

# How to Kit



**20 Fantastic Outdoor Family Literacy Activities**

*Celebrating 20 Years of the NWT Literacy Council*

## Other How to Kits & Literacy Activities

This How to Kit was developed to help organizations celebrate literacy in the NWT. It is one in a series of How to Kits that you can download from the NWT Literacy Council website at [www.nwt.literacy.ca](http://www.nwt.literacy.ca). You are welcome to photocopy and use the activities in your programs, or adapt them to your needs.

### Other How to Kits you will find on our website:

- 1-2-3 Rhyme with Me
- Community Book Swap
- Family Reading Party
- Games Night
- Literacy Treasure Hunt
- Pyjamas and Book Party
- Reading Circles and Story Extenders
- Scattergories
- Storytime on the Radio
- Family Literacy Activities Night
- Book Making
- Literacy Games for Adults
- Get Caught Reading & Other Promotion Ideas
- Election
- Environmental Print Games
- More Literacy Games
- Read for 15
- Writing and Publishing Children's Books
- Literacy Survivor
- Writing Contest
- Involving Families in Children's Learning
- Literacy Activities for Holidays – Thanksgiving, Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter, Birthdays
- Puppet Making
- Culture and Traditions
- Books in the Home
- Facilitating a Workshop
- Talking Books
- Family Math
- Family Cooking
- Readers Theatre
- Family Literacy Activities Night 2
- Word & Picture Bingos
- Plan a Family Literacy Fair
- Storysacks
- Science Fun
- Reading with Your Child DVD
- TV Free from A to Z
- Puppets

### You are welcome to download and use these kits.

NWT Literacy Council

Box 761

Yellowknife, NT X1A 2N6

Phone: 867-873-9262 Fax: 867-873-2176

Toll Free in the NWT: 1-866-599-6758

Email: [nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca](mailto:nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca)

Website: [www.nwt.literacy.ca](http://www.nwt.literacy.ca)

## Winter Treasure Hunt

Enjoy a fun afternoon outside with a treasure hunt. There are many ways that you can create a treasure hunt, so feel free to improvise on the idea here.

### What to do:

1. Gather the treasure and place it in a suitable container. The treasure doesn't have to be fancy. It could be as simple as special snacks, craft items or yard sale leftovers.
2. Hide the treasure in the snow.
3. Create clues for finding the treasure. If you have small children or non-readers, make picture clues.
4. Place the clues in a plastic bag to weatherproof them and hide them in the snow. You may need to put a little rock or piece of ice inside to weigh down the bag.
5. Start the treasure hunt by giving the players their first clue.





## Ice Moulds

Enjoy the great outdoors with some fun ice moulds. Use these ice moulds to decorate castles and sculptures, and if you want to get really fancy – wind some lights through them for a dazzling winter effect.

### What to do:

1. Gather various containers (eg. yogurt containers, sand pails, etc.) for making the ice moulds.
2. Fill the containers with water, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the top.
3. Set the moulds outside or in your freezer.
4. When frozen, put the moulds in the sink for a few minutes and briefly run some warm water around the outside of the mould to loosen the ice.
5. Unmould the ice and place outside.
6. You could also add some food coloring to the water before freezing it, but be careful when unmoulding. The colored water will stain your clothes.

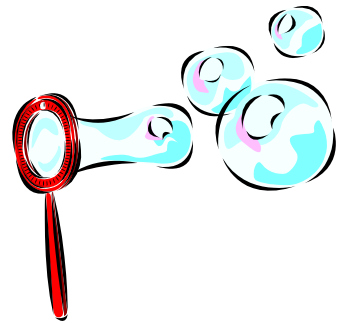


## Crystal Balls

You may have tried making bubbles in the summer, but have you ever tried in the winter? Crystal balls will form when you blow bubbles in the cold and let them freeze. To create crystal balls, try making your own bubbles. You can use a bubble wand from the store, make your own out of a pipe cleaner, or use a cookie cutter. You can also try making a giant bubble wand out of a coat hanger.

### You will need:

- ½ cup Joy or Dawn brand dish soap
- 4 cups water
- 1/8 cup glycerine\*



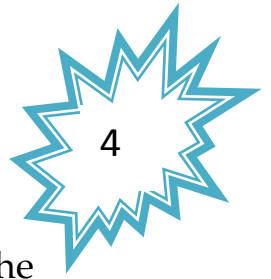
### What to do:

1. Mix all of the ingredients together.
2. On a cold day with a light wind, blow your bubble, but do not let it escape. As the bubble freezes, watch the formation of ice crystals. If you leave it long enough, it will form a crystal ball.
3. Store the bubble solution in a container with a lid. It works better the longer you leave it.

