

FUN WINTER ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS AGES 2-12





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Introduction

Wintertime is a time that's ripe with frustration. It's cold outside. It's dreary. The days are dark and short and sometimes it can feel like winter will never end.

You have a five-year-old asking you "what can I do now?" You look at the tablet. You look at the TV. They've already spent a lot of time on screens and you want another option.

What should you do?

What can you do to fill the time when the weather outside is frightful? Or what can you do when it's 10 AM and you ran out of all your best ideas and the kids are starting to argue over nothing?

If you're looking for some ideas for what you can do when short winter days become too long, this eBook will provide you with a whole lot of ideas for both indoor and outdoor winter activities.



Best Indoor Activities

When thinking about winter activities, you may think of outdoor snowball fights and sled rides. This book will share the best outdoor activities, but first, we're going to explore the indoor ones. These are the things you can do with your kids when it's too cold outside, or when they've already been outside and now your kids need to warm up.

Here are some of the best ideas for indoor activities for your kids this winter.

Make a Book

A really fun activity that allows your kids to explore their creativity is making their own books.

To make a book, get some regular sheets of paper and fold them in half. This gives your children a quick and easy book template that they can use to make their own stories and illustrations.

Children that are too young to write words can draw pictures and tell you what's happening on each



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page. They will love telling you about the adventures they created.

You can join in too by taking turns writing parts of the story to keep it going. When they're finished writing their books, take time to read them together.

Play Board Games

Board games are a lot of fun for kids, and they come with a whole host of benefits. When your younger children play board games, they're often learning things like color identification, counting, how to take turns, and how to win and lose graciously.

Older kids can learn things like critical thinking, organization, and planning ahead. As they develop their game strategies, they are learning important life skills without realizing it.



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You may like the idea of using board games but aren't sure which ones are the best option for kids. Here's a list of great kid board games you can use



this winter organized by age.

<https://www.aacreativewitty.com>



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Board Games for Kids Ages 2-5 (Preschool Age)

1. Connect Four. Connect Four is a simple game that uses colors, counting, and stacking. It's quick to play and easy to clean up. Kids can play with adults or with other children.
2. Sleeping Queens. This is a card game that fits entirely into a small box. The game was created by a child and helps children learn things like simple addition and number recognition. This game can also be played and enjoyed by older kids. This game can be played in about 10 minutes.
 - This game is probably better grasped by children 4 to 5 than those that are 2 or 3.
3. Hoot Hoot Owl. This cooperative game has everyone working together. This could be a good choice for a younger child who is still learning how games work or for one who struggles with losing. It takes around 15 minutes to play.



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4. Candy Land. This game is a classic game that takes very little skill to play but will teach things like taking turns, color recognition, and counting. A great game for little ones!
5. Silly Street. Silly Street is exactly what the game says it is -- silly. This game asks participants to do fun exercises like singing, dancing, and mimicking. Players may have to come up with a story on the spot or find an object in the room to use as a hat.
 - This game is just for fun, and although there is a winner at the end, it's more based on silly activities than the competition.
 - This game can be played in around 10-15 minutes.
6. Any matching game. There are lots of matching games available. Choose your child's favorite characters and pick up a simple matching game. When your children are very small you can start by using only 3 or 4 matches so they can succeed.



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A couple of notes about board games at the preschool level: First, there are some games that include small pieces which may be choking hazards for children who tend to put things in their mouths. Please keep this in mind when choosing board games for your children.

Secondly, remember that kids develop at different rates. What may be a challenge to one three-year-old may be a good fit for another. Don't get discouraged if you try a board game and it proves too challenging for your child. You can always tuck it away for a few months or a year and revisit it later.

Board Games for Kids Ages 5-8

1. Ticket to Ride: First Journey. This is a strategy game much like the original game Ticket to Ride but made a little easier for younger players. In Ticket to Ride: First Journey you try to pick the best routes across the game board to get the highest points possible.
2. Qwirkle. Qwirkle is a game that uses matching and counting. It's actually fun for



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adults as well as kids, so it's a good one for the whole family. It takes around 30-45 minutes to play and will challenge your kids to use critical thinking and strategy.

