



## SUMMER-FALL-WINTER-SPRING FAMILY PLAY PLANS

*Busy families often find it hard to set aside time for play, especially with the distraction of screens and technology.*

*TRUCE offers some seasonal, screen-free ideas to inspire your whole family — whatever their ages — to play together.*



# WINTER FAMILY PLAY PLAN

# Turn off the Screen & Turn on the SNOW

## Snow offers endless opportunities for family playtime— both indoors and out.

Young children find snow magical. It's unique. They can control how it changes and do whatever they want with it. There's no right or wrong way to play with snow, so perfection doesn't matter. As families play together, children learn skills like cooperation, turn taking, and problem-solving. And, of course, it's just plain fun for everyone.

Watch children as they play. This can help you figure out what they are working on and can help you know what to say and do.



You can add to the play by talking about what is happening: "I dug a big hole." "I made my finger disappear!" Ask simple questions: "Where did your finger go?" "How does the snow feel?" "How can we make that pile of snow taller?"

### PLAY VALUE—PRICE VALUE

Playing with snow—a free, open-ended material—can offer a deeper, more creative play experience than many of the expensive, one-purpose toys sold today.



# IDEAS FOR WINTERTIME FAMILY PLAY WITH SNOW

## SNOW NATURE

- Go on a hike to **collect natural materials**, such as pine cones, twigs, winter berries, bark, and other natural materials to use when constructing snow sculptures.

- As in the book **“Stranger in the Woods,”** construct your own snowman to feed the animals. Put birdseed in his hat, a carrot nose, eyes and ears made out of nuts or other tasty treats. Notice if animals have eaten the food. Can you tell if animals have been there? Do you see tracks?



## SNOW SCIENCE

Explore how snow melts together as a family.

- ◇ **Melting.** Fill several containers with snow and bring inside. Put them in several places around your home—on a table, in the freezer, in the refrigerator, near a sunny window, under a light bulb. Ask children to guess which will melt first, last. Set a timer for every 10 minutes and check progress.
- ◇ **Snowball thermometer.** On a mild day, make snowballs of the same size and place them on different surfaces like a rock, patch of grass, sidewalk, parked car. Observe which one melts first. Ask children why?



## SNOW GAMES

- ◆ Have a **snowball throwing contest.** Draw targets in the snow.
- ◆ **Ice cube hunt.** Freeze colored water into ice cubes. Hide around yard or park. Optional: assign points to each color.

## SNOW ART

1. Fill spray bottles with water and a little food coloring. Spray paint your snowman or other designs you've made.



2. Spread snow on a tray or cardboard box. Use old, dry markers to color the snow.

3. On fresh snow, frame your picture with sticks. Then paint with water color paints. As a family, create a large mural, with each family member contributing ideas and artwork.

4. Create a “snow snake” with a line of snowballs. Paint with water colors.

## WHAT DO THE EXPERTS SAY?

Snow play requires creativity, scientific observation, and negotiation skills. Think of the creativity fostered as children build snow creatures and use various objects to decorate them. They learn the complexities of problem solving as they try to mold snow into different designs and learn about the properties of physics as they build jumps for sledding or walls for snow forts.

- Dana Gorman, *Playfully Learning Blogspot*

## SNOW CONSTRUCTION

Gather snow in a bowl or bucket to bring inside. Find a place you don't mind getting wet. Provide spoons, scoops, measuring cups, small cars/trucks/planes, bowls of different sizes, sandbox toys. Children (and adults) will be more comfortable wearing mittens when playing with snow inside.



## TRUCE FAMILY PLAY TIP

Develop a family screen turn off ritual. Here are some ideas:

- Count all the screens that are on as you turn them off.
- See if you can turn off all the screens in a minute or less.
- Have a bin or basket where you put all portable screens during family play time.

