

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Making ice decorations

Make these simple but beautiful ice decorations to hang up outside, with the opportunity for some science and problem-solving too.

Learning aims

- Predicting, estimating, reasoning
- Problem-solving and sustained shared thinking
- Noticing changes
- Creating using a range of media and materials
- Fine motor skills (pouring from a jug, using scissors, manipulating small objects using pincer grip).



Resources

- Shallow dishes, bun tins or similar
- Collections of winter items (twigs from pine trees, holly leaves), natural items (small pebbles, shells), bird seed, etc.
- Twine
- Scissors
- Water, jug.

Activity outline

1. Show the children the range of resources available and, to support their thinking and reasoning skills, encourage them to suggest what they might be able to make
2. When you share that they will be making ice decorations, find out if any of the children know where the ice will come from. Remember to encourage all answers so that children are confident to have a go. At this stage, you may like to show the children a finished ice decoration so they can see what they will be working towards
3. Each child pours some water into their chosen dish, or section of the bun tin
4. They will need to cut off a length of twine to create a loop to hang up the decoration. Support the children to estimate how long their piece of string will need to be. The string should then be folded in half and the ends placed in the water, so it will create a loop when frozen
5. Place a selection of the natural items in the dish
6. Decide where to put the dishes to freeze. If it is likely to be cold outside then they would be best left out overnight for the children to come to the following day to discover the frozen decorations.

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Children could be asked to propose a place where they think their water will freeze and enabled to place them wherever they suggested. If their decorations have not frozen by the following day, this is an excellent opportunity to discuss reasons why and try for a more successful spot

7. Once the decorations have frozen, they should come out of the dishes easily. Hang them up on tree branches, bushes or fences
8. Encourage the children to revisit them regularly and look for any changes. When they melt, talk about why and find out what happened to the items they put in their decoration. Some may fall off the tree altogether if the ice around the twine melts. It may be worth warning the children that their decorations will melt to prevent any upset
9. It is advised that as the decorations will melt, only natural items are included so that the outdoor environment is not spoilt.

Extension ideas

If below freezing temperatures are expected, collect a number of containers of different depths. Talk with the children about depth and capacity. Fill the containers with water and leave outside. Encourage predicting and reasoning to support children to think about what might happen. For example, will the depth of the container make a difference to how quickly it freezes? Ask the children where the containers should be placed so they are most likely to freeze – try putting some in different locations to see if it makes a difference. The children will be excited to see what happened to their container of water the following day. Talk to the children about their predictions and what actually happened.

Extending the activity

- Publication: [Fun for all seasons](#)
- Blog: [Early years science and outdoor play](#)
- Course: [Expressive arts and design](#).