

Children will love learning about these amazing animals, using the Polar Footprints stones to make footprint trails and imagine walking the frozen landscape themselves. The animals on the back of the stones will spark conversations about their size, strength and speed, and foster a desire to protect them.

Get talking – useful words

Arctic, Antarctic, north/south pole, ice cap, glacier, melt, warming, huddle, swim, dive, waddle, predator, prey, camouflage, claw, hoof, webbed foot, smooth.



Snowy hide and seek

A playful and sensory way to introduce the Polar Footprint Stones is for the children to uncover them themselves – using their eyes and sense of touch to find the camouflaged creatures. The stones could be hidden:

- In a tray of ice
- Under artificial snow
- In a mound of shredded paper or cotton wool balls (which can be reused!)
- Under some floaty white fabric

Cornflour playdough is great for creating a snowy landscape. To make it, combine the following ingredients in a pan over a low heat and stir until the mixture comes together:

- 100g cornflour
- 150g table salt
- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 tbsp cream of tartar
- 250ml water

Allow the dough to cool before kneading it. You could add some bio-degradable silver glitter to make the snow sparkle! If you spread the dough over the floor of a tray, children can practise making footprint stamps with the stones, developing fine motor skills as they learn how much pressure to apply. Some small world polar animals could watch the fun – and join in the play!

Chilly chatter

There's so much to talk about with polar animals. You can build children's knowledge, understanding and critical thinking skills by discussing:

- Which animals on the stones they recognise.
- Why the penguin and albatross have webbed feet.
- What sort of place these animals live in. Is life challenging in the polar regions?
- Why some of these animals have white fur.



- How the animals manage to keep warm in the cold. Do they have a warm furry coat or a thick layer of fat under their skin? Maybe they huddle together, like the penguin and arctic hare. Or perhaps they dig cosy dens to hide from the cold – such as the arctic fox, arctic hare and polar bear.
- Some are surprisingly big! You could measure together how tall a polar bear can be (over 3m), how long a musk ox can be (2.5m) and how wide the wingspan of an albatross is (3.3m – the widest of any bird).
- Some are super speedy! If you can find any video clips of an arctic fox or hare running, the children can see their amazing speed and agility for themselves. And don't forget the penguin – clumsy on land, wonderfully agile and fast in the water!
- You might like to discuss how can we protect where these animals live – albatrosses are affected by plastic waste in the sea, and polar bears by sea ice disappearing.

Arctic explorers

Children will love exploring the world of ice and snow through role play – using their imagination, solving problems and extending their knowledge:

- Offer everything an arctic explorer needs to wear to go off on an adventure, such as warm clothes, snow boots and goggles.
- What equipment do the children think they'll need? You could provide binoculars, a compass, magnifying glasses, snow shovels and skis.
- What about an arctic survival kit? What food would be suitable and what would they live in?
- Every explorer needs a map! Offer paper with large gridlines for the children to draw maps of the land, sea, mountains, ice caps and base camp.
- Use the stones to record the animals the children spot in the wild – they might like to press the footprints into clay or make rubbings of them using wax crayons.
- Provide non-fiction books for the explorers to consult.



Match and sort

As the children's knowledge increases, they can start to match and sort the animals, using the stones. This could include:

- Sorting by how many legs they have
- Which animals can swim?
- Sorting into birds and mammals
- Sorting by where they live – land, sea or ice caps?
- Sorting by what they eat – animals or plants?
- Matching the footprints on the stones to pictures of the animals
- Matching the animals to the north or south pole by placing the stones on a map



Books about polar animals

Say Hello to the Snowy Animals! by Ian Whybrow

A Dot in the Snow by Corrinne Averiss

The Emperor's Egg by Martin Jenkins

The Lights that Dance in the Night by Yuval Zommer