

WINTER ACTIVITIES:

get outside and play...

Outside play is important to all of us – young and old alike. On this webpage you will find a wealth of information of activities to get outside with your child and play together. Nature is valuable to know and understand; but until we get out there and get to know our own backyard and spaces that we live; we won't know how important it is to all of us. Researchers have found that outdoor play and nature experiences have proven beneficial for cognitive functioning, reduction in systems of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and an increase in self-discipline and emotional well being at all developmental stages. American children on average are spending less than 20 minutes of unstructured time outdoors each week. With the frost on the window and the winter wind howling outside, bundle up and head outdoors. Here are some ideas for winter activities to keep everyone sane and happy during those cold and blustery days. We all need exposure to our natural environment – it allows our brains to rest, to recover and be ready for what is in store for us next – work, school work, etc.



* Feed the birds

What you need: day-old bagels, peanut butter, birdseed and dried fruits.

What to do: Tie a piece of twine through the center of the bagel, spread on the peanut butter and then decorate with the seed and fruits. Hang the treats out on a tree branch and watch as the birds enjoy their feast. Winter is tough for birds, who have limited food supplies when the world outside is frozen. Have your child keep a record of all the species of birds that come to the feeder and what date each first was spotted. For more information on bird watching, visit <http://www.birdwatching.com/>

* Crystal Balls

What you need: Bubble solution (or one part Joy or Dawn dishwashing liquid to 10 parts water), glycerin and sugar. Bubble blowers, wire shaped into a circle, or try a straw with 4 (1cm) slits at the end.

What to do: On a cold day with light wind, form a bubble, but do not let it escape. As the bubble freezes, watch the formation of ice crystals. If you leave it long enough, it will form a crystal ball.

* Take a Good, Close Look at Snowflakes

What you need: Black paper or fabric (place in freezer) Magnifying glass

What to do: Take the black paper or fabric out of the freezer and outside when it's snowing.

Let some snowflakes land on the paper and quickly use the magnifying glass to see the beautiful shapes.

* Snowflakes on Glass

What you need: A piece of glass and hairspray (aerosol, not pump)

What to do: Freeze the glass and the hairspray and wait for the snow to fall. Spray the frozen glass with the frozen hairspray and let some snowflakes settle on the glass. Bring the glass inside to thaw for 15 minutes and you will have a permanent record of your snowflakes.

* See How Much Water is in the Snow

What you need: A container, preferably clear plastic, ruler, snow

What to do: Gently fill the container with fresh snow, then bring it inside and let it melt. Measure how much water is in the container. You can try this several times over the winter, using different kinds of snow (light fine snow and big fluffy snow) to see if there is any difference in the amount of water.



❄️ Snow Mosaic

Create a snowy self-portrait that doubles as a tasty treat for animals that might stop by to admire and sample your work.

Materials



- Birdseed (such as sunflower seeds and cracked corn)
- Fruits and vegetables (like apples, kale and carrots)
- Food coloring
- Pump bottles

Instructions

- Start by prepping your art materials; fill the pump bottles with different hues of food-color-tinted water and cut up various fruits and vegetables. Then take the materials outside.
- Next, start your masterpiece by lying back in the snow to make a body print.

Gently rock your body to pack the print, then carefully get up (you may need a friend's help).

- Create a portrait by filling in the shape with the seeds and vegetable pieces and adding details with the colored water.

Tips:

Younger kids may find it easier to work with fewer materials and to use cups or small pitchers (instead of their hands) to pour lines of seed. Remember to have the artists sign their initials somewhere, too!

❄️ Birdseed Snow Angel

Kids can delight their feathered friends by decorating a snow angel with a mosaic made of birdseed.



Materials

- Various types of birdseed (like thistle, corn, sunflower and safflower)
- Cups
- Pine boughs

Instructions

- This angel is easiest made by a team: One partner lies down to make a snow angel while the other partner stands by to help the maker get up without messing up the imprint.
- After the imprint is formed, pour cups of birdseed into the angel, filling the head and body with bands of variously colored seed.
- For a finishing touch, add pine boughs for the angel's spreading wings.

❄️ Snow Treasure Island Hunt

Hide a chest full of loot in the snow, then watch young castaways track it down clue by clue.



Materials

- Cooler
- Treats
- Magazines (optional)
- Paper
- Markers
- Plastic bags

Instructions

- Pack a cooler full of treats and then hide the "treasure chest."
- Create a series of clues leading to the chest. Use either pictures from magazines or create your own with markers and paper.
- Place each clue in a plastic bag and hide it in the snow.
- Begin the hunt by handing the players their first clue.

