



# WHITE CASTLES

FOUNDATIONS: EARLY LEARNING CURRICULUM



## What Is Foundations

Welcome to Foundations, a blended, play-based curriculum designed for children ages 2–5, with built-in support for infants and young toddlers. Foundations is created to give child care providers consistent structure, meaningful learning goals, and joyful, hands-on experiences for the children in their care every day.

Each volume invites children into a rich theme world where literacy, math, social-emotional learning, science, physical development, and creative expression are woven naturally into play. Through stories, characters, crafts, building, sensory exploration, and movement, children grow skills while feeling safe, curious, and inspired.

Before you begin, take a moment to scan the sections in this volume so you know what's included and can choose what to print for your classroom or binder.

## What's Inside This Volume - Look For The Labeled, Section Guide Pages.

**SECTION 1:** Monthly Overview

**SECTION 2:** Monthly Learning Map

**SECTION 3:** Foundations Focus (Academics)

**SECTION 4:** Curriculum Characters and Stories

**SECTION 5:** Classroom Setup and Themed Decor

**SECTION 6:** Book List and Literacy Connections

**SECTION 7:** Full Month of Daily Lesson Plans

**SECTION 8:** Dramatic Play and Center Ideas

**SECTION 9:** Sensory and STEM Feature Pages

**SECTION 10:** Craft Showcase Pages

**SECTION 11:** Educational Printables and Teacher Support

**SECTION 12:** End-of-Month Closer

**Don't  
Print!**

## A Note for Teachers

Foundations is here to support you — not overwhelm you. Use the structure to guide your planning, adapt activities to meet your children where they are, and choose the pages that best fit your program. Consistency brings confidence, and play brings learning to life.

Thank you for being part of The Daycare Network community. Together, we are building strong foundations for every child.

*~The Daycare Network!*

**Relax. Play. Learn. Welcome to Foundations.**



# SECTION 1: MONTHLY OVERVIEW - VOLUME 1 - WHITE CASTLES

## Theme Story Snapshot

Step into a peaceful winter wonderland with White Castles. This month, the classroom transforms into a snowy kingdom filled with glowing castles, gentle snowfalls, moonlit skies, and quiet winter magic. Children explore this world alongside our White Castles characters — Elin the Watcher, Rowan the Builder, Theo the Helper, Mira the Guide, and Lila the Dreamer — who model curiosity, kindness, teamwork, and imagination. Through dramatic play, cozy stories, and hands-on exploration, children slow down, notice details, build together, and discover that even in the quiet of winter, big learning is happening. The environment feels calm, magical, and inviting, with soft blues and whites, twinkling lights, winter textures, and spaces that encourage wonder, conversation, and creative play.

## What's Fun This Month

- Snowy castle dramatic play setup
- Winter character stories woven into circle time
- Ice, snow, and melting sensory & STEM explorations
- Cozy literacy moments with winter books
- Building challenges using blocks, Magnatiles, and recycled boxes
- Winter-themed crafts perfect for display
- Calm movement games inspired by snow, wind, and animals

## Who This Month Is For

Designed for children ages 2–5, with a full infant and young toddler adaptation section included. All activities, stories, and experiences can be simplified so mixed-age programs can enjoy the same theme together.

**Learning Focus This Month** - This month intentionally supports all major early learning domains through play-based, hands-on experiences. Learning goals are purposeful, but should always be delivered in flexible, developmentally appropriate ways.

- Literacy & Language – winter vocabulary, storytelling, conversation, and books
- Early Math – counting, comparing, shapes, and sorting in meaningful play
- Social-Emotional Learning – kindness, cooperation, patience, confidence, & empathy through character stories
- Science & Discovery – ice, snow, melting, temperature, and cause & effect
- Physical Development – daily gross motor movement and fine motor practice
- Creative Expression – art, music, dramatic play, and imagination

**Foundations Focus for January** - These foundations are woven throughout circle time, games, crafts, visuals, and play centers all month long.

