

How to Build a Quinzee Snow Shelter



A quinzee is a simple shelter made by hollowing out a big pile of snow. They can take several hours to build, but are an effective way to stay warm when camping in the winter. Here's how to build one.

BUILDING A QUINZEE



Step 1: Shovel a pile of snow into a mound 7 to 8 feet high and big enough around to hold two people once it is hollowed out. Mix snow of different temperatures to cause it to harden, or “sinter.” Flip the snow over so it mixes when you pile it into a mound.



Step 2: Shape the mound into a dome and allow it to sinter for about 90 minutes. Then begin to hollow out the mound.

Dig a small entrance on the downhill side. Smooth out the walls and ceiling. The walls should be 1 to 2 feet thick. Poke measuring sticks through from the outside of the mound, so you will know to stop hollowing out the inside when you see the ends of the sticks. Hollow the shelter out from the top down.



Step 3: Use the last foot of snow to make elevated snowbeds. Dig a narrow trench between the beds all the way to the ground. This allows cold air to flow down and out of the quinzee. Poke a small ventilation hole near the top of the dome.

Building a quinzee will make you sweat. Prevent hypothermia by changing into warm dry clothes after you finish building your shelter.



Step 4: Make sure you mark your entrance in case it gets covered with snow while you are away having fun. Keep a small shovel inside in case you need to dig your way out.

WINTER CAMPING TIPS

- If you have to visit the latrine in the middle of the night, eat a snack afterward to help warm up your body and get back to sleep. Don't worry about keeping the snacks in your quinzee — when you camp in winter, you don't have to worry about bears.
- Jell-O gelatin mix makes a great hot drink. Store Jello-O powder in refillable backpacking tubes and add it to hot water. Try cherry Jell-O in instant hot chocolate!
- Eat your meals from their packages. Vacuum-sealed meals and packages of oatmeal can be opened and used as “bowls.” If you don't rip the top off completely, you'll have only one piece of trash to dispose of.
- Bury your water jugs in a snowdrift. The snow insulates the water and keeps it from freezing.