



Winter Sensory Table Ideas

Sensory activities are a necessity in an early childhood learning environment. A sensory table is a great way for children to experience hands on learning. You can put just about anything in your sensory table for children to explore.

The following is a list of ideas of things you can put in a winter themed sensory table. I would like to thank the wonderful women of my yahogroups childcareand2 and shelleylovettssecprintables for sharing their awesome ideas.

Please remember that not all items are suitable for all age levels. Small objects should not be placed in a table where children under the age of three will be using them.

Some of the things I use for my winter sensory table include:

Instant Potato Flakes
Cotton Balls
Shaving Cream With Glitter
Snow

Cars and trucks can be added to drive around in the "snow". We also use measuring cups and spoons.

Shelley Lovett
childcareland.com

I put shredded paper in our table---then hide different objects in the shredded paper--the objects fit whatever theme we happen to be working on that week or month.

Another thing I do with the Winter Sensory Table is to put construction paper in the table and let the children tear the paper into shreds--this helps them get ready for handwriting--we then use the shreds in our arts and crafts projects.

Shirley Wilson
Bradenton, Fl.

Packing peanuts are great for a January sensory table. It's pretend snow. Has lots of static,too. My kids had a blast playing with them last year.

Stacy

A couple of ideas. We use shaving cream and let the kids drive the cars in it. We also use cotton balls with scoops and shovels and my favorite ice fishing. We get a piece of the foam insulation cut to fit the top of your sensory table (I cut mine to fit snugly in the top so it rests inside the table but only on the top) and cut two holes in it about 5 or 6 inches round then

cover all the foam with foil put magnetic fish in the table place the foam ice on top and magnetic poles and let them ice fish. They love it!

Deanna

I use a few different types of beans all together for my son. He loves it! I know his speech therapist said to put rice also. He really likes the beans & didn't care for the rice when I did add them before. I really enjoy your emails & tones of ideas.

Take care,
Rose

I also use different size ice shapes for the kids to chip away at.

Packing peanuts are great too.

Tina McIntosh

You could have fake snow:

<http://www.sno-wonder.com/product.asp>

<http://www.thinkgeek.com/geektoys/science/79ea/>

We also include mittens, wool fabrics (watch for allergies), fleece fabrics, holly leaves and berries, pinecones and needles, marshmallows, dried leaves, nuts, fruits, and grasses, and cloved

oranges.

:)

Amanda

Put in ice cubes and let them children try to build structures with them. Ask what is happening to the ice as they play with it---it brings up the question of why is it melting?

Purchase the instant snow and put in the table.

Earlene Bogart

I have used shaving cream and mittens. The students wear the mittens while playing with the shaving cream. The mittens work well when dealing with ice as well, usually before they are exposed to the coldness of the cube.

I have also used packing bubbles in the table and placed mittens or cut outs of hats, gloves and boots for the children to find. The cut out could have digits, dots, shapes and colors that can be used as a matching activity.

Another idea is to fill small storage bins with coco mix or brown sand and place miniature marshmallows in the mixture for students to sift through and find.

Hope this helps. My 3-5 year old's with special needs have always enjoyed them.

Sincerely,
Ellen McPhillips
Yonkers, NY

I put styrofoam popcorn along with spoons, measuring cups, muffin tins and tongs.

JMBoen

I made blocks of ice using empty baby wipe containers. I filled my sensory table about 2 inches full of water and floated the big block of ice + about 2 big bowls of ice cubes. The kids have LOVED it! The plus from this is, I'm not hearing about the kids not taking turns. They visit the sensory table and move on in just a couple of minutes!!!!

Leslie
Houston, TX

I am thinking about putting dry instant mash potatoes in mine.

Patty, Illinois

I use ice that is frozen to look like an ice rink and we skate little people on it. We also have done shaving cream with ice to make it feel cold, the kids love it.

Kim Fissette
Elk Grove, IL

I use package pieces in my sand table now and the kids love it.

Daniela Lofaro

Hi.

I use the 'fake' instant snow and plastic Christmas snowflakes. We do not have real snow often in Atlanta, Georgia.

Virginia

What about using confetti or shredded paper? I have used them before.

Christine Elder

In addition to what you have mentioned, I have used the following in my winter sensory table....

marshmallows

ice

magic snow (a powder that becomes snow when water is added)

Linda Shawcross

Ice with small animals in for the kids to chip away at.