Tips:

Look around the yard for good clue hiding places and plot them on paper. Then create the picture clues for each spot and hide them in order (keep the master list just in case a clue gets lost). For more sophisticated castaways, give them their clues in riddles or use rebuses.

❄️ Winter Sun Catcher

This eye-catching ornament strikes a festive note as a yard decoration -- make it a day or two ahead so it will have plenty of time to freeze. Or make it with friends as a fun project.

Feel free to improvise with any colorful natural materials you have on hand.

Materials

- Disposable foil pan (we used a rectangular cake pan)
- One orange cut into rounds
- A few small pine branches
- Fresh or frozen cranberries
- Sturdy twine, cut into 4 lengths (ours were about 2 feet each)

Instructions

- Place the pan on a flat surface. Arrange the orange rounds and pine branches in the pan and add enough water to cover them. Sprinkle on the berries. For the

hanging cords, lay one end of each piece of twine in the pan, submerging it at least several inches. Let the pan freeze outside (or place it in the freezer).

- Remove the ice block from the pan (run warm water over the back if needed) and hang it up outside.



❄️ Snow Chateau

Crown yourself a royal architect and build beautiful rainbow-colored ice castles.

Materials

- Plastic containers
- Food coloring
- Natural materials

Instructions

- Fill containers (pails, gelatin molds, plastic storage containers, cups) with water. Then add food coloring (about 20 drops of color per cup of water) and freeze outside overnight.
- Before building, bring the ice to room temperature. When you see a bit of water on top or when the ice turns in its container that means the ice is ready to slip out.
- Build away. Decorate the completed castles with sticks and mini pine boughs, if desired.



Tips:

If the ice shapes aren't sticking when you stack, add snow between to "glue" them together.

❄️ Mini-Snow Golf

Set-up a course where players putt across a frosty green and the ever-changing conditions -- ice, slush, and blizzards -- keep the game exciting.

Materials

- Spray bottles
- Green food coloring
- Various obstacles
- Scissors
- Felt
- Glue
- Tape
- Wooden dowels

Instructions

- Stomp down an area around each hole (hard-packed snow holds color better than fluffy snow does).



- Mix water and green food coloring in a spray bottle, then spray the mixture on the packed snow. (Note: Unless you want green jeans, don't lie or sit on the sprayed snow.)
- Once the green is set, add wacky obstacles like these: pool toy rings or a hula hoop sunk halfway in the snow; a toboggan or skateboard upside down; a trash-can lid; a tunnel through the bottom of a snowman. And don't forget to make holes: recycled plastic containers sunk in the snow.
- To make a flag, cut a triangle from one color of felt and a number from another. Glue them together. Then tape or staple the flag around a dowel or ski pole. If necessary, wrap a rubber band around the dowel under the flag to keep it from slipping.

Tips:

Use a rubber ball and hockey-stick "nine iron" (a broom also works) to sink aces like the pros.

*** Snowball Tag**

For kids, one of the best parts of winter is the chance to toss—and dodge—snowballs. This year, put a spin on the fun with a frosty version of dodge-ball.

Materials

- snowballs

Instructions

- Match up each child with an adult, and have each team make two snowballs (loosely packed!).
- Each pair must either link elbows, hold hands, or team up piggyback style. The choice is theirs, but they must stick with it throughout the contest.
- Pairs must try to hit another team with one of their snowballs and avoid being tagged themselves. Duos that remains untagged when everyone is out of snowballs face off in a second round, and so on, until one team is left the victor.

*** Frosty Furniture**

Creating a snow art table – use it for a snack of hot cocoa or cider...imagination soar

Materials

- Shovels
- pine branches – any branches
- plates, cups, your favorite drinks and snacks

Instructions

Build something human-size out of snow; but not another snow fort. Use shovels to pile up, pack and carve the snow, then decorate the front with pine branches or other branches and cones. Decorate however you wish – then set up thermoses of hot cocoa or cider – snacks. Make some Frosty Cupcakes (see recipe below)

Tip: Use the sharp edge of the snow shovel to square up the side of your table creation or whatever you decide to create.