- *Letters:* A, B
- *Numbers:* 1, 2
- *Shape:* Circle
- *Colors:* White & Ice Blue

**Sample Materials to Collect** - Use what you already have — simple swaps are encouraged.

- White fabric or sheets
- Blue scarves or fabric pieces
- Cotton balls and pom-poms
- Foil or shiny paper
- Plastic snowflakes
- Ice cube trays and bins
- Scoops, cups, droppers
- Winter animal figures
- Blocks, Magnatiles, recycled boxes
- Lanterns, battery lights, or soft string lights
- Paper plates, glue, watercolor paints, craft sticks

## What You'll Find in This Month

- A full monthly learning map across all domains
- Alphabet, number, shape, and color focus integrated daily
- Original White Castles characters with descriptions and stories
- A complete month of detailed lesson plans (4 weeks, Monday–Friday)
- Hands-on activities, learning games, crafts, and sensory/STEM
- Dramatic play and learning center ideas
- Suggested books and literacy connections
- Infant & young toddler adaptation guide
- Room decor and learning visuals
- Optional CACFP inspired child care menus and grocery lists - separate download
- End-of-month reflection

**Welcome to White Castles. Rest. Relax. Learn.**

# Foundations

## Early Learning Curriculum



### WHITE CASTLES | VOLUME 1 | MONTHLY OVERVIEW



Step into a winter wonderland of White Castles in January! We'll explore snowy landscapes, build icy castles, and learn through frosty fun. Let's play with shades of white and ice blue, practice our letters A and B, count to 1 & 2, and discover the magic of circles. We'll cuddle up with cozy winter books and let our imaginations soar!

#### Letters

A & B

#### Numbers

1 & 2

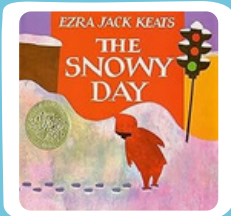
#### Colors

white & icy  
blue

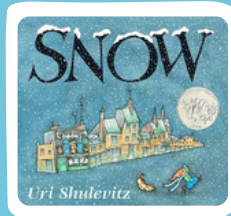
#### Shape

circle 

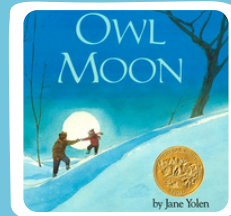
### Books of the Month Suggestions



The Snowy Day



Snow



Owl Moon



Winter Is Here

### January Weekly Highlights

Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Week 1</b> Welcome To White Castles	White Castles story, meet Elin, Theo, Rowan, Mira & Lila, letter A, number 1, color white	Castle play, meet Rowan & Mira, letter A, circle shape, sensory snow, color icy blue	Snow words, meet Lila, letter A, number 1, fine motor snow art, winter movement	Castle routines, letter A review, counting 1, circle hunt, helper game	Winter friends story, character recap, letter A, number 1 review, color review, music
<b>Week 2</b> Building In The Snow	Rowan story (the builder, build castles, letter A, number 1, circle shapes	Tower building, letter A, counting 1, problem-solving, gross motor	Shapes in snow, letter A, circle focus, block play, icy blue art	Build & count, letter A review, number 1, balance and movement	Builder challenge, letter A, number 1 review, teamwork, winter games
<b>Week 3</b> Snowy Friends & Winter Helpers	Theo story, helping friends, letter B, number 2, color blue	Kindness play, letter B, circle review, counting 1-2, movement	Mira story, guiding others, letter B, number 2, problem-solving	Work together, letter B review, count 1-2, shapes in play	Friends day, letter B, numbers 1-2 review, colors white & blue, music
<b>Week 4</b> Magic, Light & Winter Wonder	Elin story, noticing snow, letter B, number 2, quiet observation	Light & shadow play, letters A-B, count 1-2, color icy blue	Lila story, imagination, letters A-B, circle shapes, creative art	Review days, letters A-B, numbers 1-2, circles, colors white & blue	Winter celebration, character recap, A-B & 1-2 review, circle, reflection



## SECTION 4: CURRICULUM CHARACTERS & STORIES - VOLUME 1 - WHITE CASTLES

**Mira** loves showing friends the way through the snowy White Castle. She points out paths, helps others find what they need, and gently encourages friends when they feel unsure. Mira teaches children that being a guide means caring about others and helping them feel confident to try new things.



