Try a winter sport

Get prepared to have fun outdoors during the season of snow and ice.

If you are tired of being indoors during the colder months, there are many ways you can enjoy being outside right now. Activities such as ice skating, skiing, snowboarding, and snowshoeing are great sports to try in the winter. Here’s how to get started.

Dress in layers
Winter sports are more fun when you protect your body from the cold. The best way to do this is to dress in layers. Start with a base layer, which should be a fitted top and bottom, as well as warm socks. You can buy long underwear made for cold weather, but you can also use leggings, a long-sleeved shirt, or a turtleneck. Ideally, these items should be made from fabrics like nylon, polyester, or merino wool. Unlike cotton, these fabrics will stay dry when you sweat from activity outside, keeping you warmer. Next, put on a middle layer, like a fleece or sweater. The last layer is your outer layer, including your coat, a pair of snow pants, gloves, a hat, and boots.

Be safe
For many winter sports you’ll want to wear a helmet. Most ski and snowboarding schools require kids to wear ski helmets, and you can usually rent a ski helmet at the mountain. But it’s also important to wear a helmet for other winter sports that you might do on your own, experts say. If you are planning to go sledding or ice skating, ask your parent about wearing a ski helmet or a bike helmet. Since snow and ice are very slippery, it’s important to protect your head in case you fall or hit something. You should also always talk to an adult before heading out to do a winter sport, even sledding. And make sure you’re choosing safe spots: Never ice skate on a frozen lake or pond unless it has been approved for skating and you have supervision.

Use appropriate gear
Many winter sports require special equipment, such as skis, snowboards, and skates. You may be able to borrow what you need from a friend, but just be sure that what you’re using fits well. A proper fit will make the activity more fun for you, and it’s also safer to wear the correct size. You could also rent the equipment from a local winter sports store or the venue where you are going.

Take a lesson
Spending time in a group lesson with a ski or snowboard instructor can help you learn the basics, such as how to turn and stop. Getting help from someone will make you feel more confident, which can make the experience a lot more fun and exciting for you. Many local ice rinks offer skating lessons or clinics.

How some snow gear came to be

The equipment people use in cold weather has significantly changed throughout history.

**Skiing**
The oldest ski discovered by scientists is believed to date back to 6,000 BCE. Found in Russia, it has an elk head carved on one end that may have been used to help the skier slow down.

**Snowshoeing**
Native American tribes created different types of snowshoes to meet the particular needs of their environment. For example, tribes that lived in dense forests used smaller round snowshoes that could maneuver around trees.

**Ice skating**
The first ice skates are thought to have been developed in northern Europe. Instead of metal blades, bones from animals like elk, oxen, and reindeer were used.

**Snowboarding**
This is a new winter sport compared to the others mentioned here. The first snowboard, created in 1965, was made by fastening two snow skis together. It was called a "snurfer."