a patchwork pattern using coloured sweets such as Smarties or Jelly Tots.



- [Simple biscuit recipe](#)
- [Elephant cookie cutter](#)

AREAS OF LEARNING





Elmer Pride: LGBTQIA+ awareness

In 2014 Elmer was named an LGBTQIA+ icon by The Guardian newspaper, in recognition of the story's message of acceptance and inclusivity. Settings can use Elmer to support children's understanding of these concepts and follow this through into June which is Pride month.



The links below, including for LGBTQIA+ young people's charity, Just Like Us, offer a range of resources to support settings to become more LGBTQIA+ aware and to help practitioners to promote equality and diversity in their settings.

There are also book suggestions for children that include LGBTQIA+ characters and books that can help answer questions for children who may be exploring their own identity.

- [Just Like Us](#)
- [Booklist: Identity](#)
- [Booklist: Characters](#)
- [Pride Month book list 0-5's](#)
- [FSF Article](#)



AREAS OF LEARNING

CL

PSED

L

UW