



W H A L E C L A S S

Circle Time Guide

Everything you need, one page per day.

Week 16 · Winter Is Coming

4–8 January 2027 · 13 minutes a day · ages 2.5–6, English learners

First week back after the winter holiday · 小寒 (Minor Cold) falls on Tuesday 5 January

WEEK OVERVIEW



Print · laminate · ring-bind · hold this all week

It is cold now — so I put things **ON**. Everything this week hangs off that one sentence. Winter is not a topic to be told about; it is a thing the body notices and the hands answer. Second thread: one ice cube goes out on the shelf on Monday and is looked at every single morning. Nobody explains it. By Friday it is a puddle and they explain it to you.

FIVE WORDS THEY'LL OWN BY FRIDAY

winter cold snow coat boots

Littles (2.5–3) — one word + a gesture is a win: “Cold!” (shiver, rub your hands, brrr), “Snow!” (fingers fluttering down), “Boots!” (stamp, stamp).

Bigs (4–6) — sentence frames: “It is cold.” · “I put on my coat.” · “Winter is here.”

THE 13-MINUTE FLOW, EVERY DAY

- 2 MIN** Magic Box hook — chant, shake, sniff, dramatic peek, the day's real object. (This week it opens at the shelf: ten seconds looking at the ice.)
- 4 MIN** Teach — the day's word with the real thing in your hands. Get it wrong once on purpose.
- 3 MIN** Song — chorus → today's new verse → chorus.
- 3 MIN** Game — one named game, tied to the day's word.
- 1 MIN** Close — whisper → normal → SHOUT.

IN THE MAGIC BOX, DAY BY DAY

Mon one ice cube in a small clear bowl — it stays out on the shelf all week · **Tue** a woolly hat and a long scarf · **Wed** a pair of real snow boots, the biggest you can borrow · **Thu** real snow (or crushed ice), white feathers and paper snowflakes · **Fri** everything from the week, plus the four dressing cards.

THE WEEK'S CLOSE

Everyone: “Cold... coat... BOOTS! WINTER IS HERE!” (*shiver · zip up · stamp, stamp · both arms thrown wide on the shout*)

THEME SHELF · FOUR TRAYS

- 1** • Melting ice — a cube, a dish and a two-picture record card (ice → water). *Control:* it really does become water. (Monday's Magic Box object, living on the shelf.)
- 2** • Dressing sequence + dressing frames — the four cards hat → scarf → coat → boots laid in order, with the button frame and the zip frame beside them. *Control:* numbers on the backs. (From Friday's circle — the tray the whole week is really for.)
- 3** • Winter / summer clothes sorting — 12 clothing cards under two signs. *Control:* a snowflake or a sun drawn on the back of each card by the class. Action cards beside it, face down.
- 4** • Winter 3-part cards — winter 冬天 · cold 冷 · snow 雪 · coat 外套 · boots 靴子. *Control:* the whole control cards.

CHINESE ANGLE

One 汉字 card a day beside the ice bowl: 冷 · 衣 · 鞋 · 雪 · 冬. 新年快乐! on Monday, because 元旦 was the 1st. 小寒 named on Tuesday 5 January, with what it means — the cold has started and the big cold is still coming. 下雪了! on Thursday, said the way you would actually say it at a window. 冬天来了! shouted together on Friday.

FRIDAY'S DARK PHONICS SOUND

b — the lips press shut and then *pop* open with the voice already switched on: bed, bug, big, baby. “*Big baby burp!*” The week carries it everywhere: **boots**, **brr**, **big**, **button**, **blue**. Finger on the lips to feel the pop, hand on the throat to feel the buzz — the buzz is what makes it a b and not a p.

MONDAY · DAY 1

Brr! It's Cold!

Today's words: **cold**

Grab: one **ice cube in a small clear bowl** for the Magic Box (make it this morning, or the night before); a hot-water bottle or a bottle of warm water; an ice pack or a bag of frozen peas, both wrapped in a tea towel; the 冷 card; a shelf spot ready for the bowl where everyone can see it all week.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

First, the welcome back. Before the box, before anything: go right round the circle and say every single name out loud, and let them look at each other. Two weeks is a long time when you are three.

