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How to build a quinzee snow shelter

By Rosemarie Colombraro Illustrations by Matthew Vincent From the January 2006 issue of Boys' Life magazine

36 Votes

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.

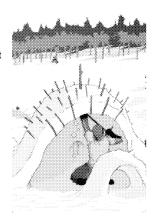
BUILDING A QUINZEE

Step 1: Shovel a pile of snow into a mound seven to eight 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

Dig a small entrance on the downhill side. Smooth out the walls and ceiling. The walls should be one to two 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.



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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.



Step 4: Building a quinzee will make you sweat. Prevent hypothermia by changing into warm dry clothes after you finish building your shelter.

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.

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Mr. Fixit says:

January 18, 2014 at 11:24 am (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-444493)

When I was little, we had huge drifts that my siblings & I used to hollow out for the same effect! We had a blast playing in the snow!

> Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=444493#respond)

December 25, 2013 at 11:50 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snowshelter/comment-page-3/#comment-433998)

Awesome! Wish I could attach photos in the comments. thanks for posting this!

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=433998#respond)

Awsome says says:

December 19, 2013 at 10:26 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-429236)

Me and my friend built one and we are going to sleep in it tomarrow

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=429236#respond)

Anonymous says:

December 17, 2013 at 2:53 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snowshelter/comment-page-3/#comment-427004)

it is awesome thats so cool

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=427004#respond)

December 2, 2013 at 4:00 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-414966)

great idea i will use it today

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=414966#respond)

Anonymous says:
October 8, 2013 at 3:29 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snowshelter/comment-page-3/#comment-388005)

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=388005#respond)

January 18, 2013 at 2:42 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-330772)

Today we cut the work a little by burying our rucksacks, which we dug out when hollowing the quinzee.

> Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=330772#respond)

Anonymous says:
January 18, 2013 at 2:40 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snowshelter/comment-page-3/#comment-330771)

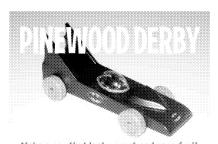
great article!

made a mini quinzee today in meagre UK snow

the measuring sticks are a stroke of pure genius - you know exactly when to stop

:)

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=330771#respond)



Make a car that looks great and goes fast!

Cam says:

January 17, 2013 at 5:30 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snowshelter/comment-page-3/#comment-330500)

My troop is going camping his Saturday up in NY. This looks really cool!

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=330500#respond)

thomas says:

January 17, 2013 at 2:55 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-330461)

my Troops going snow camping this weekend and i and my buddie are going to build a quinzees for are snow shelter

> Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=330461#respond)

January 9, 2013 at 9:41 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-329501) ment-page-3/#comment-329501)

My outdoor ed class is building them tomorrow and i really want them to turn out! This is practice before our actual camping trip in 2 weeks.

> Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=329501#respond)

snow-mum says:January 1, 2013 at 10:53 am (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snowshelter/comment-page-3/#comment-328143)

Our son first learned how to make a quinzee while in Scouts years ago. He is 22 and still makes one every winter just for the fun of it. He has slept in it each year too and the dog loves to go in there because it is quite warm. When they went winter camping the Scout leaders stayed in tents and the boys were way warmer! A great winter activity for us Canadians!

> Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=328143#respond)

December 16, 2012 at 8:16 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-324890)

I have no snow yet. :3

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=324890#respond)

Not aYeti ... at all ... says:

November 11, 2012 at 11:58 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snowshelter/comment-page-3/#comment-319796)

Where I live, there's a ton of snow in the winter but i never knew how to build a Quinzee =-P Thanks for the article!!!

> Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=319796#respond)

January 19, 2012 at 11:45 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snowshelter/comment-page-3/#comment-259585)

I wish that it would snow often here, that looks fun

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=259585#respond)

December 12, 2011 at 7:04 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snowshelter/comment-page-3/#comment-253932)

Sounds pretty cool. I always try to build snow forts but it never works. Once I even succeeded in making one but my dog wrecked it before I even went in it

> Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=253932#respond)

December 18, 2011 at 11:44 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-254660)

I am going to build one when I get the chance

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=254660#respond)

bubu savs

June 19, 2012 at 8:09 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-283265)

it is good i dont have a dog

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=283265#respond)

Georgecoo says:

December 20, 2012 at 3:18 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-325641)

I love snow and I'm making one of these huts right now

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=325641#respond)

wiilover says:

December 8, 2011 at 2:11 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-253496)

i am going to try this when it snows. I cant wait!