3. Catan Junior. Catan is also fun for adults as well as kids. This game involves collecting resource cards and gold and building ships to explore the seas. This version is a great fit for younger players who want to play a Catan game. Playtime is around 30 minutes.
4. Enchanted Forest. This game takes around 30 minutes to play and is good for challenging memory. It's a game of fairy tales that will be familiar like Cinderella, Rumpelstiltskin, and Jack and the Beanstalk.
5. Outfoxed. Outfoxed is another cooperative game that is suited for kids 5 and up. The objective is to figure out the case and rule out suspects. Playtime is around 20-30 minutes.

Board Games for Kids Ages 9-12

1. Carcassonne. A board game that may be hard to say but isn't hard to play. In this game,



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you match up board pieces to make cities and score points. It can be played in 30-45 minutes.

2. **Spy Alley.** Want a game that allows you to use chicanery and deceit? This light-hearted game has participants attempt to keep their identity hidden while trying to figure out the identity of the other players.
 - It has some similarities to Clue but has enough unique qualities to make it a fun game in its own right.
 - This game is a 30-45-minute game.
3. **Blokus.** Blokus is a strategy game that will remind you of Tetris but is challenging in a different way because you're playing against other players trying to fit their pieces in. This is an enjoyable strategy game that can be played in around 30 minutes.
4. **Catan.** The original Catan game is a good fit for older kids who enjoyed playing Catan Junior, or for those who are new to the game.



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- Catan may seem overwhelming to learn at the beginning, but once you understand the gameplay, it's fairly simple and easy to play. It takes a bit longer to complete with the average game lasting at least an hour.
5. Risk. Risk is a board game that is part chance and part strategy.
- Be prepared to buckle in for a long ride as this game can take anywhere from 1 to 8 hours to complete.
 - Younger children will likely not enjoy this game as it takes focus and patience to complete, but it can be an enjoyable game for kids who like planning out strategies in advance.
6. Code Names. Code names is a word-based game in which you pretend to be spies. There are two teams, and each team has a “spymaster” that tries to get teammates to guess their words on the board without accidentally guessing the other team’s words.



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- There are a variety of kid-based versions of this game including Codenames Disney, Codenames Harry Potter, and Codenames



Marvel.

Indoor Camping

Feel like changing things up and making a memory? Consider trying indoor camping with your kids. You can either use a real tent if you have the space, or you can make a blanket fort with your kids.



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Hand everyone a flashlight, pull out the sleeping bags, and cozy into your tent. For dinner, you can have traditional camping food like hotdogs, mountain pies, and s'mores. Or you can make whatever foods your family would ordinarily enjoy when camping outside. Really get into it by eating on the floor or inside your tent.

If you have a fireplace in your house, light a fire and roast some marshmallows by the fire. As a family, you can play board games or break out a pack of cards. You can also read a favorite book as you settle in for the night or tell scary ghost stories.

Don't forget to add some ambiance with Christmas lights or lanterns!

Do Exercises With YouTube

Exercise is healthy for the body, but it can be hard to do when the weather is bad and you're stuck inside. Thankfully, there are a lot of YouTube videos that can help you and your children get the kind of exercise your body needs even when the temperatures are unbearable outside.

To get you started, here are some popular YouTubers that have exercises geared towards kids.



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- Cosmic Kids. On this channel, the YouTuber Jamie Amor shares lots of fun exercises for kids set in familiar stories like Frozen, My Little Pony, and Minecraft. Each video is gentle and enjoyable for kids, and she makes it entertaining and easy to follow even for the youngest children.
- Get Kids Moving. Glenn Higgins, a personal trainer and health coach from London, England, created the channel Get Kids Moving. On this channel, the videos include superheroes, wizards, and Jedis to help motivate kids to get up and start exercising.
- The Body Coach. The Body Coach, with trainer Joe Wicks, offers videos for adults, but he also has a series of videos just for kids. These videos feature cartoons to help keep kids interested, and your kids can earn badges as they go along.
- Bounce Patrol. This channel is for preschool-aged children, and they share videos with songs for little ones to dance to. Each video is only a few minutes long, but after watching several videos, your child



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will be able to burn off some energy and wiggle out the winter grumps.



