

Liverpool Biennial

Stine Marie Jacobsen

Future, Before it Happens

12 Tools for building climate futures

INTRODUCTION

Future, Before It Happens draws on visualisation and participatory futures to help young people imagine alternative scenarios for the future in the context of a climate emergency. Visualisation means generating mental pictures about what we experience, wish, or imagine. Participatory futures means working with others to explore or shape what the future will look like.

The toolkit can be used in sessions hosted in libraries, schools or community centres.

Try to use a calm and cozy space to help imaginations fly. We've also included some activities for children to do with their adults. Become future explorers together!

Future, Before It Happens¹ is guided by a simple idea, that if we work on our collective visualisation skills, we can create new imaginations of a common future. The toolkit focusses

on how to achieve collective goals, specifically regarding current climate challenges.

This is a toolkit for children and their adults. The activities are for groups of children aged 8-12. The tools are divided in 3 steps:

- Getting ready
- Futuring
- Make it happen

ROLES

Imagine you and your friends are Future explorers. This toolkit is packed with missions to help you imagine what your lives will be like in 20 years, 50 years, maybe even a million years from now.

Before setting off on your journey, choose a Futures captain to guide you. The captain will read the missions out loud.

This will help the explorers find their version of the future.

You might have some others join you on the way; your adults, teachers, family members, your pets etc. Think of

them as your Futures crew. Their job is to get explorers to the future safely.

“Futuring” is like using a magic crystal ball that shows you what is happening now and helps you think about all the different ways things could change and happen in the future.

GETTING READY

MISSION 1

Time: 10-15 mins

What it’s for: To get the group paying attention to one another and creating something together that builds collective energy.

What you’ll need: Nothing

How to get ready: No preparation needed

Send each other invisible electric energy. Stand in a circle with your group. Use your hands to send energy to each other. When you have decided who to send energy to, point at them and make eye contact.

Shout “Zip” when you send energy to the people standing next to you. Shout “Zap” if you’re sending it to someone on the other side of the circle. Don’t send it back to the person who sent it to you. Try to keep it going as long as you can!

After 5 mins, a player can send a “Boing” when they receive a “Zip” or “Zap”. When a “Boing” is sent, the energy bounces back to whomever sent it.

How fast can you get? How long can you keep it going?

MISSION 2 – PART 1

Time: 45 mins

What it’s for: This is where the explorers share and talk about their objects “from the past”

What you’ll need: Nothing

How to get ready: Explorers should bring “something from the past”. Ask your crew members for help if you get stuck. The object could be anything that makes you think of the past. It could be an old sock, or a photo.

Gather as a group of explorers and stand in a circle with your objects “from the past”. Each circle can have up to 10 people. Make more than one circle if you are a big group. Take it in turns to introduce your object to the group. Explain what the object is and why it is “from the past”.

“The future enters into us, in order to transform itself in us, long before it happens”.

The poet Rainier Maria Rilke wrote this in year 1929.

What do you think the poet meant by this?

How can time travel happen in our bodies?

How can future transform in us?

MISSION 2 – PART 2

Time: 1 hour

What it's for: This is where explorers make their "mood time" visible

What you'll need: Paper and coloured pens

How to get ready: No preparation needed

Work together to make a drawing that shows how time looks when it changes the object into a "future object". What is its mood?

Think explorers... is your object in the future:
angry/funny/excited/ hopeful/radical...?

What does your version of time look like?

How does it sound or behave?

You can use this drawing template:

1. Draw how the object looks now.
2. Draw how time itself looks.
3. Draw how the object will look in the future.

Finally, you can choose three sounds from the group and play “Zip Zap Boing” (Mission 1) using these new sounds. Send each other energy from your imagined future worlds!

Examples from workshop with the children from St Anne’s Catholic Primary school:

TIME TAKES AWAY COLOURS

TIME IS STRETCHY

TIME RECYCLES

TIME MELTS

TIME IS HOT

TIME IS A VORTEX

TIME BREAKS

TIME MAKES CRACKS

TIME TRANSFORMS

MISSION 3

Time: 20 mins

What it's for: This is where explorers imagine what the future will feel like for different people

What you'll need: Nothing

What to bring: No preparation needed

Future captain, it's time for your big mission. You're going to lead the explorers through a time travel adventure.

Remember, you're in charge. If you want to join the time travel, ask an adult from your crew to read the mission.