\*You can often buy glycerine in drugstores. If you can't find glycerine, you can substitute 1/8 cup of light corn syrup.

Bubble recipe from: <http://bubbleblowers.com/homemade.html>

Idea from: <http://www.pnr-rpn.ec.gc.ca/air/wintersevere/activities.en.html>



## I Spy Snowflakes

Have you ever noticed a snowflake when it lands on your coat? The individual flakes are unique and distinct. Try this neat experiment to view snowflakes up close.

### You will need:

- Black paper or fabric
- Magnifying glass



### What to do:

1. Place the black paper or fabric in the freezer or outside.
2. Go outside with the paper when it is snowing – gentle, softly falling snow will work best.
3. Allow the snowflakes to land on the paper/fabric.
4. Quickly use the magnifying glass to view the snowflakes.





## Tracks in the Snow

Searching for animal tracks is always a lot of fun. Children love to try to identify the owner of the tracks.

### What to do:

1. Find some tracks in the snow, and see if you know who made them.
2. Check out a library book on tracks to see if you can match them up, or ask an Elder or hunter in your community.



### A Fun Twist

For a bit of fun, make up some animal tracks yourself and see if other people can identify them.



## Science in the Snow

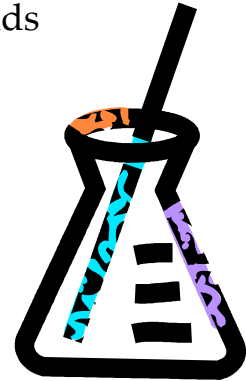
Turn the great outdoors into a fun science lab. Keep the kids busy playing mad scientist in their own backyard.

### What to do:

There are various experiments that you can do with snow. Allow the children time to explore on their own and think up their own experiments to solve.

### Here are a few ideas:

- Add table salt to snow and watch it melt.
- Make snowballs of different sizes and sit them in the sun.
- Find the volume of different containers by filling them with snow and find out which holds the most.
- Make a sink or float experiment by placing different toys on top of the snow and seeing which ones are light enough to stay on top, and which ones are heavy enough to sink down.







## Amazing Ice Candles

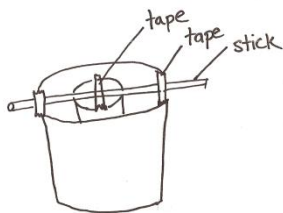
Ice candles are fun to make and fascinating to watch. They make beautiful outdoor Christmas decorations.

### You will need:

- A small bucket or plastic container (a sand pail is ideal)
- An empty tin can or plastic cup
- Water
- Small rocks or dried beans
- Tea light candles

### What to do:

1. Fill the bucket with cold water.
2. Place the tin can inside the bucket. Weigh it down with rocks so that it almost, but not quite, sinks to the bottom. Or, you may find it easier to tape a stick across the top of the bucket with the can hanging down underneath.



3. Put the bucket outside until it is frozen solid.
4. Bring the bucket inside. Turn it upside down in the sink or on a

cookie sheet and let it melt until the ice is loose enough to take out. This may take up to an hour.

5. Take the can out of the middle. You may need to fill it with warm water to get it out.
6. Put your candle back outside and place a lighted tea light inside.

## **Variations**

Try using food colouring to make coloured ice candles.

Use your ice candle as an indoor centerpiece. Place it in the middle of your table in a tray or bowl to catch the melting water. It will last for at least 4 to 5 hours and will be interesting to watch as it melts.

Instead of floating the tin can in the bucket, add enough rocks so that it sinks to the bottom. Only fill the bucket to slightly below the top of the can. You will end up with a tube of ice. Instead of placing a candle inside, set it over a light bulb on a string of coloured Christmas lights. Make enough to cover the whole string.

## Sliding and Books Party

For a fun winter family literacy night, hold a sliding and books party! Have families bring their sled, crazy carpets and GTs and go sliding. Then invite everyone inside to read some books about winter and have hot chocolate.

### Some books to read:

*Stella: Queen of the Snow* by Marie Louise Gay

*The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats

*Jillian Jiggs and the Great Big Snow* by Phoebe Gillman

*The Three Snow Bears* by Jan Brett

*Fifty Below Zero* by Robert Munsch

*Thomas' Snowsuit* by Robert Munsch

*Tracks in the Snow* by Wong Herbert Yee

*Snow Bear* by Jean Craighead George

*Perfect Snow* by Barbara Reid

*Snowballs* by Lois Ehlert





## **Skating and Books Party**

For a fun family literacy night, hold a Family Skating and Books Party. Your local rink may be able to donate some ice time, or you can skate on an outdoor rink. Try these fun skating games:

### **Amoeba**

1. Chose 2 to 4 people to be “it,” depending on the size of the group.
2. The people who are it chase the other skaters. When someone catches another skater, they must hold hands and skate together.
3. When your amoeba has caught 4 people, it must split up into two groups of two.
4. The game ends when everyone is in a group of two.