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Teach Your Kids to Cook or Bake

Children can start helping in the kitchen at a very young age. It can be a great confidence booster for them and a great help to you.

When children are very young, they can begin practicing with a butter knife to cut soft items like a banana. They can help with weighing, pouring, and mixing. You can also ask them to retrieve items for





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you that they can reach and carry.

For example, you could ask them to get a spoon from the drawer, or they can retrieve a food item from the pantry.

Older kids can begin helping with things like grating cheese, measuring ingredients, and learning how to use the stove and oven. They can also follow simple recipes from start to finish and help plan meals for the family.

Note: You will need to know your own child and their abilities. If something doesn't seem safe to you, wait until you think they're ready or responsible enough to use a knife or work with a hot stove or oven.

Take extra care to teach kitchen safety so they know what to do to avoid dangers in the kitchen. Keep pot handles, hot liquids, and other dangers away from younger children and let them know not to touch hot or sharp items in the kitchen.



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Try Simple Science Experiments

Science experiments are a great way to incorporate learning into a fun activity. Kids won't focus on the fact that they're learning, but they will enjoy watching reactions and testing outcomes.

Some fun experiments you can do at home include:

(Note: Full tutorials can easily be found online but are not provided here.)

- Make rock candy. With sugar, string, a stick, food dye, a saucepan, and water, your kids can make their own rock candy at home.
- Layer liquids. Show kids how different liquids react with each other by layering different types of liquids. You can use oil, water, dish soap, honey, and so on to show how the different densities will accumulate. Try using food dye to better show the distinct layers.
- Make a tornado in a jar. With a few items you probably already have, you can make a



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tornado in a glass bottle or jar. Using water, liquid soap, vinegar, and water, you can recreate a tornado effect in a glass jar.

- Make a lava lamp. You can try making your own lava lamp using a bottle, food coloring, vegetable oil, water, and Alka seltzer tablets.
- Will it sink or float? Using a plastic tub of water or the bathtub, you can play a game with your kids to see which household items will float or sink. Before placing an item in the water, ask them if they think it will float or sink and why.
- Volcanos. The classic home experiment, but always a lot of fun. All you need to make an erupting volcano is an empty bottle, dish soap, food dye (if you want it to be colored), baking soda, and vinegar.
- Play with magnets. Give your children an assortment of magnets and show them what objects they can pick up with magnets and which ones they cannot. You can also teach them about why magnets attract or repel each other.





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Building Activities

Continuing down the STEM path, you can also give your children a variety of building activities at home.

These activities will teach them how to use engineering and constructive thinking to build masterpieces.

Here are some building activities that you can test out with your kids:

- Toothpicks and marshmallows. Using toothpicks and mini marshmallows, your kids can make different constructions. They can learn what will stand up and what will fall down based on their designs. You can use other soft materials such as candy to make structures.
- Playdough and straws. With a similar technique, your kids can make buildings using soft playdough and straws.



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- Popsicle sticks. With popsicle sticks and glue, your kids can experiment with the best way to make buildings or structures. You may be surprised by how many different ways they will think to build.
- Paper cups. Buy your kids a cheap box of little cups -- the kind you might use at a bathroom sink -- and let them build things by stacking them on top of each other.

Building toys that you can purchase for your kids:

- Magnetic Tiles
- Lincoln Logs
- Legos
- Duplos
- Wooden blocks
- K'Nex
- Foam blocks
- Marble run
- Zoobs
- Bristle blocks



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Make Some Winter Crafts

Winter is the perfect time to get crafty. If your kids can't or don't want to go outside, they can keep themselves busy by making a craft or creating a unique piece of art.

Depending on the child's level of interest, this is an activity that could take a while. While craft projects are notoriously messy, they're great for things like motor skills, developing creativity, and learning to problem-solve.

Here are some winter craft activity ideas that you can try this winter:

1. Make holiday ornaments. There are many different types of ornaments you can make, and they can either decorate your home or be used as gifts. You can use natural materials found outside to make ornaments, make them out of paper, or find materials at a local craft store.
 - If you search online, there are multitudes of tutorials for handmade



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ornaments.