FROSTY CUPCAKES



Ingredients

- Cooled cupcake (baked from your favorite recipe), White icing, Large marshmallows, Waxed paper, Pretzel sticks, Decorators' gel, Orange slice candy, Junior Mints, Thin Mints, Fruit leather

Instructions

1. Frost a cooled cupcake (baked from your favorite recipe) with white icing.
2. Flatten a large marshmallow on waxed paper with the palm of your hand. Cut a second marshmallow in half horizontally, and then stack the halves on the first marshmallow to form a torso and head.
3. Push a thin pretzel stick down through the snowman (this will help him stand up), then set him on the cupcake. Use decorators' gel to create a mouth, eyes, and buttons, and then add pretzel stick arms and a wedge cut from an orange slice candy for a nose. Accessorize with a candy hat (a Junior Mint secured to a Thin Mint with icing) and a fruit leather scarf.

- ❄️ **Count Your Steps with a Pedometer** Whether it's a relaxing stroll or a fun saunter in the brisk winter air, enjoy the Great Outdoors by taking a walk. The Surgeon General recommends that everyone participate in 30 minutes of moderate exercise a day, and walking is a great way for the whole family to get active. Want to see how far you've gone on the walk? Hook a simple pedometer to your pocket and record your steps. Don't have a pedometer handy? Plug in any route to G-Maps Pedometer at www.gmap-pedometer.com/ and let the computer do the calculating.
- ❄️ **Keep a Photo Logbook** Engage in the winter season by starting a photo logbook with the family. As a long-term project, encourage kids to get outdoors, take a walk and capture photos of the same location during varying points of the season – early winter, first snowfall, late winter – and log the photos in an album. As winter days change, compare the location photos for similarities and differences. For a short-term logbook project, have kids snap photos of shadows throughout the day and discuss the light changes and colors.
- ❄️ **Animal Tracking** A fun way to get some outdoor exercise, foster observational skills, and learn more about animals and their winter habits is to follow their tracks. Winter is a great time to go animal tracking in your own backyard or in a nearby park. Start the outdoor adventure by having kids search for tracks in newly fallen snow or muddy patches. Take measurements and sketch drawings of the tracks. Then, have kids search for other signs of an animal's presence, including rub marks, bite marks and scratches on trees and other vegetation, and snap photos. For more information on identifying animal tracks, visit your local library and pick up a book about animal tracks.
- ❄️ **Play Snow Games** Kids will abandon their video games for a classic winter pastime – a good, old-fashioned snowball fight. Add a few more games to the winter fun repertoire with freeze tag and red rover, which will get everyone's blood pumping. True to its name, powder-puff football is great to play in powdery snow. Grab a spray bottle filled with water and food coloring and use it to draw goal lines in the snow. Then, line up your teams for the big game!
- ❄️ **Travel to Snowy Spots** Soak in winter's majesty this year by taking the family to visit breathtaking, snow-laden locations where they can participate in a variety of fun outdoor activities. From day trips to weeklong skiing excursions, create family vacation memories of the Great Outdoors that will last a lifetime. Before you travel, explore wintry destinations and enjoy panoramic views using webcams on the Internet at <http://www.earthcam.com/>
- ❄️ **Track the Snowfall** Whether it's your own backyard or a city hundreds of miles away, teach your kids and grandkids about snowfall patterns and how to track the weather using www.weather.com. Pick a few locations nationwide, including neighborhoods where other family members live and cities that get large snowfalls, then punch in the zip codes to record snowfall in inches throughout the winter. Don't forget to get your kids off the couch and into the backyard so that they can compare the numbers from around the country with the snowfall they measure right at home using a simple ruler.
- ❄️ **Visit a Zoo** Our furry friends need company during the cold winter months too, so grab your hat and gloves and take a walk through your local zoo. In addition to great animal sightings, you are likely to learn about the seasonal habits of many different creatures throughout the zoo. Do they hibernate? Be sure to visit the penguins and polar bears in their natural weather habitats. Find the zoo nearest you at the Association for Zoos and Aquariums at www.aza.org/FindZooAquarium/
- ❄️ **Create Art Using Nature** The treasures found outside in winter can transform any blank sheet of construction paper into a work of art. Take the kids out on a nature hike in the neighborhood before the first snowfall and have them collect fallen sticks, dried leaves, pinecones and small pebbles to paste into a collage. With a glue stick and some crayons, they will easily have the refrigerator decorated in no time.
- ❄️ **Explore Nearby Creeks and Rivers** Changing river depths and temperatures can be fascinating phenomena to explore throughout the winter with the kids. Take the family outdoors to a lake or a river near you and visit it periodically throughout the winter with a ruler, thermometer and camera in hand. Keep a record of how temperature and water depth fluctuate throughout the season while snapping shots of the landscape at varying locations. Compare and contrast the different colors of the river's surroundings and keep an eye out for the changing population of critters and insects.
- ❄️ **Winter Scavenger Hunt**
Winter is a great time to get outside and see some of the art and beauty of nature. Create a winter scavenger hunt list to help you sharpen your observation skills. Watch for these items this winter as you hike, ski, and play outdoors. When you find one of these items, check it off by clicking on the box. See if you can complete the list before the end of winter. If you need any help – email me at cindy.newkirk@in.nacdn.net or call at 317-462-2283 Ext 3.