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=253496#respond)

proffesional snow builder says:

November 28, 2011 at 9:11 am (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-252111)

If you want to save time just build a quinzee in a snow bank created by snow plows.

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=252111#respond)

flagger says

January 18, 2013 at 8:09 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-330802)

have you tried that? you do realize the snow is very hard packed when they do that, plus it's not very even either so will have many air gaps and hard chunks that make it less structurally sound

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=330802#respond)

Snow warning says:

January 19, 2013 at 9:46 am (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-330852)

Please please please, don't build this in the snowpile created by the road plows. You could easily get hit and trapped inside if they return to push another foot or two off the roads OR if a car parking on the street pushes into your quinzee without knowing it.

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=330852#respond)

IT IS Cool but dangerous says:

December 17, 2013 at 2:52 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-427002)

Snow warnings is right that is dangerous and you could get hurt doing that personally I wouldn't do it dude just my opinion so please don't do that

Argonian says:

October 5, 2011 at 3.04 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-243671)

Dont light a fire in your quinze unlees you wanyt all of your stuff to get wet if you want to cook somthing bring along a back packing stove and use that to boil water for hot chocolate just make sure you keep all flamables away from it and make sure you put it under the vent in the top(prevents melt-down)

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=243671#respond)

Origami Guy says:

September 28, 2011 at 7:38 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-to-build-a-quinze

ME TOO

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=242642#respond)

Origami Guy says:
September 28, 2011 at 7:32 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-242638)

cool I'll try it next time it snows

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=242638#respond)

iames1234567890 savs:

February 17, 2011 at 7:32 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-207806)

can you build a fire inseide one of these?

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=207806#respond)

mountaineersam says:

May 28, 2012 at 7:46 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-279958)

No you cannot light a fire in one on these because then it melts and gets your gear wet and then you get hypothermic. build a small vestibule so if you want to cook with a stove you are shielded from the wind but can cook and avoid carbon monoxide poisining so dragon fly dont light a fire if you dont want to barf blood and go to the hospital

> Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=279958#respond)

rtore says:

December 16, 2012 at 8:18 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzeesnow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-324891)

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=324891#respond)

Texas Yall says:

February 16, 2011 at 9:57 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-207678)

So we are building these this weekend not sure how well it will work.

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=207678#respond)

monkey dude says:
February 13, 2011 at 6:46 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snowshelter/comment-page-3/#comment-207233)

i went winter camping this weekend with my troop, and we built snow quinzees. for the most part we were very warm, these quinzees take quite a lot ofwork to build. one thing that you want to remember is to dig out shelves in your quinzee and light about three candles. this will help warm up your quinzee tremendousley, it gets kind of cold after they go out though.

> Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=207233#respond)

i says says:

February 11, 2011 at 4:33 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-206906)

my troop is going winter camping this weekend and we are building quinzees. ive never made one before but i am looking forward to it. ive been tld they are very warm but i dont know i guess i will find out soon.

> Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=206906#respond)

Anonymous says:

February 10, 2011 at 9:05 am (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-nelter/comment-page-3/#comment-206661)

my troop is planning on camping out this weekend and we are planing to build quinzees. ive been told they are very wrm but i dont know iguess i will find out

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=206661#respond)

dragonfly says:

February 9, 2011 at 11:53 am (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-206478)

Do you ever build a fire in a quinzee to make hot chocolate or cider?

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=206478#respond)

Wise Ninja says:
February 8, 2011 at 8:21 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-206430)

Very cool!! 8) My troop is going snow camping, and I'm going to use this (harness the power of snow!!)!

> Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=206430#respond)

pwn says:
February 8, 2011 at 5:12 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-206386)

Quincy's are awsome

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=206386#respond)

Simmy!! says:
February 4, 2011 at 6:26 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-205831)

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=205831#respond)

Up State NY savs:

January 14, 2011 at 3:39 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-202220)

Our troop is doing a winter camp out this weekend and we are building quinzees and sleeping in them over night. It is going to be a blast!

> Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=202220#respond)

zachie says:
January 20, 2011 at 12:11 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzeesnow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-202888)

sweet bro

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=202888#respond)

Anonymous says:

January 12, 2011 at 2:34 pm (http://boyslife.org/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/comment-page-3/#comment-201974)

I build one every time it snows!! It so much fun!!

Reply (/outdoors/outdoorarticles/2992/how-to-build-a-quinzee-snow-shelter/? replytocom=201974#respond)

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