Ice cubes plain and colored using food coloring

Clean mud (toilet paper, water, and ivory soap)

Kristy Buss

White packing peanuts and mitten cut outs (they were two mitts cut from felt and sewn together like a real mitt just small). Then like in the story the mitten children choose a mitt and search through the "snow" for the mate.

Sharon

We put cotton balls in the dry table along with tongs and some artic animals. For the water table we have icebergs. We freeze large butter tubs with blue food coloring and place it along with artic animals inside the water table with warm water. We also discuss why the icebergs are melting.

Melody Bernal

I use the white packing styrofoam peanuts that come in packages. The kids love it!

Heather D in Iowa

I use Insta Snow from Steve Spangler Science. All you have to do is add water and the powder and it feels like real snow. They have Blizzard in a bucket that is only 14.95, that comes with various tools and the Insta Snow, or you can just buy the InstaSnow. They have various amounts and prices for the Insta Snow. My students love when I change the sensory table to the fake snow.

The website is <http://www.stevespanglerscience.com>. At the top, there

is a search box and just type in Insta Snow.

Amber Wolf

White Packing Peanuts
Shredded Paper

Julie George

For winter..... plain white rice the s pieces of styrofoam packing
..... oatmeal.

Gisele Johnston

Rice colored with alcohol and food coloring (it's mouse proof).

R. Silter

I fill my sensory table in the winter with salt. I add some white or blue
glitter too. It looks great and the kids tell me it is snow.

Karen

I put snow in ours just yesterday, my kids had a ball, of course they brought
in the hot wheels trucks :)

Gwen Apger

We use ice, either frozen in ice cube trays or frozen in different size plastic bowls to make icebergs and float them in water. The children can also use a salt shaker with salt it to stick the ice chuncks together to make ice shapes.

Kelly Nutter

bare twigs and some evergreen branches
pine cones
coal
hot water bottle
woolly socks
bird nuts and fat balls

janice mcglen
crieff
Scotland

Right now my table is full of snowballs, both styrofoam and cotton, foam snowflakes and larger glitter plastic snowflakes. My winter unit right now is penguins so they are also included. I have small paper plates with numbers and that's how many snowballs or snowflakes the children have to place on the plate, it is their ticket to play in the snow table. I also add white shredded paper which makes it very interesting.

Lucy

I have frozen rubber sea animals in ice cubes and then let the kids go ice fishing. They put them in pails and then see what they caught. I have also put in styrofoam pieces to use for ice bergs.

Tara

I use polyester pillow stuffing with shovels and buckets. I also use socks rolled up into "snowballs". Of course, mittens are included in the center to keep their hands "warm"!
Happy Teaching!

Missy Earl

Last month, I sprayed shaving cream in front of my 4&5 year olds and after they played awhile, I gave them some more added red or blue tempera paint to it and asked them to draw a picture in the shaving cream. When they were done, I layed a piece of art paper on top of it to transfer the picture from the table to the paper and allowed to dry. They were hung on the doors in the classroom after the dictation of the picture was done for all the parents to see.

The children really enjoy playing in the shavingcream and were fasinated when the picture Magicly appeared onto the Paper!!!!

Olivia Engle

I live in Southeast Texas and we don't receive snow down here. Steve Spangler the Science Guy has "Insta Snow". I use it in our sensory table when we do "Winter Wonderland" theme. The kids love to help make it and love to play in it. And it really feels cold. It is the closest thing to snow that we have.

Dana
Magnolia, Texas

How about ice cubes of all sizes and ice shavings. If you freeze small toys inside it's even more fun. It also becomes a science lesson on melting and what becomes of ice when it is in a warm place.

Julie Fitzpatrick

Winter Sensory--packing "peanuts" for snow. We have already removed ours, and have put rice and beans in it. We may even cook some for the class.

Isa @ Ga

We use macaroni and/or rice - hide objects such as pipecleaner snowflakes, cottonball snowmen, rubber hearts (valentines) etc.

Also use Styrofoam packing peanuts(providing students with big bulky mittens), playdoh with rice mixed in, playdoh with oatmeal.

We also use a closed sensory box - (black cloth covering hole in box) and place various items in it for students to come up with the word of the day. We give a clue - i.e. this week's words have to do with temperature (we only meet 2 days a week) - items: cold pack (cold), activated mitten warmer (warm). Another week - textures: items- cotton balls (soft), sand paper covered block (rough), etc. Clothing items - winter hat, gloves, wool socks, etc.

--JulieAnne, Rochester NY

This afternoon I put in some of that instant snow stuff. I bought it at a local teacher supply store. It's soooooooooo cool!!!!