* Winter Stargazing

Here are some fun activities you can do as you stargaze at the winter sky:

1. See the Earth's rotation by watching the star field change positions in the sky.
2. Find a bright star or planet near the eastern or western horizon and note its position in the sky, wait one hour, then view it again and notice the change in position. It also works well to find a landmark that doesn't move and compare a star's location in the sky to this landmark at different times of the night. Remember to stand in the exact same place each time.
3. Find the Milky Way. It is a band of stars which looks cloudy and crosses the sky through the following constellations: Cassiopeia, Perseus, and between Gemini and Orion. Look for winter constellations: Orion, Taurus, Gemini, Cassiopeia, Pegasus, Big Dipper or Ursa Major, Little Dipper or Ursa Minor.
4. Find out where these and others are by looking at a January star chart and take it with you outdoors.
5. Look for bright and colorful stars: Polaris (the North Star), Betelgeuse (beetle-juice) is orange in color; Rigel is a bluish-white colored star. A star's color is caused by its surface temperature, blue and white being the hottest, and red and orange being cooler.
6. Find planets in the sky. Planets will look like stars, but you can actually see 5 planets without a telescope. In early January, Venus can be seen shining very brightly in the southwest after sunset, and will sink closer to the horizon as the month goes on. Mars and Jupiter can be seen higher and a little farther south, or to your left. Saturn will be even farther south (left) and even higher in the sky.
7. Look for meteors.

* **Crate Races on Skates** Stack two plastic crates upside down on top of each other (use duct tape or tie them together). Young skaters can practice by pushing the crates or even racing each other. Always pick a smooth area of ice – no bumps or cracks.

* **Pokagon State Park** Pokagon State Park is a clear first choice for winter fun in Indiana State Parks. Located near Angola in the northeastern part of the state, it borders on Lake James and Snow Lake, which offer abundant recreational opportunities. Park features a quarter-mile toboggan track, which operates weekends from Thanksgiving through February. Winter activities also include camping, ice fishing, and cross-country skiing. The Potawatomi Inn offers both cabins and hotel-style rooms.

* **Brown County State Park** Brown County State Park is the largest state park in Indiana, and includes nearly 20 miles of roads, with numerous scenic vistas. Large campgrounds, hiking trails, and extensive horse riding facilities make the park popular on a year-round basis. The park includes Weed Patch Hill, one of the highest points in the state, at 1,058 feet in elevation. The rustic Abe Martin Lodge, located in the park, offers rooms and 20 housekeeping cabins year round. For reservations and/or more information, call 812-988-4418.

LINKS



<http://www.grandparents.com/gp/events/indianapolis.html>

<http://www.naturerocks.org/>

<http://familyfun.go.com/>

<http://www.childrenandnature.org/>

On really cold days and you can't go outside....think about spring and try these indoor activities.....

- * **Study and take care of "Peculiar plants"** What kid wouldn't be fascinated by an insect-eating plant? Many garden centers sell Venus flytraps in their houseplant section. Then visit your library or search the Internet for more information on the natural habitat and growth habits of this unusual plant.
- * **Decorate while you wait** Let kids indulge their natural creativity by painting inexpensive terra cotta pots to use next spring, for repotting houseplants this winter, or for birthday and thank you gifts. Kid-safe, durable paints can be purchased at most craft shops.
- * **Get a jump on spring** Plan a visit to your local garden center to buy seeds; let your child help select varieties from the seed catalogs. Then start seeds indoors to plant outside after the last frost. Ask the experts at your garden center or check your favorite gardening book to determine when to start seeds.
- * **Windowsill gardens** All you need is a sunny spot and a few containers of soil. Herbs are an excellent choice for windowsills.
- * **Worm farm** Line a large cardboard box with a garbage bag. Fill it with soil, organic matter, and a few worms. Keep it shady and moist, but not too wet. Add kitchen scraps (vegetables only!) Worms will help teach your kids about the interdependence of plants and organisms as they turn vegetable kitchen scraps into valuable compost.