### **Cops and Robbers**

1. Make a small jail in one corner of the ice. You can use cones or draw on the ice with a felt marker.
2. Chose people to be the cops. For example, all the girls could be cops, all the boys could be cops, all the people with black helmets, etc. Everyone else is a robber.
3. The cops chase the robbers. If the robbers get caught, they have to skate directly to the jail.
4. A robber can get out a jail if another robber who has NOT been caught tags her hand.

5. Switch the groups who are the cops often, so that everyone gets to be a cop.

### **The Shopping Game**

Although this co-operative game seems extremely simple, it is a lot of fun for 4 to 6 year olds.

1. Spread out a bunch of objects at one end of the rink. Use spare hats and mitts, cones, balls, pucks or whatever else you have around.
2. Put an empty box or pail in the middle of the rink. This is the shopping cart.
3. Gather everyone at one end. When the leader says “Go shopping,” everyone skates down to the end as fast as possible, picks out only ONE item, and brings it back to put in the shopping cart. They return as many times as possible.
4. The game ends when all of the items are in the shopping cart. There is no winner, although skaters may want to challenge themselves to see how many items they can put in the cart.
5. For a fun surprise, you could put out small treats (candy canes, Halloween treats) the last time you play. Make sure that the leader picks up any extras that are left on the ice.

Afterwards, go inside for some hot chocolate and read one of these great books about skating:

*Just One Goal* by Robert Munsch

*The Moccasin Goalie* by Roy William  
Brownridge

*The Magic Hockey Skates* by Allen Morgan

*Duck Skates* by Lynne Berry

*Caillou Learns to Skate* by Marion Johnson

*Pearl's New Skates* by Holly Keller

*Ruby's Skating Day* by Rosemary Wells

*The Hockey Sweater* by Roch Carrier



## Colour Your Snowy World

Make a snowy masterpiece by adding some colour to your winter wonderland. Kids of all ages will enjoy painting and spraying the snow.

### You will need:

- Brushes or spray bottles
- Small containers if you are using brushes
- Food colouring

### What to Do:

1. Mix food coloring with water into the small container or spray bottle. Be careful... this mixture will stain.
2. Spray or brush designs in the snow. You can spell your name, or make a snowman extra colourful.



## Watch the Weather

Children have a natural curiosity about the world around them. Why not tap into this curiosity by finding out about the local weather? Building a backyard weather station from materials you have on hand is easy and fun!

Here are some directions for a wind vane and a snow gauge. Don't forget to put a thermometer outside to find the temperature. Track your weather with a weather journal or chart.



### Wind Vane

#### You will need:

- Long wooden dowel (about the size of a broom stick)
- Aluminum pie plate
- 30 cm long piece of wood
- Nails
- Metal washer
- Hammer
- Glue
- Small saw (or serrated knife)
- Wire (for mounting)

#### What to do:

1. Take the 30 cm piece of wood. Using the saw, cut a vertical slit at each end of the stick, approximately 1 cm deep.



2. Find the halfway point of the wood, and hammer a nail all the way through the stick. Turn the wood around the nail several times to make sure the stick will turn easily around the nail.
3. Cut a head and tail piece from the aluminum pie plate (refer to picture). Glue the head and tail into the slot at each end of the wooden stick. Make sure the glue is dry before you take the wind vane outside.
4. Connect the weather vane to the long wooden dowel (broom handle) by placing the metal washer on the end of the dowel and then hammering the nail through the wooden stick and into the wooden dowel. Make sure that the wind vane will move easily around the nail.
5. It's time to mount the weather vane outside. Position the wind vane away from houses or trees (this can affect the results). Try to get the wind vane as high as possible, while making sure that the dowel will be steady.

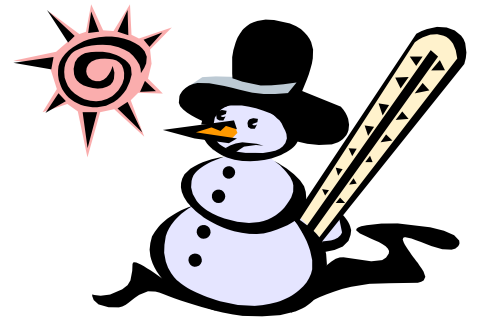
### **Reading your Wind Vane**

The head of the pointer will always point to the direction from which the wind is blowing. For example, if the head points to the North East, then the wind is blowing from the North East. It's as simple as that. (A common mistake is to think that the wind is blowing toward the North East.) Record your wind direction readings in your weather journal.

