

Five things to do with... ice

With winter well under way, *Julie Mountain* finds some icy things to do

1: PUDDLE JUMPING

Find icy puddles and jump in them. Few winter activities are more simple or joyful than smashing the thin sheet of ice over a shallow puddle.

- Draw around the puddles with chalk – go back later to see if they've shrunk or expanded. Why? Remember that water expands when it freezes.
- Count the puddles. Which puddle is the biggest and which is the smallest? With older children, use a metre rule to measure the dimensions of the puddle. Can you find a puddle that is *longer than a child is tall*?

2: MAKE ICE PENDANTS

A magical activity for a truly freezing night! Pour water into shallow vessels such as plastic food boxes, egg poachers, saucers, ice-cube trays and sweet-tin lids. Collect lots of natural materials – leaves, tiny cones, pebbles, flower petals, feathers, shells and so on. Place one or two in each vessel of water – or arrange to make an attractive picture in one of the larger lids. Loop a short length of string and place the ends into the water. Leave outdoors to freeze overnight – the string will freeze into the water so that your beautiful pendant can be hung from a tree the next morning. Add sparkle or colour with glitter, liquid paint or food colouring.



3: DINOSAUR (OR DRAGON) EGGS

Fill small balloons with water and food colouring – a funnel will make this easier. Stretch the neck of each balloon and push a small-world dinosaur into it. Freeze until solid, then remove the balloon itself. Place the eggs around the garden – hiding some. Begin by talking about dinosaurs, or reading a story such as *Oliver and His Egg* by Paul Schmid. Equip children with explorers' kit (hats, magnifying glasses, a map) and set out on a dinosaur egg hunt.

- For three- to five-year-olds, connect the story or discussion points to the discoveries outdoors. How did these eggs get here? What shall we do with them? As they begin to melt, what can you see inside? Which will melt the quickest – the bigger eggs or the smaller ones?
- Let babies and toddlers handle the ice eggs, lifting and transporting them in whatever way they choose.

4: FROSTY FINGERS

Wait for a really hard frost, and wrap up warmly. Find a variety of textures

Above: looking through ice
Left: exploring the feeling of frost
Below left: an ice pendant

EARLY LEARNING

Key questions for ice play:

- What does the ice feel like (prompts: smooth or rough; soft or hard; wet or dry; heavier or lighter than you thought)?
- What does ice turn into when it melts?
- Why have we found icy puddles this morning?
- Where can you go in the world to find ice and snow all year round?

that have been touched by frost, and place ungloved hands on them. What happens when a warm hand presses on frost? How long can you bear to put your hands on it? Can you write your name or draw a picture in the frost?

5: ICE-LOLLY CHALKS

Mix equal parts cornflour and water, and add plenty of food colouring or powder paint to create a thick paste. Fill the 'push-up'-style ice-lolly moulds with the mixture, and freeze until solid. Using the 'push up' lolly moulds means children don't have to hold the frozen chalk in their hands and can wear gloves to create their icy artworks outdoors. Use the same mixture to fill novelty ice cube trays in order to make ice chalk shapes to play with outdoors, or in a Tuff Spot indoors. Ice-lolly chalks are also enormous fun on a hot summer's day. ■

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BENEFIT-RISK ASSESSMENT

Key questions to consider:

- What are the **benefits** of this ice activity? How will it develop (for example) children's language, problem-solving or fine motor skills? What will they learn about the world around them? How will I know if we have had a successful ice activity session?
- What are the **risks**? For example: ice can be heavy as well as slippery; chilblains and frostbite

are a possibility if you're out too long.

- How will we **mitigate** the risks? Limit the length of the activity to fit the weather conditions, children's clothing and their age. Don't allow children to handle ice or snow for too long with their bare hands; while there's much to be gained by really feeling these intriguing textures, all the fun will be forgotten if children get frostbite!