Tammy Oveson

I have a sand and water table inside our house in our small playroom. We love the basic sand and water "beach" to build sand castles and hide buried treasure-- great for fine motor skills when picking up with a clothes pin.

We also use Styrofoam popcorn. My daughter loves the feel. She will dig and play then start breaking them up which is also great for strengthening those small fingers for writing.

I try to change it up each week so we have also used: cotton balls for snow, shaving cream to practice letter and number writing, then add food coloring for color exploration, play dough, baking soda mixed with water, Insta-Snow (from Target)-great science experiment, and marble painting- put a clean piece of paper down and a few drops of paint then roll marbles through the paint for beautiful pictures!

On the water side we have used sea creatures to learn about the ocean, put foil under the water for a shimmery look, made our own boats from various materials like foil or Styrofoam and tested to see if they would float and we have gathered object from around the house and made predictions to

see if they would sink or float then tested our hypothesis- another great way to introduce science to preschoolers.

Stacey in VA

I enjoying teaching a hot chocolate unit during the winter months. In my sensory table I use:

flour- 12 cups or more

cocoa (unsweetened)- as much as desired

1 carton of salt

Mix it all together and add sifters, plastic spoons, cups etc.

Lots of Ohhhhhhhhhhh's and Ahhhhhhhhhhh's.

It's fun and the children love it. Easy to clean.

Note: I use salt to keep the flour (powder) down. It keeps it from going into the air.

Ruth Stewart

Some things to use in the sensory table for winter: Rice, white packing peanuts, shredded white paper

Elaine

Here in Minnesota we get lots of snow so we always put that in our table when possible. The kids wear extra pairs of mittens we have available.

We also put water and add icebergs (cool whip containers make great icebergs) and plastic penguins, polar bears, etc.

We use clear cube blocks which look like ice cubes as well.

Margie Jones
Kids Connection
St. Anthony, MN

In our preschool we use a product called Insta - Snow which we order from the School Specialty catalog. It comes in power form and you add water to it. It fluffs up like real snow and is cool to the touch. The kids love it.

Kathy Stuby
KECC Director

Ice blocks and water (like the artic); use cleaned milk cartons, fill with water and freeze

Rice

Styrofoam

Packing Peanuts

Dee Osborne

Clean mud - toilet paper, ivory soap flakes, and water (mix together and it makes a white mud substance)

Snowball soap - shred ivory soap(bars) and add a little water (makes a thick snowy texture that you can form into snowballs)

Jennifer Dingfelder
Zumbrota P.M.
Head Start Teacher

white shredded paper
shaving cream
white instant rice
instant potatoes
cotton balls
packing peanuts
cold water w/no tears shampoo to make "snow" bubbles
ping pong balls (snowballs)
ice cubes (or freeze water in bowls to make bigger ice chunks)
white flour
white sand

Colleen (KS)
VPMM of Cpl Josh - USMarine Corp
VPM of Megan, DJ & Jesse
VPM & VPMIL of Daniel & Rachel
Colleen's Country Kids Childcare

I freeze ice blocks in margarine containers and put them in the sensory table. We also sprinkle salt on some of them and see which ones melt first.

- rice
-oatmeal
pasta
mixed beans
shredded paper

Kay Holmes

We have our sand table set up right now with scissors and white paper for the children to cut "snow flakes" into. They stand for such a long time, practicing their cutting and making a snowstorm! The best part for the custodian is not vacuuming up the scraps from the floor!

Have a great day!
Laura

I love to use Steve Spangler's InstaSnow with our small winter animals, such as polar bears, penguins, seals, etc.

Debbie Grace

Ice?

Changing from a liquid to a solid and expanding in size, to melting to a liquid again. That was just the start of this adventure. We filled a gallon milk jug with water and then dropped colored straws into the jug. As they fell into the jug they fanned out and made a spiral. We placed the jug in the freezer for the next day. Cut off the container and the straws were beautiful. Of course it was a solid, wet, cold, but it felt like it burned if you kept your hands on it to long.

As it melted and began to expose the straws, the kids began to see if they could pull them out. Each day after worktime we replaced the ice into the freezer. Again, took it out and watched the process of it turning to a liquid, and the straws becoming exposed more. The challenge became hugh to pull the straws out. Their hands were cold and wet and could hardly hold onto the straws. They did after a few days pull them out. They became

interested in the holes it left. They laced the straws back in and they tried lace string, and pipe cleaners into the holes. We had one gallon that did not freeze all the way the first night. So therefore there was water in the middle. This opened another conversation.

This was a big hit with all the kids.