2. Make cards for people in nursing homes. If you want an idea to help your children grow in kindness and empathy, you can have them make cards for people who are in nursing homes.

- With limited or restricted visitation over the past few years, this is something that could greatly brighten someone's day.

3. Make pinecone bird feeders. Take some time in the fall or in winter when there's no snow on the ground to collect pinecones with your children. On a cool winter day, you can use the pinecones to make simple bird feeders.

- Coat the pinecones in peanut butter and roll them in birdseed. Use a string to hang them up outside.

4. Make paper snowflakes. This is an easy craft that requires only scissors and paper. Cut a regular piece of paper into a square, and then fold it over several times into a triangle shape. Use scissors to make various cuts in



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the paper. Unfold the paper to reveal a unique snowflake design.

5. Make toilet paper tube animals. Using a toilet paper tube, construction paper, and paint, your kids can make a variety of animals or characters. You can let them come up with their own designs or find templates online.



Best Outdoor Activities

You won't be able to get your kids outside every day during the winter. There will be plenty of days that are too cold or days when the weather is nasty, and you can't send the kids out.

However, even on days when the temperatures are a little below comfortable, it can still be beneficial to have your kids spend some time outside.

Why Is it Important to Play Outside in the Winter?

Have you ever heard of the term cabin fever? There are different theories about where this term originated, but it's something that most believe started in North America.

Cabin fever may have at one point been associated with typhus fever, but today it has a different meaning. It's a term that refers to that feeling you get when you've been stuck in a confined space for a long period of time.



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The Merriam-Webster definition of cabin fever is,
“...extreme irritability and restlessness from living in
isolation or a confined indoor area for a prolonged
time.”





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If you think about it, this definition is pretty apt for the way people feel in the wintertime, especially kids. Kids who spend many days inside may start to argue with their siblings, become irritable, or feel bored. They may even begin to feel a little blue.

Although your kids may *think* they would rather spend time inside on screens, once they're bundled up and playing outside, even for a short period of time, it will help them feel refreshed and energetic.

Want some reasons to motivate you to spend 20 minutes getting snow clothes on your kids for 30 minutes of playtime?

Here are some great reasons why it's good for kids to play outside (even during the winter months):

1. Helps build their immune system. We often think that playing in the cold will cause kids to get sick, but getting fresh air is actually a good way for them to avoid viruses and bacteria that are spread in the indoor air.
 - Some research also shows that playing outside can help strengthen the immune system and lower the



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risk of developing allergies.

2. Physical exercise is healthy for kids.
Physical activity is good for muscular development, building an immune system, and maintaining a healthy weight.
3. Improves mood and behavior. Playing outside can help kids shake off that cabin fever feeling. As they physically move, try new things, and use both their bodies and their minds, they will begin to feel better.
 - The time spent outside will not only make them feel better, but it will also help them get rid of that stir-crazy feeling they're developing from being pent up inside.
4. Helps kids sleep better at night. Getting sunshine and exercise are both helpful factors for helping your kids fall asleep and stay asleep at night.
5. Takes away from screen time. Screen time is a normal part of modern children's lives, but too much time on screens can have negative effects such as irritability, difficulty



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sleeping, or behavioral issues.

- Playing outside can break up the day and give kids a chance to do something other than look at a screen or play video games.

How Cold is Too Cold to Play Outside?

According to some medical and weather experts, it's important to pay attention to the windchill factor, not just the temperature degree.

If the wind chill temperature is 32 degrees or above, it's safe for kids to play outside. From 13 degrees to 32 degrees, kids can play outside for shorter spurts of time, like 20-30 minutes. Below that temperature, it's advised to keep activities inside.

To keep kids safe, ensure that they have proper layering and don't have parts of their skin exposed to the cold.

Once kids become wet, it's much easier to get cold, so try to provide winter gear that will keep them dry. Thankfully, most kids will let you know when



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they get too cold and come inside (especially older kids).

As always, you know your kids so use your instincts when it comes to playing outside during the winter. If it seems too cold, avoid going outside and choose fun inside winter activities instead.

For younger children, you may want to keep them inside for lower temps as little ones have a harder time regulating their body temperature.