## Snow Gauge

### You will need:

- Empty two litre plastic pop bottle
- Permanent marker
- Ruler
- Scissors



### What to do:

1. Remove the labels from the pop bottle.
2. Cut the top off the pop bottle, making the cut at the wide part of the bottle, not at the neck.
3. Use the ruler and marker to mark lines on the outside of the pop bottle. Mark lines 1 cm apart. Start at the bottom and go to the top. Make a larger line every 5 cm.
4. Place the snow gauge outside away from buildings or trees (this may cause false results.)
5. Record the snowfall.

Source: <http://www.fi.edu/weather/todo/vane.html>

## Winter Treasure Walk

When the weather warms up a bit, take a walk in your neighbourhood to see what you can find!

Here are some ideas for fun scavenger hunts:

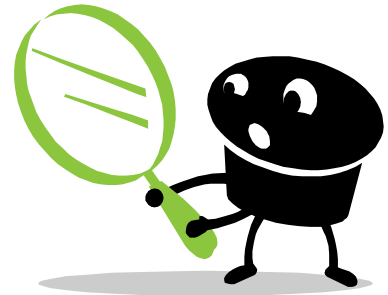
### Alphabet Scavenger Hunt

Try to find things in your neighborhood that begin with the letters of the alphabet. The person/team with the most letters could win a small prize.

Example: **A** animal, **B** bark, **C** coyote, **D** dead tree ...

### Regular Scavenger Hunt

For this scavenger hunt, make a list beforehand and have people try to find things on the list. Example: 4 things that are orange, 5 things that are round, 2 things that are smooth ...



### Five Senses Scavenger Hunt

This scavenger hunt will require people to tune into their environment. Using the five senses, make a list of things you may feel, smell, watch, hear and taste in your neighborhood. For example: **Feel** the wind on your face, the bark on a tree, the texture of snow. **Smell** the wood stoves burning, the fresh air. **Watch** birds flying, the wind blowing things around, the clouds going by and the sun setting. **Listen** to the squeaky snow underfoot, dogs barking and ravens squawking. **Taste** the hot chocolate when you come home!

## Make a Masterpiece

Using your creativity, make a snow drawing by using a stick to draw a picture in the snow. You could start by making a snow angel and then decorating it to look like you! Find items in nature such as branches, pine cones, rocks or seeds to illustrate your picture.



## Catch Some Supper

Ice fishing is a popular winter activity. Make sure you go ice fishing with an experienced person.

Don't forget the following ice fishing safety tips:

- Wear layers and waterproof boots.
- Bring extra clothes in case you get wet.
- Bring a rope and ice picks in case someone falls through the ice.
- Bring a first aid kit, matches and a PFD cushion to use as a flotation.
- Make sure the ice is thick enough.
- Never go ice fishing alone.
- Learn how to act if you fall through the ice.
- Go home when you start to get cold, or if you get wet.



When you're finished ice fishing, cuddle up with a great book about ice fishing adventures such as *Kumak's Fish* by Michael Bania.

Source: <http://www.icefishingcanada.ca/icefishingstorepage1.html>

## Sugar on Snow

Have a sweet time with some maple sugar on snow (tire d'érable in French).

### You will need:

- Maple syrup
- Snow
- Fork or popsicle stick
- Pot
- Stove
- Candy thermometer



### What to do:

1. Place a quantity of maple syrup (the pure kind, not pancake syrup) in the pot, and boil until the temperature on the candy thermometer reaches 234 degrees Fahrenheit. Try not to stir, as this will cause crystals to form.
2. You may keep the syrup hot at a low temperature once it reaches 234 degrees.
3. Place some clean snow onto a table or tray (outside).
4. Pour one or two tablespoons of maple syrup onto the snow. (If the syrup is runny and does not harden, then it has not reached the desired temperature).
5. Twirl the syrup around the popsicle stick or fork.
6. Enjoy!

## Icy Indoor Experiments

Try this neat experiment to show how polar bears, penguins, seals and other aquatic animals are able to survive the cold water.

