Facilitator’s Guide

1

Why This Project Matters

This kit is part of HEAR US! The Philadelphia Children’s Time Capsule, a project of Smith Memorial Playground & Playhouse. During America’s 250th anniversary in 2026, Smith is gathering children’s words, artwork, hopes, and predictions to preserve for the future.

The time capsule is planned to reopen in 2076, during America’s 300th anniversary. Today’s children will be invited to return to Smith, perhaps with family, friends, or other people important to them, to discover what they contributed fifty years earlier.

A core goal is making sure Philadelphia’s children are seen, heard, and remembered. Their everyday experiences matter. Their contributions will help people in 2076 understand what it was like to be a child in 2026.

Share this purpose with your group before beginning. Children should understand that they are creating something for a real time capsule.

See “Begin Together: A Look Back” on page 3 for an opening conversation about things children have saved and how to introduce the time capsule.

How to Use the Kit

2

Begin with the Letter from 1976 and its accompanying pictures. This introduction helps children understand how much can change in fifty years.

Then choose one, two, or all three contribution activities:

- 2026 Survival Kit
- My Prediction for 2076
- A Message to My Future Self

Choose based on your available time, the children’s interests, and the support they need. Each activity can stand on its own after the introduction. You can also spread the experience across several sessions.

The kit can be used with families, classrooms, teams, clubs, and other youth groups. Adults may read aloud, explain unfamiliar words, help with cutting, or write down a child’s spoken response.

Before You Begin

Print the materials for the activities you have chosen. Gather No. 2 pencils, our recommended choice for writing and drawing intended for long-term preservation. Children may also use markers or crayons. For the survival kit, have scissors and glue available. Ordinary paper is fine; Smith will reproduce emailed submissions on paper suitable for long-term preservation.

Make sure each child’s full name, age, and date appear on their contribution.

Let children know:

- There are no right or wrong contributions.
- They may write, draw, or combine words and pictures.
- Their ideas do not need to match anyone else’s.
- They may keep personal details private and decline to share aloud.
- Adults can help record their ideas while keeping the words and meaning their own.

Begin Together: A Look Back

3

Start with Something Children Have Saved

Ask:

> “Have you saved anything from when you were younger? What is it, and why did you keep it?”

Children can describe an object, photograph, drawing, or something else. They do not need to bring it or have a saved object to participate.

Use their responses to introduce the time capsule:

> “Saving something can help us remember an earlier part of our lives. A time capsule does that too. We collect things now so people can discover them much later.”

Read the Letter from 1976

Explain that Debbie’s letter describes one child’s life in Philadelphia 50 years ago in 1976.

Read it together. Ask children to listen for:

- Things that have changed.
- Things that still feel familiar.

As unfamiliar objects arise, show the accompanying photographs. Pause for reactions and questions. Invite children to explain how they do similar things today.

Helpful questions include:

- “America was celebrating its 200th birthday. What birthday did we celebrate this year?”
- “Do families still watch television?” Then share the photo of how tvs looked in the 70’s
- “She only had 6 channels. How many do we have today?”
- “How did she listen to music?” Show photos of 45s. Show a young Michael Jackson.
- “Her family only had one phone. How many does your family have?”
- “Do kids still ride bikes?”

Close by connecting the letter to their own contributions:

> “Debbie thought her everyday life wasn’t special, but her details helped us picture a different time. Your everyday life will be interesting to people in 2076 too.”

Choose Your Contribution Activities

4

2026 Survival Kit: Capture Life Today

Children choose 10 items that represent what they need, use, or value in everyday life. They cut and paste the pictures onto their kit sheet. They may draw an unlisted item in a square instead.

Explain what “survival” means for this activity:

> “Imagine you already have the basics you need to live, including food, water, and a safe place to stay. Now choose things that help you play, learn, connect with others, or feel happy and comforted in your everyday life in 2026.”

Give children time to choose independently. Avoid ranking choices or suggesting that some are more mature or worthwhile. A stuffie, pet, book, or game can each tell an important story.

After children paste their choices, invite them to share one item with a partner if they wish. Pair-sharing happens after choosing so children can record their own preferences first.

Ask:

- “Why did you choose that item?”
- “What will it tell people in 2076 about your life?”

Children may write or draw their reflections, explain them aloud to an adult, or choose not to share publicly.

My Prediction for 2076: Imagine the Future

This multiple-choice questionnaire gives children an accessible way to share predictions without having to write a long response.

Read questions and answer choices aloud if helpful. Explain unfamiliar ideas neutrally. Children can select an answer, offer their own idea where space is provided, or skip a question. Follow the instructions for questions that allow more than one selection.