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Best Outdoor Winter Activities

Now that you know the benefits of playing outside, and how to be safe with cold temperatures, now is the time to share some of the best activities your kids can do this winter.

Build a Snowman

This is probably the most popular winter outdoor activity. As soon as there's enough packable snow on the ground, your kid is probably going to start rolling balls to stack on each other and make a snowman.

This is a fun activity that the whole family can participate in, but if you want to make it a little more fun, there are some fun spins you can put on building a snowman.

You can have a snowman-building competition where everyone builds a snowman, and an objective third party (like Grandma or Grandpa) chooses a winner. There can be different categories such as silliest design or best built.



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You can also try building a snowman community or making snow animals instead. Make a snow family including a tiny snow baby.

Even if you build a traditional snowman, your kids will enjoy being creative and making something out of snow.

Go Sledding

Another popular outdoor activity is sledding. Nothing puts a smile on a kids 'face like speeding down the hill and safely landing in a pile of snow at the bottom. If you don't have a good place to sled in your backyard, there are other options available.

Depending on where you live, some places where you might be able to sled are:

- State parks
- Ski resorts
- Nearby farms
- Friendly neighbor's yard
- Local parks

Freezing Bubbles



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When the temperature is below freezing, you can blow bubbles outside that will freeze. It sometimes takes quite a bit of experimenting to make this work, so be prepared that it may not work the first time.

Some tips from people who have perfected the art of it are:

- Use a bottle to make the bubbles. Take a plastic water bottle and make a hole in the lid. Insert a straw and put clay or playdough around the straw to keep it from leaking air. You can also use a squeeze bottle with a straw for the same effect.
- Try adding corn syrup. Instead of just using soap and water, add corn syrup to make it thicker.
- Add sugar. Sugar helps with the crystallization effect.
- Try picking a low wind day. It's best to choose a day that's very cold but not windy so the bubbles don't pop easily.



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Go Birdwatching

You can take the kids outside in the winter to watch and listen for birds.

Here are some tips for birding with kids in the winter:

- Look for nests. It's easy to spot nests in the trees because there are no leaves to hide them.
- Get a pair of binoculars. You don't need binoculars to go bird watching, but they can make the experience more fun and it gives the kids the opportunity to see birds up close.
- Take a field guide with you. You can use a field guide to help kids identify the birds they see. Let them take the time to find the birds and match them to the characteristics that they see.
- Take paper and pencils. To make the kids feel more involved, they can draw pictures of the birds they see and label them as they



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learn what they are.

- Talk to your kids about which birds will be present in the winter. Some birds stay all year long while others are migratory. Tell your kids which birds to look for before you set out and let them know which ones may have migrated.
- Search for birds near open water. Birds will often come to water areas to get a drink, so you'll have a chance of spotting many varieties of birds this way.
- Don't forget snacks. Kids are always hungry or thirsty, and this activity requires some patience and waiting, so snacks are a good way to maintain peace while you're out.
- Get a bird feeder at home. Having a bird feeder at home that you can see from inside the house is a good way to help kids practice identifying different birds.

Look for Signs of Animals



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Another fun wildlife activity is searching for signs of animals. Your kids won't be the only ones who walk through the fresh snow, and you can use this as an opportunity to see what the wild animals in your yard are up to.

When you take your kids out, challenge them to find as many signs of wildlife as they can.

Here are some things to look for the next time you're out:

- Animal prints. One of the most tell-tale signs of animals is the prints they leave behind. It's a lot of fun trying to identify which animal left the tracks. For instance, rabbits have a distinct track that looks quite strange if you don't know what it is.
- Scat. It may sound gross, but animal droppings are another way to identify who has been through your yard. Scat can be quite distinct, so it's fairly easy to figure out who has been active on your property.
- Feeding signs. Animals have to eat during the winter, and this can often be another clue



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about who has been traipsing around. For instance, deer often eat the tops of plants off, especially fresh buds.

- Destructive activity. This may sound funny, but one way to know if animals have been around is by the destruction they leave behind. Woodpeckers are active in the winter and will often leave behind splintered wood on the ground and holes in trees. Beavers are also quite destructive and will cut down entire trees.

