

Winter Doldrums Jar: Simple, Fun Kids Activities for Cold Weather



In honor of the new year, tape a large piece of butcher paper on the wall. Have each family member draw pictures of what they remember of the year gone by for a mural of remembrance. Save it for next year.

Find an ordinary calendar. Each day, try to write a few words in each square so you will remember the activities you did and the places you visited.



Make a height and weight chart for each child. Take these measurements every six months during the year to track your child's growth. Some families write these directly on the wall.



Paint a rainbow with washable watercolors on white paper to brighten a January day.



Use a deck of playing cards. Lay out three of the same number and one that is different. Ask your child to choose which one is different.

Take a carrot, onion or potato. Stick three toothpicks in the vegetable and rest it on the rim of the glass of water. Watch it sprout and talk about how plants grow with your child.



Make some Jell-O in a cookie sheet. Cut out shapes with a knife and practice identifying squares, circles, triangles, etc.



Snuggle, read and play board or card games. On a cold day there is nothing like cocooning!



Draw pictures in the frost on a window.

Make your own ring toss game for indoors. Get a nice sized piece of Styrofoam, some regular clothespins and some canning jar rings. Stick the clothespins into the Styrofoam and toss the rings. Do this on a tabletop for smaller children.



Get several clear glasses of water and several food colors. Add the colors one at a time, watching the water change from clear to colorful. Then try mixing some colors.



Take some yarn (wrap a piece of clear tape around the end) or a shoe lace and make a necklace out of circle shaped cereal, like Cheerios or Fruit Loops.



Beat a pattern on a drum or on the floor with a deck. Have your child repeat the pattern. Start simple and get more complex.

Has your child practiced walking with a book balanced on her head?



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It is never too early to introduce your child to the joy of serving others. Is there a nursing home in your area? Call to see if they have a special mom and child visiting time. A flower clutched in a small hand or a crayon drawing for a gift can be the highlight of an older person's week.

Make a map of your house. Show and label the rooms. Talk about bigger maps and introduce your child to an atlas or wall map. If you have the wall space, display a world and United States map. On another day, get a larger piece of paper and draw a map of the neighborhood.



Go outside to make snow angels!



Put water and food coloring in squirt bottles and go outside to spray the snow.



Write your child's name on a stiff piece of cardboard in block letters. Cut it out like a puzzle and let her practice putting them in the proper order.

Talk about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and get a book about his life from the library. Even the smallest child can get a feel for the greatness of this man's life.



Make a tape recording of your child to play back and save. Write a list of questions and pretend you are interviewing her. Let her listen to her own voice and save the tape for the future. I came across one of these recently and was delighted to hear my young child's voice once again.



Catch some fresh snow in a container. Put it in paper cups and pour some juice on it to enjoy some real snow cones.



Beanbags are wonderful things. You can buy them or make your own, even with hand sewing. Make squares or other shapes. Use them to toss into containers, or practice walking with them on your head. They can be used to play catch too.

Take an icicle from outside your house and place it into a glass flower vase. Watch it now and talk about the transformation from ice to water. Estimate how much water will be in the container and how long it will take to melt. This can also be done with snow. Fill the container and wait for it to melt.



When it's just too cold to go out and your floor needs washing, bring cookie sheets of snow into your kitchen. Provide cups, spoons and other toys. Then make hot chocolate to warm up cold hands.



Introduce your child to a thermometer. Talk about the seasons. Hang in your window and consult it with your child periodically to discuss the temperature. An older child can keep a record of daily temperatures and weather conditions.



Show your child different kinds of clocks. Draw a pretend clock on a paper plate and let her decorate it.

Use hot air popcorn or cotton balls to make snow pictures. Give your child a snowman design and a dish of glue and let her glue on the popcorn or cotton to create a fluffy snowman. This can also be done with crumpled balls of white great paper.



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Draw a snow scene on black or blue construction paper with a piece of white chalk. Glue on cotton balls if desired.

Store a snowball in the freezer.



Collect several pairs of mittens and gloves from around your house and have a "mitten match." Or draw matching mittens from construction paper and cut them out.



Make some silly putty with one part liquid starch and two parts white glue. Measure the starch first, and then add the glue. Mix with a spoon and add single tablespoons of liquid starch until you get the right consistency



Get a book of old school nursery rhymes from the library. Use props, like a bucket for Jack and Jill, or a pie plate for Little Jack Horner.

Use some yarn or masking tape to make a large circle or square on the floor. Practice going in, out, around, or onto the shape.



Play red light/green light. Take a Popsicle stick and green and red construction paper and construct a stop and go sign. When you flash the stop sign, your child has to freeze in position. When you flash the go sign, she can move about.



Let your children have a pillow fight. Join in!



Let your child help you fold towels fresh from the dryer. Show her how to do it, and then don't criticize the job she does. Let this become one of her chores.

Get a play telephone or an unused real telephone and let your child practice dialing 911 (where available) and your home phone number. A good way to memorize a phone number is to put it to the tune of "Twinkle, twinkle little star" with your own made-up ending. We sing, "Seven - - - - - , that's the way my phone number goes."



Set up some chairs and play train or taxi. Let your child be the driver, conductor, ticket taker, passenger, etc.



Do potato prints. Cut a potato in half and carve a shape on the inside, like a star or heart or circle. Put some paint in a meat tray or paper plate and use the potato to make prints for cards or wrapping paper.



Cut a heart shape into a sponge and sponge paint some greeting cards.

An old typewriter is a treasure! Children love pecking out letters or banging the keys, with or without paper. You can often pick up an old machine at a garage sale.



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Teach your child her address. Turn it into a familiar song if that will help her remember.

Make a faces mural. Collect all kinds of faces from newspapers and magazines. Mount them on a large piece of cardboard. This can be an ongoing activity. Talk about how there are all kinds of different people in the world. Work with your child to identify facial expressions, like happiness, fear, contentment or puzzlement.



Cut out and save pictures of cars, boats, trains, etc. from magazines. Make a book of Things That Go by pasting these pictures on papers folded into a book. Staple the pages together or make holes along the left side of the book and lace with yarn.



Put a line on the floor with masking tape. Walk the line, jump over the line and practice balance skills.



Get a book from the library about safety and strangers. It's never too early to begin a gentle discussion about safety.