Encourage children to consider both familiar possibilities and big changes. The goal is to capture what they think, rather than identify a correct prediction. Remind them of how many things changed between 1976 and 2026.

Let children answer independently before inviting discussion.

Useful follow-up questions include:

- “What makes you think that might happen?”
- “What might stay the same?”
- “Is that something you think will happen, something you hope will happen, or both?”

Welcome different feelings about the future. Children may feel excited, hopeful, curious, worried, or several things at once. They do not have to explain personal worries to the group.

A Message to My Future Self: Leave a Personal Message

5

Invite children to create a message for themselves in 2076. They may write, draw, make a comic, or combine these approaches.

They can share:

- Something about life today.
- More about their predictions.
- A hope for their own future or for the world.
- Something they want their future selves to remember.

Give children quiet time to think and create. If a child needs help getting started, ask one simple question, such as:

> “What would you want future-you to remember about your life right now?”

An adult may write down a child’s words or add a child’s explanation of a drawing. Preserve the child’s meaning and voice.

Explain that other people may read their contribution when the capsule opens, so they should include only what they feel comfortable sharing.

A Message to Kids in 2076: Share Your World

This activity invites children to introduce themselves to someone their age living fifty years from now. Picture prompts and simple questions help them decide what they want future children to know about life in 2026.

The first page offers a large drawing space with ideas such as a favorite place, game, family or friends, or an invention for the future. The second page invites a written message and includes “Today in My World,” where children can record details such as their favorite food, song, and something they hope never changes.

Children may complete either page or both. They do not need to answer every prompt. An adult can help by reading the choices aloud or recording a child’s own words.

You might say:

> “Debbie’s letter helped us picture her life in 1976. Now imagine a child in 2076 discovering your drawing or message. What would you want them to know about being a kid today?”

If children need help getting started, ask:

- “What do you enjoy that you think children might still enjoy in fifty years?”
- “What little detail about your life would help someone picture it?”
- “What would you like to tell or ask a child living in 2076?”

Encourage personal details and children’s own ideas. A favorite game, a family tradition, or a joke can help future children understand life today. Children may share their work aloud if they wish.

Close and Send Contributions

6

Thank children for helping tell the story of life in 2026. Invite volunteers to share something they created or discovered.

Include the child’s full name, age, and the date with their contribution. If submitting through a school or organization, include its name as well. This information will help Smith organize the collection and help participants locate their submissions when the capsule opens in 2076.

A photograph of the child is optional and should be included only with parent or guardian permission. Identifying information collected for the time capsule will not automatically be used in public displays or promotional materials.

Photograph or scan completed contributions clearly, capturing the entire page. Email them to timecapsule@smithplayground.org by November 1, 2026. For group submissions, include your organization’s name and an adult contact.

Smith will prepare the submissions on paper suitable for long-term preservation. Participants do not need to purchase special paper or mail the originals.

The children’s completed work is their contribution. The introductory letter and photographs do not need to be submitted.

Join Us as We Seal the Capsule!

Saturday, November 7, 2026, at 1 p.m. | Smith Memorial Playground & Playhouse

Celebrate this historic moment with emcee Patty Jackson of iHeartRadio, performances by Settlement Music School, and the first public presentation of “Voices for the Future,” a special time capsule recording created this summer at the Philadelphia Clef Club of Jazz and Performing Arts.

Featuring children’s reflections, musical performances, and inspirational messages from participating artists, the recording will carry voices from Philadelphia today into the world of 2076.

Help children make their contribution, then join us to send their voices fifty years into the future!

Letter From 1976

1976
OPEN IN
2026

An imagined letter from a child in 1976, based on historical details.

October 3, 1976

Dear Whoever Finds This,

My name is Debbie. I'm 13 and in seventh grade at Roosevelt Junior High in Philadelphia. My teacher wants us to write letters about our everyday lives for a time capsule that will be opened in 2026, fifty years from now. That seems strange because nothing about my life feels special. But here goes!

This year has been all about the Bicentennial, America's 200th birthday. On July Fourth, my family went downtown for the celebration. There were crowds, a huge parade, and fireworks. It was exciting, but honestly, I'm a little tired of red, white, and blue everything.

After dinner, we usually watch television. We can get six channels. Since I'm the youngest, I'm the one who has to get up and turn the dial to change the channel every time. My favorite show is The Bionic Woman. I was so upset last week when I missed an episode. I don't know when it will play again!

My friend Karen has a record player. Sometimes we spend our allowance on 45s that have one good song. I love Michael Jackson and the Jackson 5. I play my favorites over and over. When you can only afford one record, choosing is hard! My dad has an 8-track player in the car, so we can listen to music on tapes while we drive. Usually he picks the music, though.