Teacher: "Happy New Year, Whale Class. 新年快乐! We are all back — and while we were away, something changed **outside**." (*point at the window and hold the point*)

Now the box. It is heavier than usual and it makes no sound at all.

Everyone: "What's in the box? What's in the box?"

Open it, look in, and pull your hand back sharply as though it bit you. Do it twice. Then lift out the bowl, and pass the **ice cube itself** round the circle so every child holds it for two seconds and hands it on fast. Shiver: "**Cold!**"

4 MIN TEACH · COLD

The whole class shivers together, twice — small and shaky, then enormous:

Brrr, my hands are **cold!** (*rub both hands together, fast*)

Brrr, my nose is **cold!** (*hold your nose, wince*)

Shiver, shiver, **shake...** (*shake your whole body from the shoulders*)

and now — a big warm **HUG!** (*wrap both arms round yourself and squeeze*)

Littles do the shiver and say "**Cold!**" Bigs owe you the sentence: "**It is cold.**" "**My hands are cold.**"

Then the bowl goes on the shelf, in front of everybody, and stays there. Say one sentence about it and no more: "*That ice cube is going to sit there all week and we are going to look at it every single day.*" Do not explain. Do not ask what will happen. Leave it.

Teacher fails: take off your own coat, fan yourself, and announce "Phew! It's so **HOT** in here today." Wait. Let them shout you down.

Chinese moment: lay the 冷 card beside the bowl. Say 好冷! once with the shiver. The card stays; the row grows by one card a day.

3 MIN GAME · HOT OR COLD?

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" Two wrapped bundles go round the circle in opposite directions: the **warm** bottle one way, the **ice pack** the other.

Teacher: "Feel it... and **shout it**. Hot? Or cold?"

Each child holds one for two seconds, shouts "**Hot!**" or "**Cold!**" and passes it on. When the two bundles meet on the far side of the circle, everybody cheers. Then swap directions and go round again, faster.

Wrap both bundles in a tea towel so nothing is ever painful, and check the warm one on your own wrist first. Warm, never hot.

1 MIN CLOSE

Everybody standing, arms wrapped round themselves. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: "Cold... coat... **BOOTS! WINTER IS HERE!**" (*shiver · zip up · stamp, stamp · both arms thrown wide on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *The Snowy Day* (Ezra Jack Keats) — a small boy, a red snowsuit, and a whole day outside. Read it slowly and let them look.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — chorus → Monday's verse → chorus, standing up.

"The ice is cold, the ice is white, / it melts, it melts — out of sight!" (*hold an imaginary cube in your fingertips; hands sink slowly and open out flat*)

TUESDAY · DAY 2

Hat, Scarf, Coat

Today's words: **coat** (cold comes back every day)

Grab: a **woolly hat** and a long **scarf** in the Magic Box; a spare child's coat, hat and scarf for the game (two sets if you can, one per team); the 衣 card; the ice bowl still on the shelf.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Look at the ice first. Every day this week starts with ten seconds at the shelf. Point. Say nothing. Let somebody else say it. Then the box — today it is soft, and something is hanging out of one corner.

Everyone: "What's in the box? What's in the box?"

Pull the scarf out very slowly, hand over hand, as if it will never end. Keep going. Let it get silly. Then the hat, straight onto your own head, crooked, over one eye.

Teacher: "When it is cold outside... I put things **ON**." (*wind the scarf round your neck twice*)

Everybody mimes pulling on a hat: **"Hat!" "Scarf!"**

4 MIN TEACH · COAT

Now the coat, and the order it goes on in. Stand up and do it together, twice, naming every step:

Hat on my head, (*both hands pull a hat down*)

Scarf round my neck, (*wind it round twice*)

Coat on my arms — (*one arm in, then the other*)

zip it up — **CHECK!** (*zip from tummy to chin and pat your chest*)

Then the Montessori part, and it is the point of the day: show the **coat flip** — coat on the floor, hood at your toes, hands in the two armholes, flip it over your head. Do it once, in silence, slowly. Then let one child try while everybody watches.

Littles say **"Coat!"** with the two-arm mime. Bigs give the frame: **"I put on my coat."** **"It is cold, so I put on my coat."**

Teacher fails: put the coat on **backwards**, or both arms down one sleeve, and stand there looking pleased with yourself. Wait for the roar.