### MIRA – THE GUIDE

#### Mira teaches us to:

- Help friends find their way
- Speak kindly and give encouragement
- Take turns leading and following
- Try new things with confidence
- Use our words to support others

#### When to use Mira in your day:

- Circle time** when introducing new activities or ideas
- Transitions** that need calm direction, like moving to centers
- Small groups** when children need guidance or reassurance
- Dramatic play** in the White Castle village
- Any moment** when a child is helping another feel brave

#### Teacher Prompt:

"Mira is guiding her friends today. How can we help someone who feels unsure? What could we say to be encouraging?"

#### Social-Emotional Focus:

Confidence • Encouragement • Leadership • Kindness

#### Try this with Mira:

Let one child be the "guide" during a simple activity, like leading friends to a center or showing how to start a game. Talk about how guides use kind words and how it feels to help others feel safe and confident.









# SECTION 7: DAILY LESSON PLAN - VOLUME 1 - WHITE CASTLES



## Week 1 – Monday - Theme: Welcome to the White Castles

### CIRCLE TIME

Teacher:

"Friends, today we are stepping into a brand new winter world called the White Castles. In this snowy place, there are tall icy towers, quiet falling snow, and magical friends who live there. This month, we are going to explore their world and learn with them every day."

Introduce the characters one at a time (show images):

"**This is Elin the Watcher.** Elin helps us slow down and notice the snow and tiny details."

"**This is Theo the Helper.** Theo shows us how to help our friends and work together."

"**This is Rowan the Builder.** Rowan loves to build castles and try again when things fall."

"**This is Mira the Guide.** Mira helps show the way and encourages us when things feel new."

"**And this is Lila the Dreamer.** Lila imagines stories and magical adventures in the castles."

Teacher:

"These friends will be with us all month in our stories, games, and play."

Introduce focus: "Today our letter is A, our number is 1, the shape is a circle, and our color is white, just like snow!"

**Song/Chant:** "To the tune of 'Row, Row, Row Your Boat':

Snow, snow, soft and white,  
Falling all around,  
In our castles big and bright,  
Friends and fun we've found!"

**Quick Movement:**

Stand and pretend to be snowflakes drifting down, then stretch tall like castle towers.

**Character Moment:**

"Which character do you want to be today? A watcher like Elin? A helper like Theo?"

### LITERACY FOCUS – Letter A

Skill: Recognize letter A and its sound

Teacher: "This is letter A. A says /a/ like apples

Children trace A in the air and find A cards or posters.

### MATH FOCUS – Number 1

Skill: Count and recognize one

Teacher: "Our number today is 1. Let's count one castle together."

Children hold up one finger and count one block or picture.

### ACTIVITY / LEARNING GAME – PHYSICAL ANCHOR

Game: Carry One Block to the Castle

Materials: Blocks, Magnatiles, or recycled boxes

Setup: A bin on one side, "castle spot" on the other

How to Play: Children carry one block at a time to build one group castle.

Movement: Walking, bending, carrying, stacking.

**Extension:**

Work in pairs — one carries, one stacks.

### CRAFT – White Castle Collage

Materials: Paper, glue, cotton balls or torn white paper, markers

Instructions: Print a black and white castle and let the children glue blue/white ripped paper onto the castle. They can also use cotton balls for snow.

Fine Motor: Pinching, gluing, placing.

### SENSORY / STEM – Snow Touch Tray

Materials: Cotton balls, shredded paper, scoops, cups, small figures

Invitation: "Explore the snow. How does it feel? Can you hide a character?"

Guide language: soft, light, cold, white.

**Outdoor Option:**

Use real snow if available or make your own pretend snow - To make it, mix about three cups of baking soda with half to one cup of white shaving cream, adding the shaving cream slowly until the mixture becomes fluffy and moldable.

### SNACK

Apple slices with a little cream cheese "snow spread", and blue sprinkles.

### DAILY CLOSER

Teacher: "Today we met our White Castle friends and started our White Castle adventure. We learned about letter A, number 1, and the color white."

Reflection Question: "Which character do you like best so far?" Who likes to play in the snow?

