SLICK TRICK

Stack ice cubes to see how easily success can slip away.

THE SETUP

You’re not going to build an ice castle. The object of this slick trick is just to pile ice cubes one on top of another. Good luck! Ice cubes are not bricks. They slip off each other as the tower grows.

You will need:
- Ice cubes
- A plate
- Table salt

There is a way to build a cool tower (more than three cubes high). Before you try stacking the ice cubes, let them sit on a plate at room temperature for two or three minutes. Then generously sprinkle salt on the top surface of a cube before putting another cube on top of it. Put a layer of salt between ice cubes as your stack grows. Practice and you may beat our record of five.

INSIDER INFORMATION

There are two reasons why the ice cubes don’t slip in your salted stack. First, salt lowers the freezing point of water. The ice melts around each grain of salt as the salt dissolves. As a result, the ice is unevenly eaten away, forming a pitted, non-skid surface. (This is why salt is used to melt ice on roads and walkways.)

Second, the water, now salted, refreezes on the surface of the ice cubes, joining them together. This happens because the insides of the ice cubes are much colder than the freezing point of water. They are cold enough to draw heat out of the newly melted water, and it refreezes.