



Icy Cold Fun



photo courtesy USFWS

Mini Fact:

Small fish called minnows and worms called night crawlers are used for bait in ice fishing.

What do you do for fun during the winter? Kids who live near the mountains might ski or snowboard. Families in Florida can spend time at the beach, and Arizonans can hike and play outdoors all year long.

For those who spend the winter months where temperatures are freezing and snow is all around, ice fishing can be a great way to be outdoors and enjoy friends and family.

This week, The Mini Page learns more about this fun winter sport.

What is ice fishing?

Ice fishing involves cutting a hole in a frozen lake or pond where fish live. This is done using an **auger**, a tool that is screwed down through the ice to make the hole. Some people use a power drill for this task.



Then, using a fishing pole and line, bait is dropped into the hole, and fish gobble it up.

Ice fishers typically catch yellow perch, bluegill or sunfish — known as **panfish** — or larger species like northern pike. Some are taken home to cook and eat; the bonier species are usually released back into the water.

Safety first

Cutting a hole in ice over frigid water might sound dangerous, but ice fishers know how to stay safe on the frozen lake.

First, people use a **spud bar**, a long piece of steel with a point at the end, to prod the ice

as they walk away from the shoreline. In some lakes, during the coldest months, ice can be 2 to 3 feet thick, but experts agree that it must be at least 4 to 8 inches thick to be considered safe to walk on. When the ice is very thick, it can support pickup trucks driving onto it!

Bait shops and sporting goods stores also may have ice reports with current news about the safety of specific lakes.

Fun for kids

If sitting in the cold around a small hole in the ice, waiting for a fish to bite sounds boring, you haven't heard the whole story.

Kids love to ice fish "because they're not contained in a boat," said Sabrina Chandler, refuge manager in Minnesota. "If fish aren't biting, they can build a snowman, throw snowballs, run around."

Kids also can help keep the hole open

by scooping out ice as it falls into or refreezes in the hole. And they can use a special tool called a **tip-up**, a spring and trigger with a little flag that is attached to the fishing pole. When a fish bites, the trigger releases the hook, and the flag pops up. Then kids can pull the line up by hand and grab the fish.



photo courtesy USFWS

More about ice fishing

You may have seen pictures or movies showing people inside a shelter while ice fishing. Chandler says shelters can be very simple, such as a pop-up tent with seats inside and a hole in the floor, or very fancy trailer-type structures with beds, kitchens and seats inside. People can also use heaters in their shelters; the ice is so thick that it doesn't melt.



photo courtesy USFWS

A community event

Ice fishing attracts groups of people just like picnics or festivals do in the summer. Parents bring their grills and enjoy catching up with neighbors as kids play games and check their fishing lines. In fact, at some spots, there can be hundreds of people at a time ice fishing.

In climates where people can feel cooped up indoors during the winter, ice fishing gives them a chance to enjoy the fresh air and being outdoors.

Resources



On the Web:

- youtu.be/9tXtTMBci_s
- bit.ly/MPfishing

At the library:

- "Kumak's Fish: A Tall Tale From the Far North" by Michael Bania

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of ice fishing are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



- AUGER, COMMUNITY,
- DRILL, FISHING,
- FREEZING, FROZEN,
- FUN, HEATER, HOLE,
- ICE, LAKE, NEIGHBORS,
- OUTDOOR, PANFISH,
- POND, SAFETY, SCOOP,
- SHELTER, SNOW, SPUD,
- THICK, TIP-UP, WINTER.

K A S P S D R I L L U S O P C
 D B H F R E E Z I N G U F O U
 R P E W O A O C R S T I M H E
 H O L E B U E A N D S M F S R
 E O T K H G V O O H U K R I E
 A C E A G E W O I N C C O F T
 T S R L I R R N I I J D Z N N
 E T P U E I G T H M K U E A I
 R N U F N A Y T I P U P N P W
 P O N D S S A F E T Y S A G T

Cook's Corner

Ice Cream in a Bag

You'll need:

- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 tablespoons sugar

- ice
- 6 tablespoons salt



What to do:

1. Place milk, vanilla and sugar in a pint-size freezer bag and seal.
2. Fill a gallon-size freezer bag halfway with ice and add 6 tablespoons of salt (rock salt works best).
3. Put the smaller bag into the larger bag and seal.
4. Shake back and forth until mixture gets thick — and you have homemade ice cream! Serves 1.

* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

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Thank You



The Mini Page thanks Sabrina Chandler, refuge manager of the Upper Mississippi River Wildlife and Fish Refuge in Minnesota, for help with this issue.

Teachers: For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: bit.ly/MPstandards. And follow The Mini Page on Facebook!



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1. The season between autumn and spring (6-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □

2. Something done for fun/relaxation; energetic action (8-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

3. Parents and their children; people living together (6-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □

4. Not in a building; in the open air (8-letter noun)

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

1. Bobby wears a coat in the _____ to keep warm.
2. What kind of _____ do you do during cold weather?
3. Jorge and his _____ took a vacation to northern Minnesota.
4. Sophia enjoys the _____ and playing games with friends.

ROOTONYM®

by Jan & Carey Orr Cook



Study the definition. When you know the missing word, fill in the letter boxes and the sentence blanks.

Answers: winter, activity, family, outdoors.

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