Make sure the explorers are comfortable and then read out:

Future explorers - and time travellers! Get ready to move a little in a quiet place. Stand comfortably and take a deep breath. Relax your shoulders and let go of any tension. Feel your breath going in and out. Notice the ground beneath you. Be fully in this moment. Now, let's start...

Think of someone you know who is much older. It could be a grandparent, a great aunt or uncle, or someone from TV.

Think about something nice about them, like their smile or something that made you laugh.

Step back in your mind, like you're going back in time. Imagine that person when they were 40 years old. What is different about them? How does the nice thing change at this age?

Now, step back again. Imagine being at their 9th birthday party. How were they back then? What do you see at the party? Imagine the world around them at that time.

Now, come back to the present. Take a deep breath.

Let go of thoughts about the older person. Think of someone you know who is much younger, like a sibling, a cousin, or even a pet. Think of something nice about them, like their smile or what makes them laugh.

Step forward in your mind, like you're moving into the future.

Imagine them when they're 40. How does the nice thing change at this age?

Step forward again. Imagine being at their 90th birthday party. How are they then? What's happening at the party? Imagine the world around them at that time.

Now, come back to the present. Take a deep breath. Imagine opening your eyes. You've just travelled 200 years in your mind, across many generations.

How did that feel? What did you see on your journey?

MISSION 4

Time: 45 mins

What it's for: This is where explorers create a world together and get a feeling for climate issues

What you'll need: Big paper rolls or A1 sized paper. *Use an AI tool

such as DALL-E to generate picture ideas. Check with your adults before using AI tools.

What to bring: No preparations needed

Your mind is a river - a stream! Create a "story cloud" drawing with two or three climate issues of your own choice. You can use pictures from news articles or TV programmes or inspiration. Or you can use AI tools to create new images based on your ideas.*

OK explorers, are you ready?

Sit in a circle around a big piece of paper. What do you think of when you hear the word “climate”? It’s time to try a new version of “Zip Zap Boing” This time you’ll be drawing images about climate:

One person starts by e.g. drawing air and the second person draws what they think of when they hear air. This could be for example bird! The third person then draws an egg and the fourth person draws a nest. The drawings should be fast - as if you are “throwing” energy drawings to each other! When you pass your drawing to the next person, say out loud what you’re sending them! When you get to the end of the circle, start a new story cloud. A new explorer should start each time.

FUTURING

MISSION 5

Time: 1.5 hours

What it’s for: This is where explorers create an object from the future that helps them solve a climate issue

What you’ll need: recycled cardboard, glue guns, glue sticks, scissors, cutters, transparent tapes, gaffers tapes, coloured paper, crayons and markers, aluminium foil and tube cleaners

What to bring: No preparations

Captain, divide the explorers into groups of 3-4 people.

In groups, build a “future object” that solves a problem to help with the environment in the future (Who? What? How?) Remember to use your story clouds for inspiration.

Follow this simple worksheet:

In our world, there is a (what is it?) and it can (problem solve?) by (doing what?) for (who?)

MISSION 6

Time: Up to 1 hour

What it’s for: This is where all the explorers write together. There isn’t just one author - everyone has a chance to contribute.

What you’ll need: A3 paper and pens

What to bring: No preparations

Captain, it's time to arrange a "Carousel". Rotate around the groups from Mission 5.

Each group introduces their "future object". Describe the world around this object.

What can you imagine?

Follow these opening lines:

Imagine a future where ...

In the past ... The future is ...

This world must ...

In this world one can ... Let us ... !

MISSION 7

Time: 15 mins

What it's for: This is where explorers learn to say "yes and" and build on each others' ideas

What you'll need: Nothing

What to bring: No preparations

Explorers, it's time to use your bodies to build a visualisation together.

Captain...give the cue:

It's time to create a pirate ship. Everyone joins one by one to create a part of the pirate ship with their bodies. You could be the front of the ship or the side or...

Repeat until everyone gets it.

You can repeat the mission with other objects (a train, an airplane...) or maybe something from the environment (a tree, a park...).

What else can you make with your bodies?

MAKE IT HAPPEN

MISSION 8

Time: 30 mins

What it's for: Explorers need to support and engage with each other's inventions and ideas. This will help them get there!

What you'll need: Paper, card and pens

What to bring: No preparations needed

Write a message for or from the future.