Chinese moment: the 衣 card joins 冷 on the shelf — 衣服. Today is 小寒, Minor Cold: say it once, and tell them what it means — the cold has started, and the big cold is still coming.

3 MIN GAME · DRESS THE SNOWMAN

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" Two teams, one child from each team standing out front as the snowman. A pile of clothes on the floor in front of each.

Teacher: "Hat... scarf... coat! In **that** order. Ready... **GO!**"

The team dresses their snowman, calling the item out as it goes on. First team finished stands still and shouts **"Winter is here!"** Then swap the snowmen and go again so everybody gets a turn at being dressed.

Play it as a race only with the bigs. With a mixed circle, drop the racing and make it one child at a time with the whole class calling the order — the sequence is the learning, not the speed.

1 MIN CLOSE

Everybody still wearing something — a hat, a scarf, one glove. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: "Cold... coat... **BOOTS! WINTER IS HERE!**" (*shiver · zip up · stamp, stamp · both arms thrown wide on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? *Froggy Gets Dressed* (Jonathan London) — a frog who keeps forgetting one thing and has to go back for it. They will shout the missing item at the page, which is exactly the lesson.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — chorus → Tuesday's verse → chorus. On the last chorus line everybody really does zip up an imaginary coat.

"On goes my coat, one, two, three, / warm as toast — that's me!" (*one arm, other arm, zip — counted out loud and slowly; then hug yourself and beam*)

WEDNESDAY · DAY 3

Stamp Your Boots

Today's words: **boots** (cold · coat come back)

Grab: a pair of real **snow boots** in the Magic Box — the biggest, muddiest, most serious pair you can borrow; a hard floor or a big board to stamp on; the 鞋 card; the ice bowl (day three — it will be visibly smaller).

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Ten seconds at the shelf first. Today somebody will say it out loud without being asked. Let them.

The box is **heavy** today, and it thumps. Chant, then drop it (gently) on the floor from a hand's height — **thump**.

Everyone: "What's in the box? What's in the box?"

Lift out one boot. Hold it up in silence. Turn it over and show the **sole** — the pattern, the grip, the mud. Then the second boot, and bang the two together, hard, twice.

Teacher: "Big feet... **dry** feet... **STAMPING** feet!" (*stamp twice on the word*)

Everybody stamps: "**Boots!**"

4 MIN TEACH · BOOTS

Boots are the loud word of the week, so teach them with the feet:

Boots go on... (*sit, pull one on, then the other*)

and boots go **STAMP!** (*both feet, hard, twice*)

Out in the snow... (*walk on the spot, high knees, slow*)

my feet stay **dry!** (*point down at your own feet, big nod*)

Then the real work: one child sits down in front of everybody and puts the big boots on **by themselves** while the class counts the steps — sit, hold the top, push, push, **stand**. Nobody helps. Everybody waits. Then they walk a lap of the circle and the whole class stamps in time with them.

Littles stamp twice and say "**Boots!**" Bigs give the frame: "**I put on my boots.**" "**My boots keep my feet dry.**"

Teacher fails: put a boot on your **hand** and try to walk. Or put both boots on the wrong feet and set off round the circle, waddling, very pleased.

Chinese moment: the 鞋 card joins 冷 · 衣 on the shelf — 靴子. Say 穿鞋 with the pushing action as the child pushes their foot in.

3 MIN GAME · STAMP YOUR BOOTS

"One, two, three — eyes on me!" A pure echo game, and the quiet ending is the good bit.

Teacher: "Listen... then **copy me.**" (*stamp a short rhythm; they stamp it back*)

Start with two stamps. Then three. Then a pattern — *stamp, stamp, pause, stamp*. Then loud, then medium, then **tiptoe-quiet**, then a stamp so small it is only one toe. End sitting down on the floor with everybody's hands on their knees.

Bigs love giving the pattern. Let two or three of them lead one each — and hold them to it: they must be able to stamp their own pattern the same way twice.

1 MIN CLOSE

Standing, boots on (real or imaginary). Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: "Cold... coat... **BOOTS! WINTER IS HERE!**" (*shiver · zip up · stamp, stamp · both arms thrown wide on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? Take the boots outside and put them at the door with the class's own boots, all in a row, biggest to smallest. That row is a grading exercise and nobody has to be told so.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — chorus → Wednesday's verse → chorus. On "boots on the feet" everybody stamps hard enough to be heard next door.

