

# Conquering Cabin Fever with Winter Sensory Strategies



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Cold temperatures and snowy weather can make everyone feel cooped up in wintertime, which makes it a difficult season for children. That's why it's so important to get outside and enjoy winter activities whenever possible.

Whether they have known sensory issues or not, kids need year-round outlets for all of that energy! To that end, focus on input such as vestibular (movement), proprioceptive (body awareness and muscle input, often through "heavy work"), motor planning (conceiving, planning and carrying out activities) and other, more self-explanatory types of input.

Here are some ideas for outdoor winter activities that will help in this regard, while providing a great time for everyone.

- \*\* Have your child put on their own winter gear – such as snow pants, coat, hat, gloves, scarf and boots – as a different opportunity to work on dressing skills. Try to allow them to do as much as they can by themselves. Pulling on these added

heavy layers also provides kids with proprioceptive input, which increases body awareness and strength.

- \*\* Build a snow fort or igloo together to provide proprioceptive input through heavy work. This also helps a child work on motor-planning skills.
- \*\* Sled down a hill for vestibular input through movement. Have your child pull you or another child on the sled for heavy work.
- \*\* Make a pile of snow and take turns crashing into it for proprioceptive input.
- \*\* Have your child shovel snow with a shovel that's just their size to provide both shoulder strengthening and heavy work.
- \*\* Have a snowball fight or throw snowballs at targets to work on hand-eye coordination and object-manipulation skills.
- \*\* Hide brightly colored objects in the snow and have your child use their visual scanning skills to try to find them all.
- \*\* Make snow angels, and compare and contrast the differences in sizes and shapes.
- \*\* Fill squirt bottles with food coloring and water. Spray the snow different colors to make fun patterns on the snow and work on fine-motor strengthening.
- \*\* Build a snowman to provide heavy work while rolling the snow into balls. Add as many features as possible to help build body awareness.



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