How you would write from the future back to now - or from now into the future. What would you tell yourself or others if you could send a message to yourself as 40 year old or what would your 40 year old self tell you? Write yourself a postcard!

This mission links well with the imagined time travel (in Mission 3) but can also be done alone.

MISSION 9 – PART 1

Time: 1 hour

What it's for: Explorers support and engage with each other's inventions and ideas. This will help you get there!

What you'll need: Large rolls of paper (and (coloured) pens

What to bring: No preparations needed

Working in small groups create a comic strip describing the future. You can use your future objects from Mission 5, your

story clouds from Mission 4 and your future sounds from Mission 2.

Try to create a story that will make other children feel good and hopeful when they listen.

And that adults can learn from! Remember you're in charge of creating the future.

Choose an opening line for your story:

1. Let us
2. In the past
3. In the future
4. We must
5. Imagine
6. We believe
7. ?

Use a large piece of paper with 8-10 boxes in the background to draw out your comic strip. Come back together as a big group and explain your stories to each other. Ask questions and add to each others' stories.

MISSION 9 – PART 2

Cut up the comic strips from Mission 9 and collage them together to make a final group story.

MISSION 9 – PART 3

Time: 2-3 hours

What it's for: This is the end of the journey, where explorers learn to create joint visions of the future by co-authoring a storyboard and visualisation story for the film.

What you'll need: Scissors, large rolls of paper and (coloured) pens

What to bring: No preparations needed

Finally, you can bring your group story to life. You could use a mobile phone to make it into:

1. A video
2. A radio play
3. Can you think of another way to bring it to life?

ADULTS

The tools on the following pages will help you bring adults along on the journey. Explore different versions of the future together.

MISSION 10

Time: 45 mins

What it's for: Explorers and crew members come together to talk about how the climate emergency is a common responsibility

What you'll need: Paper and pens

What to bring: Suggested reading for adults:
[www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(21\)00278-3/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(21)00278-3/fulltext)

"Turn my world(s) upside down".

Choose an adult from your crew to work with.

Ask an adult to draw or tell you 5 things they can imagine in a future world. Then together, imagine a mirror world.

In the mirror world everything is opposite and upside down. You can also use your story clouds from Mission 4 or the world you created in Mission 6.

How is the mirror world different?

Which one do you prefer?

MISSION 11

Time: 1 hour

What it's for: Explorers and their adults practice empathy, understanding and talk about how to help each other stay well as the climate changes.

What you'll need: Paper and pens

What to bring: An adapted version of (and suggested reading): www.nycnvc.org/the-exercise

Choose some adults from your crew to work with.

Ask them:

Write down something somebody said to you about climate change that you didn't like hearing.

Tell them to write down how they felt when they heard those words. What did they need the moment when they heard the words? Then ask them to write down what they imagine the other person needed at that moment.

Finally, ask them to write down how they feel about it now. Has anything changed?

Listen carefully to what the adult is saying and make a drawing about what they told you. Just have fun with it and trust your instinct.

MISSION 12

Time: 30 mins

What it's for: Explorers help their adults to make their thoughts into a call to action!

What you'll need: Paper and pens

What to bring: No preparations needed

Choose some adults from your crew to work with.

Ask them:

If you could travel back in time, what would you do different?

Choose 3 actions (or more!) and draw them as symbols or signs.

The symbols should encourage others to follow them.

When they finish drawing, tell them to present it to you.

Would you follow their symbols or signs? Why yes, why no?

CREDITS

Future, Before It Happens is an art project created by Stine Marie Jacobsen, children at St Anne's Catholic Primary school in Liverpool and Aleks Berditchevskaia.

Stine is a professor of new media art in The Art Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig and a socially engaged artist who creates long-term educational, interdisciplinary and participatory projects, which investigates and lobbies for participation in politics and art.

Aleks is the Principal Researcher at Nesta's Centre for Collective Intelligence Design. She has helped organisations like the International Federation for the Red Cross and UNDP use collective intelligence methods and participatory design to address issues such as climate adaptation and crisis response.

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Future, Before It Happens draws on visualisation and participatory futures to help young people imagine alternative scenarios for the future in the context of a climate emergency. This toolkit is aimed at children between the ages 8-12. It can be used in by class-sized groups in different settings from libraries and community centres to schools.

An art project created by artist Stine Marie Jacobsen, children at St Anne's Catholic Primary school in Liverpool and Aleks Berditchevskaia.

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