

Ice rings

Age recommendation: 2 years up

This is a magical and fun activity for children that wraps up physics, climate, and teamwork. Plus it's a wonderful patience building exercise!

Each stage of this activity is fun and full of teaching moments. Gathering natural objects makes children look around, and examine things in detail. Creating the ice ring teaches them about pouring into containers, the freezing process teaches that some things don't happen instantly.

The finished ice ring is a beautiful object, and if it is hanging in the sunlight it will twinkle and sparkle magically. Children are fascinated by both the freezing and the melting process.



What you need

- 1 or 2 ring tins or Bundt tins (a baking tin with a hole in the middle)
- A container for gathering, such as a plastic ice-cream container
- Water from the garden hose or a jug
- Natural string
- Scissors

Teaching tip

Take a container with you on your next outing with the children. Ask them to collect items for an ice ring that are different from what they'd find near your house. Create themed ice rings – one for a beach, one for a park, one from a forest walk. Even incorporating small plastic figurines into the theme.

Be creative and have fun!

How to

1. Give the children the ice-cream container and send them out on a collecting expedition in the backyard. Tell them to look for some items that will float and some items that will sink. And tell them not to rush – make interesting choices. Small leaves, grasses, sticks, bark chips, shells, a feather – any natural backyard item.
2. Sit down on the ground or at an outdoor table and sort through the items, talking about what might work in the ice ring and what may not. Will it float or just sink to the bottom? What will happen as it melts? Talk about colours and textures too.
3. Place the selected items into the ring tin or Bundt tin and fill it with water
4. Place the tin in the freezer and leave over night
5. On the next day, take the ice ring out of the tin (you might need to run it under hot water for a moment or two to loosen it) then tie a length of string through the centre and in the back yard from a tree branch or rail.
6. Get the children to watch as the ice slowly melts, dripping onto the ground, eventually releasing the items and allowing them to flutter to the ground.
7. Talk about how fast the ice ring melts – in winter the ice ring may stay for days. In summer the ice may disappear in less than an hour.