"Boots, boots, stamp them so — / stamp, stamp, stamp — through the snow!" (*sing it once sitting and stamping, once marching round the room*)

THURSDAY · DAY 4

Snow Is Falling

Today's words: **snow** (cold · coat · boots come back)

Grab: real snow in a metal bowl if there is any outside — otherwise crushed ice; a handful of small white feathers; a dozen paper snowflakes cut thin enough to skid; the 雪 card; the ice bowl (day four — probably water by now).

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Ten seconds at the shelf. If the cube has gone, do not say so — just point, and let the gasp happen.

Today the box is **cold to the touch**. Let three children put a flat hand on the lid before you open it.

Everyone: “What’s in the box? What’s in the box?”

Open it and take out the bowl of snow with both hands as if it were precious. Round the circle: one finger each, one touch each, no grabbing. Then a white feather goes up in the air over the middle of the circle and everybody watches it come down.

Teacher: “Snow falls... like **that**.” (*fingers fluttering slowly down from above your head to your lap*)

Everybody's fingers flutter down: **“Snow!”**

4 MIN TEACH · SNOW

Snow is a whole-body word. Stand up:

Snow comes down... (*fingers fluttering from high above, very slowly*)

white and **slow**, (*sway, still fluttering*)

On my hat, on my nose — (*touch your head, then your nose*)

and **ALL** over my toes! (*crouch right down and touch your feet*)

Then the snow itself. Hold a little in your bare hand and let everybody watch it go. Ask one question and no more: “*Where did it go?*” Take every answer they give you, in any language, and repeat each one back in English. Then look at Monday's bowl, and let them put the two things together themselves.

Littles flutter their fingers and say **“Snow!”** Bigs give the frame: **“The snow is cold.” “Winter is here.”**

Teacher fails: try to keep a handful of snow safe by putting it in your **pocket** for later. Pat the pocket. Look satisfied. Check it at the end of circle.

Chinese moment: the 雪 card joins the row — 下雪了! Say it the way you would actually say it at a window, with the surprise in your voice, and let them shout it back.

3 MIN GAME · BLOW THE SNOWFLAKE

“One, two, three — eyes on me!” Paper snowflakes on the floor at one end of a clear strip of carpet. Everybody lies on their tummies behind their own snowflake.

Teacher: “Big breath in... and **blow**.” (*one enormous breath, one long blow — no hands*)

Whose snowflake travelled furthest? Kneel up and look along the line together. Then again, and this time everybody blows at the same moment on **three**.

This is a Montessori breath exercise wearing a party hat — the same control the candle-blowing and the feather-blowing work teach. Two rounds only, then stop; more than that and somebody goes dizzy.

1 MIN CLOSE

Standing, fingers still fluttering down. Whisper → normal → shout:

Everyone: “Cold... coat... **BOOTS! WINTER IS HERE!**” (*shiver · zip up · stamp, stamp · both arms thrown wide on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? The *Snowy Day* again, or fold one paper snowflake together with a pair of round-ended scissors — six folds, three snips, and the unfolding is the whole magic trick.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — chorus → Thursday's verse → chorus, and sing this verse **quietly**.

“Snow, snow, falling down, / white, white, white — all over town!” (*fingers fluttering from high to low; arms sweep wide and slow across the whole room*)

FRIDAY · DAY 5

Winter Walk + Review

Today's words: **winter** (all five words come back)

Grab: everything back in the Magic Box — the hat, the scarf, the boots, the empty bowl; the four **dressing cards** — hat, scarf, coat, boots — cut from the winter half of print pack page 14; coats and boots on and ready by the door; the 冬 card; the awards from print pack page 17.

2 MIN MAGIC BOX HOOK

Start at the shelf, and today let it take as long as it takes. The bowl that held an ice cube on Monday holds **water** on Friday, and nobody told them it would.

Teacher: “On Monday it was **hard** and **cold**. Today it is...?” (*hold the bowl up, tip it very slightly so it moves, and wait*)

Take every answer. Then the box, and it is stuffed: pull out the hat, the scarf, a boot, and let the class shout each one as it appears.

