



**FOUR WINDS**  
**NATURE INSTITUTE**  
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## **Winter Ideas for Families Exploring Nearby Nature Together**

**There's something to see and do in every season. So put on your winter gear and warm boots and enjoy the beauty of nature in winter!**

### **On a Snowy Day**

- Put on your coat, grab your magnifier and a piece of dark-colored fleece or felt, and go outside to capture snowflakes. Make a record of all the types of crystals you see this winter! <http://www.snowcrystals.com/>
- Make a snow stamp in a snowstorm. Use water soluble markers to create a design on a coffee filter. Place the coffee filter on the snowbank while it's snowing, so snow falls on top of it. Once the filter is soaked through, look for a stamp left on the snow.
- Make a snow robot or animal. Gather containers from around the house and in your recycling box for molding a variety of shapes from snow. Assemble your molds together to make a robot or animal shape.
- Put drops of food coloring into squeeze bottles filled with water, use to paint on snow.
- Look up at the sky! What kinds of clouds do you see on your snowy day?  
<https://cloudatlas.wmo.int/cloud-identification-guide.html>
- Choose one snowflake as it's falling, watch its descent, and capture it on your tongue.
- Look for holes/tunnel entrances in the snow. Sprinkle seeds at entrance, come back another day to see if any have been eaten. Use this [animal tracks guide](#) to help you figure out who came for dinner.
- Dig a big hole straight down in the snow. What do you notice in the layers?
- Make your own track story in the snow by moving across the snow in different ways (somersaulting, hopping, crawling, etc.) and challenge someone to re-enact it.
- Look under the snow for the different evergreen ferns. Collect a variety of fronds. Lay them on a piece of newspaper and paint them with watercolors. Then carefully press a blank piece of paper on top to create beautiful prints. Here's a [guide](#) so you can identify them, if you want.

### **On an Icy Cold Day**

- Create a beautiful hanging tree ice sculpture using natural items found in the winter landscape. Arrange bouquets in muffin tins, gently pour water over them, add a loop of string to each cup, leave outside to freeze then hang from a tree and enjoy!

- Find an icy puddle or two (or more!) to investigate. Can you see the ground through the ice? How deep is the puddle? How thick is the ice? How strong? Now Stomp!
- Stand on a bridge over a stream and look for different kinds of natural ice sculptures.
- Freeze a balloon filled with water, peel off the balloon, and take it outside to play with.
- Search for different shapes of ice frozen in containers in the yard--in buckets, saucer sleds left upturned, shovels, bird baths, puddles, ice crystals in soil, etc.
- Observe the birds at your feeder on a cold day. Make some notes in your field journal about [who is visiting](#) and their different behaviors.
- Collect pieces of crusty snow or ice and build a tower. Measure the height each day for a week - is it shrinking or growing?!

### **Out in Your Yard or in Nearby Nature**

- Go on a sound safari around your yard. Keep a list (or make a map) of natural sounds you hear, and where. How about other sounds? Any you can't identify? Try again at a different time of day, or in different winter weather, and compare your lists.
- Create stick piles for wildlife shelter through the winter; then come back for some track detective work after the snow falls. Create stories about the animal tracks you find.
- Take a night time walk and listen for owls, coyotes, the wind in the pines. Can you imitate the noises?
- Pull out a tarp to sit on and sleeping bags to keep you warm while you do some stargazing. What constellations do you see? [Star Constellations](#)
- Look for the colors of winter. Take a box of crayons outside and go on a scavenger hunt to find something natural that matches each color. Use the crayon to draw it.

### **Just for Fun**

- Challenge your family to a birdwatching contest! Can you find 20 different species in your neighborhood? Here's a [guide](#) to keep track of some of the common birds you might see in winter.
- Collect natural materials around your yard, and use them to invent a game - to play alone or teach your family members. Can you imagine rules for a game of Pinecone Golf? Or Snowball Bullseyes? Or Pick Up Sticks with an armful of big sticks?

Take photos of your kids in nature and tag Four Winds (<https://fwni.org/>) in your social media: #fwni, #nearbynature, #thenatureprogram, #fourwinds, #fourwindsvolunteer