Ms. Holly Roth
Elizabeth Early Childhood Program

Hello everyone,

I think adding leaves, grains of salt, oatmeal and crumbled bread will be interesting to add to the winter sensory box.

C. Rose

Winter Sensory Table

Fill A Large Bucket With Snow Or Ice &
put animals in it or shovels and pails for the kids to play with.

Winter Snow Recipe

Materials: Soap flakes, water, liquid starch, and white powdered tempera.

Description: Mix soap flakes with water into a thick paste. Let children mix with a hand beater. Add a small amount of liquid starch and tempera. Let children create designs by painting with this mixture.

Ice Block Designs

Children observe how salt melts ice and create colorful designs in large blocks of ice.

Materials: Large ice blocks (We made them by freezing water in empty one gallon milk containers). When the water is completely frozen, tear off the cardboard container.

Coarse salt

Food coloring
Eye droppers

Description:

1. Place ice blocks on trays covered with several layers of newspaper.
2. Children sprinkle coarse salt on top of the ice blocks.
3. Children drip various colors of food coloring on top of the ice block.
4. Tunnels of color are created as the salt melts through the ice block.
5. Put the colorful ice blocks outside. If it's cold enough, they should stay frozen for several days. Children can continue to examine the melting process during outdoor play.

Comments: If possible, give each child his or her own block of ice. They love watching the changes that occur as the blocks melt away!

Snow Painting

Need empty spray bottles. Fill them with water and add a few drops of food coloring (or washable tempera powder paint). Put rubber dishwashing gloves over your child's mittens and let your child spray art onto the snow. Play outdoor Pictionary or Tic-Tac-Toe. Can you figure out the drawings? Can you write letters?

Ice Melt

Only requires ice cubes, a plate, a towel and curiosity. Let your child discover, feel and describe the melting process. For an older child you can tell him about the process of warm air turning the ice into water. When the melting is over, don't forget to take your child a step further in the experiment: What will happen if you put the plate back into the freezer? What if you added a few drops of food coloring? Paint? You can also make Popsicles for this experiment and then let your child enjoy a frozen treat. Who said Popsicles were only for summertime?

From Little Hands Home Day Care

Kincardine, Ontario

One sensory thing I use during the winter is when we talk about polar bears living on the ice cap. I make ice balloons. Fill a balloon with water, freeze and when frozen, take out, put into a tray, remove the balloon and allow the children to observe, touch and encourage them to talk about what is happening. Lots of language - melting, frozen, dissolving, changing, crystals, patterns in the ice. It's wonderful. Try it I'm sure the children will enjoy just as much as the adults.

Kinest regards

Jean Dobson, England

Haven't done one but what about putting water in the table and setting it out on a cold night. They could see how the water turned to ice then the next day check the ice and see how it turns back to water.

Sailor Nancy

1) I have taken different plastic containers, filled them with water, and stuck them in the freezer overnight. I collect plastic penguins and polar bears, fill the sensory table with water, put the penguins and polar bears in and add the ice from the containers to the table as "ice bergs." It gets a little chilly!

2) I have cut out flat pieces of styrofoam, added water and penguins/polar bears to the table, and float the cut out styrofoam as ice or ice bergs.

3) Hot Chocolate (not tooo hot!)

VWgirl42

Hi Shelley,

I always jused the packing peanuts. The kids like them & they are free if you save them from packages you receive.

Barb Lunsford

Water with ice cubes - sometimes I color the ice cubes food dye

Lynn

Oh my what a topic!! Let's see:

- *Penguins/ winter animals in shaving cream
- *Laminated snowflakes in shaving cream
- *Foam snowflakes
- *White packing peanuts with gloves, animals, etc.

Heather Tate

Sand and Water Table Ideas: (All, except taste)

- Add a little food coloring to water
- Add plastic ducks with water to the sand and water table.
- For older children (over 3) place broken dried eggshells in the sand and water table.
- Supply the children with different colors of plastic Easter grass for a tactile experience.
- Add food coloring and soap to the water
- supply the children with colored pasta noodles or rice
- Add Shaving cream
- Add ice or snow to water
- Add ice or snow
- Add warm water in one section and cool water in another

- Add leaves
- Add beans
- Add dirt
- Add feathers
- Add Pine Cones
- Add a little kool aid to the water
- Add goop

Sharon Vietmeier

Hello!

Right now I am using a combination of table salt, rock salt and iridescent glitter for the my winter sensory table.

Heather

Hi,

I use styrofoam peanuts.

Debra Vinton