### What you need:

- 2 ziplock bags (sandwich size)
- 1 cup of vegetable shortening
- Duct tape (optional)
- A large bowl of ice water



### What to do:

1. Place the vegetable shortening into one of the ziplock bags.
2. Turn the other ziplock bag inside out and place it into the first bag. Zip the bags closed.
3. Duct tape the bags at the zipper if you wish to ensure that they do not come open.
4. Squish the shortening around so that it is evenly distributed.
5. Now you have a blubber glove!
6. Children can put their hand into the ice water and see how long they can leave it there.
7. Next, get the children to put their hand into the blubber glove and



then place it into the ice water.

8. The blubber glove should act as an insulator, and allow their hand to remain in the water longer.



## Frosty Treats

Have you ever noticed that juice doesn't freeze as solidly as water? Have you ever wondered why? Check out this neat experiment. The explanation is interesting too!

### What you need:

- 2 styrofoam or plastic cups
- Water
- Orange juice
- Freezer (or outside)
- Spoon (an ice cream scoop works well)



### What to do:

1. Fill one cup with water.
2. Fill the other cup with orange juice.
3. Freeze both cups for a few hours.
4. Examine the cups. The water should be frozen solid into an ice chunk. The orange juice should be frozen, but with a sticky slushy part on top.
5. Let both cups sit for five minutes.
6. Scrape the top of each cup. Taste the juice scrapings.
7. Continue to scrape both the water and the juice. Do you notice any difference? The juice seems to come apart in flat crystals.



## How does this work?

When a substance like sugar is dissolved in water, it lowers water's freezing point so that it has to be colder to freeze. The amount of dissolved sugar stays the same, but there is less and less water, as it is used up in the growing ice crystals. The sugar becomes trapped between the crystals and acts as a separator in the frozen water, which lets the ice crystals come apart more easily when they are scraped.

In the water cup, the crystals were all the same, which made one solid block of ice with no separations between the crystals. When the ice warmed up, it simply melted into water, it did not come apart like the juice did. This is why popsicles have a syrupy coating on them.

Source: <http://blog.jumpstart.com/2009/12/04/sno-j-flakes/>

## Indoor Snowman

Some days it may seem too cold to venture outside to play.  
Why not bring the winter indoors with this cute snowman?

What you need:

- Newspaper
- 3 white pillowcases
- Toothpicks
- Orange & black felt (scraps)
- Hat
- Scarf



What to do:

1. Scrunch up sheets of newspaper and stuff each pillowcase.
2. Tie the top and bottom corners of each pillowcase together to form large balls.
3. Stack the pillowcases to make a snowman.
4. For the eyes, nose, mouth and buttons, cut out and attach felt pieces with tape.
5. Wrap a scarf around your snowman's neck and put the hat on his head.

*Source: 50 More Things to Make and Do by Ernie Coombs and Shelley Tanaka. CBC Enterprises. 1984*

After you have created your snowman, snuggle up with a good book such as: *Sadie and the Snowman* by Allen Morgan

## Colourful Snowflakes

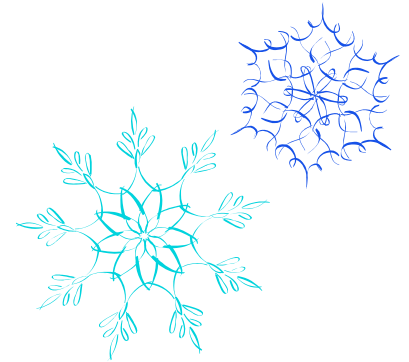
Create your own blizzard of fun inside the house with these fun snowflakes.

### What you need:

- Coffee filters or paper towels
- Small bowls of dye (diluted food colouring or diluted tempera paint)
- Scissors

### What to do:

1. Fold the coffee filters or paper towels in half, then into quarters and then into thirds.
2. Dip into a bowl of dye.
3. Blot to remove excess water.
4. Open up and leave until dry.
5. When dry, fold again and make snowflakes by snipping small shapes along the folded edges.
6. Open up the snowflakes and decorate your house.



Source: *Surviving Your Preschooler* by Trish Kuffner. Lighthouse Books. 1998

## Cook Up Some Fun!

If you've finished all the activities, what better way to spend some time together than in the kitchen? Kids love to create tasty treats, so whip up a batch of your favorite cookie and then snuggle with a good book. Try our recipe for Rocky Road Slice if you'd like to try something different.

### Rocky Road Slice

#### What you need:

- 1 egg
- 1 cup icing sugar
- ½ cup graham crumbs
- ½ cup cocoa
- ½ cup coconut
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 2 ½ cups mini marshmallows (white or multi colored)



#### What to do:

1. Melt butter.
2. Stir in egg, cocoa, graham crumbs and coconut.
3. Add the marshmallows.
4. Roll into a log, wrap in waxed paper and refrigerate.
5. Slice and enjoy!