### INFANT & TODDLER ADAPTATION - NEVER LEAVE AN INFANT OR TODDLER ALONE OR UNATTENDED WITH ANY ITEM THAT IS NOT AGE APPROPRIATE. AGE APPROPRIATE MATERIALS ONLY - SAFETY FIRST

- Soft white fabrics and cotton to touch
- Point to character pictures and name them
- Stack one soft block together
- Say "A, A, A" during play
- Short, calm interactions focused on looking and listening

Welcome to White Castles. Rest. Relax. Learn.



## SECTION 10: CRAFT SHOWCASE - VOLUME 1 - WHITE CASTLES

### Magical Winter Creations

These featured crafts invite children to create the snowy world of the White Castles using texture, sparkle, and big materials. Each craft is designed to be process-focused, photo-worthy, and full of winter magic.

#### Papier-Mâché Snowy Castle Towers

##### Materials:

Newspaper strips  
Flour and water (paste)  
Crumpled paper balls, paper bowls, or cardboard tubes (for shape)  
Bowls  
White and light blue paint  
Paintbrushes  
Optional: silver glitter, snowflake stickers

##### Instructions:

1. Mix flour and water to make a smooth paste.
2. Shape crumpled paper into balls or towers, or turn bowls upside down.
3. Dip newspaper strips into paste and layer over shapes.
4. Let dry completely (overnight or longer).
5. Paint white and ice blue to look like snowy castle towers.
6. Add glitter or stickers for sparkle.

#### Salt Watercolor Snowflakes

##### Materials:

White cardstock  
Glue bottles  
Salt  
Watercolor paints  
Paintbrushes  
Trays or newspaper

##### Instructions:

1. Children draw snowflake designs with glue on paper.
2. Sprinkle salt over glue while still wet. Shake off extra.
3. Use watercolor paint to gently touch the salt.
4. Watch colors spread and sparkle.
5. Let dry completely.

#### Recycled Box White Castles Bricks

##### Materials:

Recycled boxes  
White and blue paint  
Sponges or paintbrushes  
Paper circles for windows  
Glue or tape  
Optional: foil, cotton, glitter

##### Instructions:

1. Stack and tape boxes to form castle shapes.
2. Paint boxes white and ice blue.
3. Glue on paper circles as castle windows.
4. Add foil for shine and cotton for snow.
5. Let dry and use in dramatic play.

#### Display & Celebrate

- Create a White Castles Gallery with snowflakes and towers hanging overhead.
- Use recycled castles in dramatic play.
- Take photos for families and portfolios.
- Let children describe their creations during circle time.

#### Teacher Tip

Talk about textures and colors: soft, bumpy, smooth, white, icy blue. Connect to characters: build like Rowan, dream like Lila, watch like Elin.

#### Safety Note

All materials must be age appropriate and used with close supervision. Put away supplies, salt, small pieces, and wet or messy materials if complete supervision is not possible.

These crafts bring the White Castles to life through big art, real texture, and winter wonder.

**Welcome to White Castles. Rest. Relax. Learn.**



# Classroom NEWSLETTER

January  
2026



## What We Are Learning

### ❄️ **White Castles – A Winter of Wonder**

This month, our classroom is transformed into a magical winter world of snowy castles, glowing windows, and gentle winter adventures. Through stories, play, and hands-on activities, children are exploring early literacy, math, science, and social skills in a calm and imaginative environment.

#### **Literacy:**

We are focusing on the letters A & B, practicing recognition, sounds, and beginning writing through games, stories, and simple worksheets.

#### **Math:**

Children are learning numbers 1 & 2, counting objects, and exploring the shape circle through movement and play.

#### **Science & Discovery:**

We are investigating snow, ice, light, shadows, and winter textures through sensory bins, simple STEM activities, and observation.

#### **Social-Emotional Learning:**

Our monthly characters help guide learning:

- **Elin** teaches children to slow down, notice details, and be aware of the world around them.
- **Rowan** encourages children to try again, build, and solve problems without giving up.
- **Theo** shows how helping others and sharing makes our classroom kinder and stronger.
- **Mira** helps children learn to guide, encourage, and lead with confidence and kindness.
- **Lila** inspires imagination, creativity, and sharing ideas and stories.

