



Bringing the Season to Life: Winter Themes for Infants and Toddlers

As the days grow colder, early childhood classrooms transform into cozy spaces of wonder and warmth. For infants and toddlers, winter and holiday themes offer a sensory-rich opportunity to explore, connect with nature, and learn through play. In these early years, experiences do not need to be extravagant to be meaningful. Simple, developmentally appropriate activities can spark joy and wonder while supporting essential developmental skills. Here are different ideas to bring the magic of the season into the classrooms in developmentally appropriate ways:

- **Embrace the Senses of the Season: Infants and toddlers experience the world through sensory play.**
 - Fill a sealed freezer bag with whipped cream and silver glitter glue
 - Double seal with packing tape
 - Tape to a table or floor for tummy time
 - Let infants squish, pat, and explore the “snowy” texture safely!

Why the activity works: Visual and tactile stimulation without any loose parts.

Texture Seasonal Touch Boards: Create boards with materials like fleece, felt, foil, and wool to represent cold weather textures.

- Use a sturdy foam board, cardboard, or a wooden board
- Cover with soft fabric for comfort
- Attach materials securely using hot glue or sewing (no staples or loose adhesives)

- Always test strength before offering to children

Why the activity works: Builds sensory awareness and encourages touch exploration.

- **Seasonal Language and Songs: Repetition and rhythm are key for early language development. Seasonal songs, rhymes, and fingerplays are perfect for creating joyful routines.**
 - “Frosty the Snowman”
 - “Five Little Snowmen”
 - “Jingle Bells” with real bells to shake

Why the activity works: Hearing words repeatedly helps infants and toddlers recognize sounds, rhythms, and eventually, predict language patterns.

Safety reminder: Always supervise sensory play and be mindful of potential allergens or choking hazards.

- **Art Inspired by Winter. Art for infants and toddlers should focus on the process, not the product. These open-ended activities help build fine motor skills while allowing children to explore at their own pace. Use winter themes to explore new textures and colors:**
 - Ice painting (using frozen colored water on paper)
 - Snowflake stamping with sponges
 - Finger painting with non-toxic white paint on blue or black paper
 - Tearing white tissue paper for snow collages

Why the activity works: Each of the art-inspired activities involves actions like grasping, tearing, dabbing, or smearing, which help strengthen fine motor skills.

SAFETY FIRST: Making Sensory Play and Art with Infants and Toddlers Safe

Always carefully supervise infants and toddlers, making sure materials are safe and non-toxic for babies who like to explore with their mouths, and that freezer bags are not left unattended, as they pose a suffocation hazard, and that choking hazards are avoided.

Final Thoughts

Winter is a season full of wonder, even for the youngest learners. By focusing on sensory play and seasonal joy, you help infants and toddlers build meaningful connections with the world around them. The winter season can be overstimulating even for adults, but let the beauty of winter guide you. The magic of the season is found in the relationships you build and the safe, loving environments you provide every day. These early moments form the foundation for lifelong learning and emotional well-being. In a nurturing environment, infants and toddlers find not only comfort but also the freedom to explore the wonders of winter.

Reference:

Zero to Three www.zerotothree.org

Resource Spotlight

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- Elevate your classroom with Expert Coaching and other Support!



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VA ITSN WEBSITE



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210 Packets Court | Williamsburg, VA 23185 US

(757) 378-3177 | info@va-itsnetwork.org

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