Last out are the four dressing cards. Lay them face up in the wrong order and let them fix it: “**Hat!**” “**Scarf!**” “**Coat!**” “**Boots!**”

4 MIN TEACH · WINTER — THE WHOLE WEEK

Quick-fire, one prop at a time out of the box. Hold it up, they name it, it goes down in a line on the floor:

Ice — **cold!** (*shiver*)

Coat — **zip!** (*zip up*)

Boots — **STAMP!** (*two stamps*)

Snow — **falling down...** (*fingers flutter*)

All of it together is... **WINTER!** (*both arms thrown wide*)

Littles name one thing each with its gesture — that is the whole assessment and it takes ten seconds. Bigs put two together: “**It is cold, so I put on my coat.**” “**Winter is here and there is snow.**”

Teacher fails: pick up the dressing cards and start with **boots**, then the hat, then try to get the coat on over the scarf you have not put on yet. Ask them, sweetly, whether that is right.

Chinese moment: the last card, 冬, joins the row: 冷 · 衣 · 鞋 · 雪 · 冬. Read the whole row out loud, pointing, then say 冬天来了! together at full volume.

3 MIN GAME · WINTER WALK

Coats on, boots on, out of the door. The rule is simple and it is the only rule: **find something cold and name it.**

Teacher: “Walking feet... find something **cold**... and tell me what it is!”

A railing, a puddle with a skin of ice on it, a bare branch, the wind on a cheek, somebody's red nose. Littles touch and say “**Cold!**” Bigs give you the sentence: “**The gate is cold.**” Come back in, hands round the radiator, and look at Monday's bowl one last time.

If the weather is impossible, walk to the coldest place in the building instead — the entrance hall, the fridge in the kitchen, a window pane — and do exactly the same thing. The naming is the work, not the outdoors.

1 MIN CLOSE + AWARDS

Every child gets a “You are a STAR!” award to take home with the wrap-up. Then, coats still on, all four gestures:

Everyone: “Cold... coat... **BOOTS! WINTER IS HERE!**” (*shiver · zip up · stamp, stamp · both arms thrown wide on the shout*)

Got 3 spare minutes? Ask them to teach *you* the dressing order, one card at a time, and get it wrong on purpose one last time. Then send the “Dress MY snowman!” sheets home with the awards.

3 MIN · Today's song moment — Friday's verse, then the **WHOLE** song, standing in coats and boots just before the walk. “Cold and snow and boots and hat, / winter is here — how about that!” Then chorus → Mon → Tue → Wed → Thu → Fri → chorus. That run-through is the week's review.

SONGBOOK

★ “Brr! It's Cold!”

C (0003) F (2010) G7 (0212) Am (2000) · Strum: Down · Down · Down-Up (“brr — brr — brr-a”)

Am turns up exactly once, on “Coat zipped up” at the top of the chorus's last line — and Am is one finger in the same place as F's first finger, so if you can play F you can already play it. Every one of the five verses is just C and G7. Brisk and bouncy, like walking fast in the cold, not a lullaby. If you miss the Am and stay on C, nobody in the room will know.

CHORUS — EVERY SINGLE DAY

C Brr! Brr! It's F cold, so C cold! (*shiver, hug yourself*)
F Winter is C here — do what you're G7 told: C (*wag your finger*)
C Hat on the F head, boots on the C feet, (*touch your head, then stamp both feet*)
Am Coat zipped C up — now G7 winter's C sweet! (*zip from tummy to chin, big smile*)

MONDAY · COLD

C The ice is cold, the ice is white,
G7 It melts, it melts — C out of sight!

TUESDAY · COAT

C On goes my coat, one, two, three,
G7 Warm as toast — C that's me!

WEDNESDAY · BOOTS

C Boots, boots, stamp them so —
G7 Stamp, stamp, stamp — C through the snow!

THURSDAY · SNOW

C Snow, snow, falling down,
G7 White, white, white — C all over town!

FRIDAY · WINTER

C Cold and snow and boots and hat,
G7 Winter is here — C how about that!

Each day: chorus → today's verse → chorus, standing up — this song has feet in it. Friday: sing the whole thing top to bottom in coats and boots, just before the winter walk; that run-through is the review of the week. If your fingers get stuck, put the uke down and do the finger-play instead; the actions carry the meaning either way.