



Parents often need fresh ideas to keep cooped-up children engaged and energized during the snowiest, coldest part of winter.

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Cabin fever

Does the cold weather have your family stuck indoors?

The cold and the snow in recent weeks has sent families running for cover. This time of year, spending time snuggled together indoors is a wonderful idea, but cabin fever can take hold after just a few days.

Parents often need fresh ideas to keep cooped-up children engaged and energized during the snowiest,

coldest part of winter. Otherwise, boredom and pent-up energy can quickly erupt into mischief. To prevent or cure cabin fever indoors, have your kids shake things up and think things out. And, don't forget that the outdoors still can be fun in winter if you're bundled up warm. Best of all, most of these activities don't have to cost anything.

What parents can do

Shake things up: get physical indoors

- Turn on the music and dance. Any music or exercise video will do. Lead younger children through simple marching or skipping routines around the living room.
- Make an indoor obstacle course. Rearrange the furniture to make obstacles for kids to climb over, under, around and through.
- Jump rope. Push the furniture out of the way and jump rope. Be sure you have enough clear space for ropes to be twirled.
- Balloon olympics. For kids over 3, balloons offer lots of play possibilities. Play balloon volleyball or kickball. Beware of balloons for babies and toddlers; latex balloons, when popped or deflated, are a serious choking hazard.
- Finger paint. Kids love the squishy feel of finger paint. No paint in the house? Try painting with chocolate pudding on freezer paper or waxed paper.

Think things out: be creative or learn something new

- Put some fun into lunch. If your children are Dr. Seuss fans, have them help make green eggs and ham (a drop of green food coloring added before cooking scrambled eggs will do the trick.) Other favorite books can inspire a unique lunch. Get kids involved in measuring, mixing and setting the table, but watch out for hot stoves, microwaves and food.

- Learn a new skill. If your elementary school-age child is involved in scouting or another youth group, turn to that organization's materials for activities to try.
- Visit the library. Even beginning readers can get a free library card from most libraries.
- Invent silly stories. Have one family member start telling an original story. Just when it gets exciting, the first family member stops and another must tell the next piece of the tale.
- Do an art project. Grab the Playdoh, crayons, construction paper or any art supplies you have around the house. Even old magazines and cereal boxes can be turned into art.

Bundle up and get out

- Go to the zoo. See which animals like the snow.
- Go ice skating. Check the phone book for indoor and outdoor skating rinks in your area.
- Go sledding. Many community parks offer free sledding, just bring your sleds.
- Build a snow family. It's a great year for snowmen! Don't stop with just one; build a whole family, including a dog or a cat.