

Journey to an icy landscape full of frozen wonders and fascinating creatures. The Polar Scenery Stones are a tactile and open-ended addition to polar small worlds and loose parts play. Their shapes and patterns promote creativity, language and pattern making.

Loose parts

Offer the Stones with other loose parts, to promote critical thinking and creativity. Using loose parts to create patterns and stacks, investigate different textures and invent stories builds on several areas of learning, including maths, literacy, understanding of the world and fine motor skills.

For a polar-themed loose parts collection, in addition to the Scenery Stones, you could offer these loose parts in a white or blue tray or on fabric:

- Cotton wool balls, white/blue felt shapes or white/blue wool pieces
- Small plastic mirrors
- Glass beads, snowflakes shapes, buttons or beads in white/blue
- Ice cubes – or other shapes (use any small containers such as silicon baking moulds or yoghurt pots)
- Evergreen twigs complete with needles – or for an aromatic alternative, use rosemary or lavender stalks
- Fir cones and stones



Arctic art

The stones also offer simple and open-ended ways to get creative and develop fine motor skills:

- Use the stones and natural materials to create polar pictures or patterns – indoors or outside.
- Press the stones into dough to leave an imprint. What does the imprint feel like? You could also make patterns with imprints.
- Use wax crayons and paper to make rubbings of the stones. Learning how much pressure to apply is great for fine motor skills.



Small world polar play

The Scenery Stones offer an open-ended way to enhance small world play, inspiring children's imagination and enhancing their language development. Use these ideas to create a polar landscape inside or outdoors:

Snowy scene

There are several options for creating a sensory snowy or icy landscape, if you're not lucky enough to have any real snow or frozen puddles!

- For snow, you could use flour, crushed ice (use a robust blender), artificial snow, white fabric/felt, a thin layer of white play dough or cloud dough. Scatter biodegradable silver glitter for extra sparkle. (For cloud dough, mix eight parts flour with one part oil or lotion.)
- To create a polar sea, you could use water (with blue food colouring), a tray of smooth ice, a large mirror laid flat, blue fabric/felt, blue biodegradable sensory goo or bubble foam (made by whisking two parts water to one part sensitive bubble bath using a handheld mixer until it forms stiff peaks).

Frozen features

Add to your landscape with a number of polar props, such as:

- Cotton wool balls or clear glass beads
- Real ice cubes – on the land or in the sea as mini icebergs
- Position the Scenery Stones standing upright to create ice shards, or on the surface of the sea as floating ice sheets.
- Use white play dough to create snowy mounds or other features. You could also use Yellow Door's Play Igloo, the Cave coated in white play dough as an ice cave, or the Volcano topped with white play dough as a snowy mountain.



Arctic animals

- Add animal figures, such as Little Lands: Polar. You could also offer the Let's Investigate: Polar Footprints stones.
- You might choose to focus on just one or two types of animals, such as whales, polar bears or penguins, or just use either arctic or Antarctic animals.
- Add familiar characters from a book set in a polar region for small world bookish play. These could be printed out illustrations from a book such as *The Emperor's Egg*. Leave the book alongside for children to interact with too.



Books about polar regions

The Emperor's Egg by Martin Jenkins

The Rainbow Bear by Michael Morpurgo

Penguin Huddle by Ross Montgomery

A Dot in the Snow by Corinne Averis

Get talking – useful words

Arctic, Antarctic, north/south pole, ice, snow, snowflake, glacier, ice cap, iceberg, ice sheet, freeze/frozen, melt.

More to explore

The stones provide opportunities for developing mathematical thinking, such as counting and spatial reasoning:

- Talk about the different shapes and sizes of the Scenery Stones. Children might enjoy laying them out and counting them, or sorting them into the three sets of six.
- Use the stones to make imprints in play dough. Stamp the stones in different orientations using both the smooth and patterned sides, then match the stones to the imprints. Children will develop important spatial reasoning skills as they learn to turn and flip the stones to match them to the imprints.
- Use the stones to create repeating patterns – either flat on a surface, or in a stack. Talk about the pattern the child makes – is it white, light blue, dark blue, white, light blue, dark blue (ABC pattern) or something else? Children might enjoy making a circular pattern to look like an ice hole.
- Create patterns with reflectional and rotational symmetry. Children might also create patterns that radiate out from the centre.
- Encourage positional language – maybe the white stone is between two blue stones, or perhaps the penguin is *on* a floating ice block or *inside* an ice cave.

