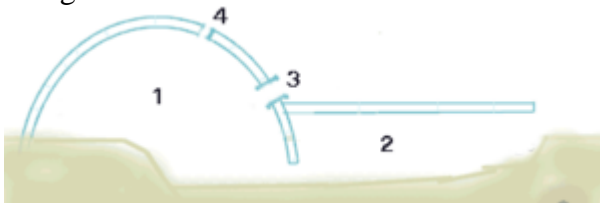


Igloo facts for kids

[Kids Encyclopedia Facts](#)



An igloo



Drawing of some parts of basic igloos: 1. living area, 2. tunnel to crawl in and out 3. window (hole to look out) 4. air hole

An **igloo** (or **iglu**) is a [shelter](#) (a place for people to stay warm and dry) made from blocks of [snow](#) placed on top of each other, often in the shape of a [dome](#) (like half of a hollow ball). They were used in [winter](#) as temporary shelters by [hunters](#) when they were away from their regular homes.

Snow is used because the air pockets trapped in it make it an [insulator](#). On the outside, temperatures may be as low as $-45\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($-49\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$), but on the inside the temperature may range from $-7\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($19\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$) to $16\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ($61\text{ }^{\circ}\text{F}$) when warmed by body heat alone.

Types

There are three traditional types of igloos, all of different sizes and used for different purposes.

- The smallest were constructed as temporary shelters, usually only used for one or two nights. These were built and used during hunting trips, often on open [sea ice](#).

- Intermediate-sized igloos were for semi-permanent, [family](#) dwelling. This was usually a single room dwelling that housed one or two families. Often there were several of these in a small area, which formed an Inuit [village](#).
- The largest igloos were normally built in groups of two. One of the buildings was a temporary structure built for special occasions, the other built nearby for living. These might have had up to five rooms and housed up to 20 people. A large igloo might have been constructed from several smaller igloos attached by their tunnels, giving common access to the outside. These were used to hold community feasts and traditional dances.

Building methods



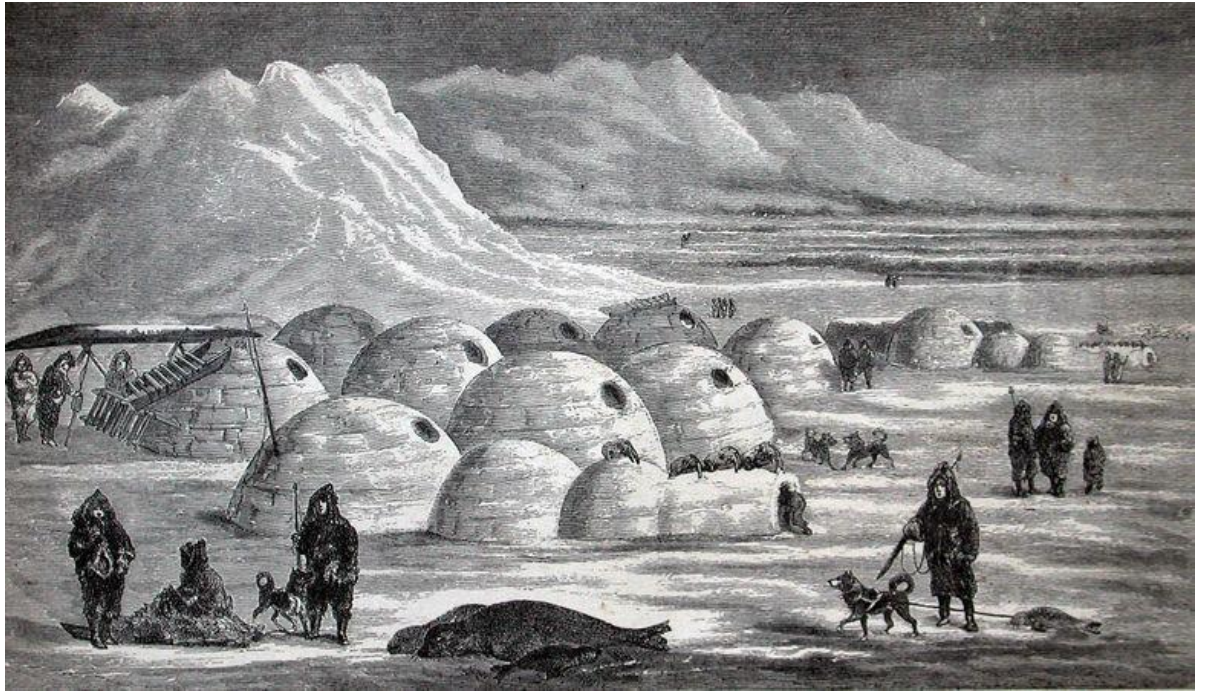
Igloo

The snow used to build an igloo must have enough structural strength to be cut and stacked appropriately. The best snow to use for this purpose is snow which has been blown by wind, which can serve to compact and interlock the ice crystals. The hole left in the snow where the blocks are cut is usually used as the lower half of the shelter.

Sometimes, a short tunnel is constructed at the entrance to reduce wind and heat loss when the door is opened. Snow's effective insulating properties enable the inside of the igloo to remain relatively warm. In some cases, a single block of clear ice is inserted to allow light into the igloo. Animal skins were used as door flaps to keep warm air in. Igloos used as winter shelters had beds made of ice and [caribou](#) furs.

[Architecturally](#), the igloo is unique in that it is a dome that can be raised out of independent blocks leaning on each other and polished to fit without an additional supporting structure during construction. An igloo that is built correctly will support the weight of a person standing on the roof. The sleeping platform is a raised area. Because warmer air rises and cooler air settles, the entrance area acts as a cold trap whereas the sleeping area will hold whatever heat is generated by a stove, lamp, body heat, or other device.

Images for kids



Community of igloos (Illustration from Charles Francis Hall's *Arctic Researches and Life Among the Esquimaux*, 1865)



An Inuk inside an igloo, circa 1900–1923. Photograph by Canadian Geological Survey.



Inuit building an igloo



Process of building an igloo with snowbrick method in mid-way



- A nearly complete, medium-sized igloo, with excavation under the door and the exterior unfinished



- Interior of an igloo, facing the passageway leading to the entrance