Paint the Snow

Do you have a creative kid? Why not try painting the snow? It's an easy project, and you only need bottles, food dye, and water to make the paints. You can use squirt bottles or spray bottles to color the snow. Mix up the colors, add them to the bottles, and take them to fresh snow.

Your kids can make shapes, practice writing their names, or simply enjoy watching the white snow turn into new colors.

Go to a Ski Resort



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This is the most expensive idea on the list, but if you want a way to keep your kids active in the wintertime, you could try going to a ski resort. You can get lessons for the kids to learn snowboarding or skiing, or you could spend the day snow tubing



instead.

Shovel the Sidewalk or Drive

Sometimes kids will avoid doing chores or helping out, but many kids really enjoy helping their parents do things. When it's time to shovel the walk or



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driveway, give your kid a shovel too and let them help clear the way.

They may lose interest once the novelty wears off, or it may be something they can do to help out during the winter months. As they get older, they may even be able to earn a couple of dollars from the neighbors for shoveling their walkways.

Invite Friends Over to Play in the Snow

As a parent, the idea of having additional kids over can feel overwhelming at times, but a playdate can also be a relief. Kids love playing together, and even if your kids have siblings, having a different person around can make things more fun.

Your kids may be willing to play outside more if they have a best buddy to go with. They can come up with creative ways to play and explore the winter world together.



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Top Ways Your Kids Can Serve in Your Community

Charles Dickens once said, *"No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of others."*

Booker T. Washington is quoted saying, *"Those who are happiest are those who do the most for others."*

Lastly, Pearl. S. Buck once said, *"The test of a civilization is in the way it cares for its helpless members."*

Your kids may feel stir crazy this winter. They may feel the effects of cabin fever. You may be pulling your hair out because the kids are arguing with each other or telling you 100 times a day that they're bored.

But one thing that almost always makes everyone feel better is doing something for someone else. Scientific research has even shown that serving others can help reduce things like anxiety and depression. Bottom line is it just makes you feel good to do something for someone else.



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So, with that in mind, here are some ways your kids can serve others this winter:

- Sponsor a soldier. There are many available programs that allow people (or kids) to send letters and care packages to soldiers. This can be especially kind during the holiday season when soldiers are overseas or traveling and missing their families.
- Shovel a neighbor's walkway. You may have elderly neighbors or neighbors who are too busy to shovel their driveways or sidewalks. Kids can be a huge blessing by doing this for their neighbors.
- Send cards to people. Simply writing a letter or making a card for someone is a lovely act of kindness. They could write to a best friend or a person who is shut-in and can't leave their home during the winter.
- Volunteer at a soup kitchen or food bank. The pandemic has made things more complicated than usual, but there are still many ways that families can help serve at community centers that offer food. Reach



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out and ask if there is a way you can help.

- Visit an animal shelter. Even if you're not in the place to adopt an animal, you can still help out if your local animal shelter allows volunteers. Your kid can help feed the animals, clean up after them, and play with them. You can even have your kids read to them.
- Make things for people. If your kid is crafty, they can learn to make things that can help people stay warm. Kids who know how to crochet, knit, or sew can make hats, gloves, and blankets to be donated to those in need.



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- Have a coat drive. Your kids can help join a coat drive or they can start one of their own. People can donate gently used coats to be given to those who may struggle to afford outfitting themselves or their families with



winter gear.



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Are You Ready?

You may love winter, or you may hate it, but with this eBook you will be prepared with fun, interesting, and practical ways to pass the winter with your kids.

Try out a new activity when things start to feel stagnant or when you've seen too many episodes of Cocomelon. Your older kids may be resistant at first, but once they start making a book or playing in the snow, they'll be glad for something different.

You can join in, too! Making a piece of art, sledding down a hill, or doing an act of service for someone else won't just uplift your kids' moods. It can be a game changer for you as well.



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Resources

- <https://www.nobiggie.net/25-indoor-winter-activities-for-kids/>
- <https://runwildmychild.com/outdoor-winter-activities-for-kids/>
- <https://artfulparent.com/winter-activities-for-kids/>
- <https://www.thespruce.com/kids-indoor-winter-activities-2104658>
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