



# Occupational Therapy Ideas for the Winter Holidays

The holidays can be a wonderful time to plan fun activities, which have the added benefit of working on developmental skills. Try some of the following:

- **Ice Skating** can help develop balance, strength, coordination and motor planning. If your child is a good skater, try putting together an obstacle course, or a planned route around features on the ice.
  - **Building a Snowperson** can help reinforce body awareness (placing body parts in the correct locations), develop the use of two hands together (bilateral coordination), increase upper body strength, and develop planning and organizational skills. Incorporate number skills and patterning by counting the buttons and body parts as you add them.
  - **Making Cookies** can help develop upper body strength (stirring stiff dough), use of two hands together (one hand stirs, the other hand holds the bowl), counting skills (count the cookies as you make or eat them), and fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination (use small objects to decorate the cookies).
  - **Making Paper Chains** - Winter can feel like a dark time of year. Paper chains can help brighten things up! Use scissors to cut strips of colourful construction paper. Glue the ends of the strip of paper together to make a loop. Pass a new strip of paper through the first loop, glue the ends together to complete the link. This craft helps develop scissor skills and hand skills. Using thick paper and thick lines to cut on will help make cutting easier. Using thinner paper and wavy lines will make this craft more challenging!
- **If it is too cold** to play outside, try some active games inside. Have your child help plan an obstacle course using pillows to weave in between, blankets to crawl under, chairs to climb over, etc. Trying the obstacle course on all fours, or in a wheelbarrow walking position will help develop upper body strength. Hopping or jumping will help develop balance.
  - **Pretend Play** is important for learning, creativity, planning and developing social skills. Pretend to be a snowman, a polar bear or some other cold winter creature or item. See how creative you can be and how long you can keep a story going. Use items from around the house to dress up and play the role!
  - **Making Puppets** out of paper lunch bags can develop many skills including body awareness (adding eyes, nose, mouth, etc.), creativity, fine motor skills (drawing and colouring), and planning.
  - **Messy Play** is great fun during the holiday season! Drawing in finger paint and playing with playdoh or other messy play can help your child develop tactile senses and creativity - and it's a lot of fun!

Best of all, have fun together and enjoy the holidays!