Children are learning to work together, express ideas, and build confidence through play.



## Reminders

- Please send your child in warm layers for winter-themed activities and movement.
- Check backpacks daily for artwork and notes.
- If your child is out, feel free to ask for missed activities or updates.
- Let us know if your child has any winter sensitivities (cold hands, dry skin, etc.).

### Upcoming Events

- Dec 31, 2025 – New Year's Eve
- Jan 1, 2026 – New Year's Day



## Contact Info

Email:

Phone:



# TEACHER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: WHITE CASTLES

## **What are "White Castles"?**

Talk about snowy castles and winter places where everything looks white and icy.

Ask: What do you think a white castle looks like? What might be inside?

Teacher-guided answer: A white castle could be made of snow or ice, with glowing windows, towers, and bridges.

## **What do you notice about winter?**

Help children observe the winter season.

Ask: How does winter feel? What do you see outside in winter?

Teacher-guided answer: Winter can feel cold. We might see snow, ice, bare trees, clouds, and gray or blue skies.

## **How do people stay warm in winter?**

Encourage practical thinking and self-care.

Ask: What do you wear when it is cold? What helps you stay warm?

Teacher-guided answer: Coats, hats, gloves, scarves, warm drinks, blankets, and staying inside help us stay warm.

## **What do you think life would be like in a snowy castle?**

Spark imagination and storytelling.

Ask: What would you do if you lived in a castle made of snow?

Teacher-guided answer: We might build towers, slide on ice, look out glowing windows, and help each other stay warm.

## **How can we be helpers in our castle?**

Connect to social-emotional learning and Theo the Helper.

Ask: How can you help friends in our classroom?

Teacher-guided answer: We can share, clean up, help someone who falls, and use kind words.

## **What does it mean to build something strong?**

Connect to Rowan the Builder.

Ask: What makes a building strong? What can we do if it falls?

Teacher-guided answer: Strong buildings have wide bases, stacked blocks, and builders who try again if it falls.

## **Why is it important to watch and notice?**

Connect to Elin the Watcher.

Ask: What can you learn by looking closely?

Teacher-guided answer: We can see colors, shapes, patterns, and changes when we watch carefully.

## **How does a guide help us?**

Connect to Mira the Guide.

Ask: When do you follow a guide? Who guides you at school?

Teacher-guided answer: A guide shows the way, helps us stay safe, and teaches us what to do next.

## **What shapes and colors do we see in our castles?**

Reinforce academics.

Ask: Can you find circles? Do you see white or ice blue?

Teacher-guided answer: Circles can be windows and paths. White and ice blue remind us of snow and ice.

## **What have we learned about winter and ice?**

Build science language.

Ask: What happens to ice when it gets warm? What does cold do?

Teacher-guided answer: Ice melts when warm. Cold makes water freeze. Winter changes how things feel and look.

## **What is your favorite part of the White Castles?**

Encourage reflection and language.

Ask: What did you like most this month?

Teacher-guided answer: Children share their favorite activities, stories, or characters.

## **How can we show kindness in our classroom castle?**

Wrap up with SEL.

Ask: What can you do today to be kind?

Teacher-guided answer: Kind words, helping hands, sharing, and gentle actions show kindness.





## **YOU'VE JUST PREVIEWED FOUNDATIONS VOLUME 1 – WHITE CASTLES**

This packet includes only a small portion of the full monthly curriculum designed for child care programs of all sizes. The actual curriculum is over 100 pages each month.

**Foundations: Early Learning Curriculum** provides child care directors/teachers/caregivers with a complete, professionally structured system that blends play-based learning with educational goals across every classroom.

### **Each monthly volume includes:**

- Full daily lesson plans (4 weeks, Monday–Friday)
- Infant and young toddler adaptations built into every day
- Literacy, early math, and school readiness activities
- Monthly focus on letters, numbers, colors, and shapes
- Social-emotional learning woven throughout original characters
- Sensory and STEM exploration
- Crafts and hands-on learning
- Dramatic play and themed classroom integration
- Center-wide usability with no per-classroom fees

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by The Daycare Network

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