- ❄️ **Terrariums** Carefully place some soil and a few mosses and plants (with roots) inside a clean jar (you can use any size). Keep your indoor garden moist with a plant spray pump, and cover the opening with clear plastic wrap.
- ❄️ **Pot People** Draw or paint faces on small clay pots, and then fill with soil. Plant grass seed, water, and watch the "hair" grow.
- ❄️ **Build a birdhouse** Lots of Birdhouse kits and plans are available at most garden centers and craft shops. This is a great activity for a cold winter's night.

List of FUN ACTIVITIES for kids and adults outside in the winter

We all need fresh air and exercise....so get out there and play with your kids (dress warm and have fun)

- ❄️ Make a snow angel by lying on your back in the snow and spreading out your arms to the side then moving them up and down. Get up carefully and see your angel with wing prints.
- ❄️ Build a snow fort. Have a snow ball fight.
- ❄️ Build a snowman. Give him a carrot nose and a hat.
- ❄️ Take a walk and look for animal tracks.
- ❄️ Play chase, tag, or hide and seek.
- ❄️ Ride your bike or scooter or sled.
- ❄️ Jump on a trampoline.
- ❄️ Shovel snow.



- ❄️ Build an igloo.
- ❄️ Put out suet and birdseed for birds.
- ❄️ Wrap in a big stadium blanket and sit on the porch swing.
- ❄️ Bird watch; sketch or write about the ones you see in your backyard.
- ❄️ Scavenger hunt for winter nature stuff.
- ❄️ Collect pinecones for decorations, fire starters, wreaths
- ❄️ Watch the sunset.
- ❄️ Skip stones across the pond or lake.

- ❄️ Ice skate.
- ❄️ Go sledding down a hill.
- ❄️ Shovel a path in the yard like a maze.
- ❄️ Put up a bird feeder.
- ❄️ Visit with neighbors. Drink hot chocolate outside.
- ❄️ Lick an icicle.
- ❄️ Sit in a sunny place and absorb sunshine.
- ❄️ Play with toy cars and trucks in the dirt or snow.
- ❄️ Play expedition. Pretend you are an explorer going to the North Pole in your own backyard.
- ❄️ Pull someone or something in a wagon or on a sled.
- ❄️ Take a nature hike.
- ❄️ Lie on the ground and watch the sky. What do the clouds look like?



LET IT SNOW....let it snow...let it snow

- ❄️ Make a neighborhood map. Color it later inside.
- ❄️ Decorate a tree in your yard with streamers to blow in the wind.
- ❄️ Watch for animals-- What animals are in your neighborhood?
- ❄️ Have a winter picnic. Take along a warm sandwich and cookies in an insulated bag, cocoa in a thermos or even hot soup in a soup thermos. Take a blanket to sit on.
- ❄️ Sketch houses, barns, buildings, plants and animals.
- ❄️ Look for winter plants to look up later and study.
- ❄️ Make a list of the trees in your yard.
- ❄️ Feed ducks and water birds.

ADD YOUR FAVORITES HERE.....

- ❄️ (1)
- ❄️ (2)
- ❄️ (3)
- ❄️ (4)
- ❄️ (5)

Tips on Dressing for Cold Weather:

As you prepare to be outside in severe cold weather, please remember the following:

- 🧤 Mittens provide more warmth to your hands than gloves.
- 🧤 Most of your body heat is lost through your head so wear a hat, preferably one that covers your ears.
- 🧤 Dress in warm layers so you can remove items if you get too warm.
- 🧤 Recognize the symptoms of hypothermia that can be a serious medical condition: confusion, dizziness, exhaustion and severe shivering. Seek medical attention immediately if you have these symptoms.
- 🧤 Recognize frostbite warning signs: gray, white or yellow skin discoloration, numbness, waxy feeling skin. Seek medical attention immediately if you have these symptoms.
- 🧤 Wear waterproof, insulated boots to help avoid hypothermia or frostbite by keeping your feet warm and dry and to maintain your footing in ice and snow.
- 🧤 Get out of wet clothes immediately and warm the core body temperature with a blanket or warm fluids like hot cider or soup. Avoid drinking caffeine or alcohol if you expect you or someone you are trying to help has hypothermia or frostbite.

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