For homework, I look things up in our World Book Encyclopedias. If I can't find what I need, I go to the library. Sometimes I wish I could ask a question and have the answer appear instantly.

We have one telephone, hanging on the kitchen wall. My older sister spends forever talking to her boyfriend. When my friends call while she's using it, they hear a busy signal and have to try again later. And with everyone walking through the kitchen, a private conversation is almost impossible.

For fun, my friends and I ride bikes and go roller skating. Sometimes we just sit around talking and laughing. My parents always ask what's so funny, which somehow makes us laugh harder.

What will life be like when you read this in 2026? Will robots do your chores? Will kids still ride bikes, listen to music, and argue with their sisters?

What would surprise me most about your life?

Anyway, that's a little bit of mine.

Your friend from 1976,
Debbie M. | Age 13

Life in 1976

Television, music, and entertainment in the 1970s.



Television set



Record player



45 record



8-track player



Michael Jackson & the Jackson 5

Photos show examples from the era; the Jackson 5 photograph is from 1972.

Photo sources: Marcel's TV Museum • Granger Hertzog • Slow Turnin Vinyl • The Henry Ford • Parade

My Prediction for 2076

2026 → 2076

Full name: _____ Age: _____ Date: _____

Imagine life in 2076, fifty years from now! Circle one answer for each question unless the instructions say otherwise. There are no right or wrong answers. You may skip a question if you don't want to answer. You can write or draw your own answers in the space provided.

1. In 2076, how do you think most people will get around?

- ○ Much the same as in 2026, using transportation like walking, bicycles, cars, buses, trains, and airplanes
- ○ Mostly in flying vehicles
- ○ Something else: _____
- ○ Mostly in self-driving vehicles
- ○ By teleporting, moving instantly from one place to another

2. In 2076, what do you think school will be like for most children?

- ○ Much like school in 2026, with teachers and students learning together in classrooms
- ○ Mostly in virtual worlds, learning with people from anywhere
- ○ Children will learn by having knowledge and skills sent directly into their brains
- ○ A mix of learning at school, at home, and out in the community
- ○ Each child will have a personal AI teacher and learn wherever they choose
- ○ Something else: _____

3. When you want to learn something in 2076, what do you think you will do most often?

- ○ Ask a person, such as a teacher, librarian, friend, or expert
- ○ Ask an AI assistant, since everyone will have one
- ○ Just know it because information will go directly to your brain
- ○ Search the internet on a phone or computer
- ○ Talk with a life-like AI version of people from history who will explain in their own words.
- ○ Something else: _____

4. By 2076, how common do you think travel to space will be?

- ○ Most people will never travel beyond places on Earth
- ○ People will be able to live permanently on the Moon and/or Mars
- ○ People will vacation on the Moon and/or Mars
- ○ Something else: _____

5. Which of these do you think science is most likely to make possible by 2076?

- ○ Helping people who are blind see using a tiny device connected to the brain
- ○ Tiny robots inside the body that find and treat illnesses
- ○ None of these
- ○ Helping people regrow a damaged body part, such as an arm or leg
- ○ Medicines that prevent people from getting sick at all
- ○ Something else: _____

My Prediction for 2076

2026 → 2076

6. In 2076, America will celebrate 300 years of independence. What do you think our country and its democracy will be like?

- ○ Mostly the same: Our country and democracy will work much as they do in 2026.
- ○ Some changes: We will make some changes in how we run our country and what matters to us.
- ○ Big changes: The way our country and democracy work will be very different from 2026.

7. When you imagine 2076, how do you feel? Circle any that fit.

- ○ Excited
- ○ Hopeful
- ○ Curious
- ○ Worried
- ○ Not sure
- ○ Another feeling: _____

What makes you feel that way? You may write or draw.

8. What do you hope children will still enjoy at Smith in 2076? Check as many as you like.

- ☐ The Giant Wooden Slide
- ☐ Birthday celebrations
- ☐ Apollo Spinner
- ☐ Tot Lot
- ☐ Family events, such as Kidchella
- ☐ Swing City
- ☐ Something else: _____
- ☐ I haven't visited Smith or don't know these activities yet

9. Do you want to share any other thought or comments?

Your ideas are part of the story we are leaving for the future!

What do you need in 2026?

Choose 10 things to help children in 2076 learn about your everyday life.
Assume food, water, and a safe home are already taken care of.
Choose things that help you play, learn, connect, or feel happy and comforted.
Cut out your pictures and save them for your "My Survival Kit" sheet.
Want something else? Draw it in a kit square instead of pasting a picture.



1. Backpack



2. Water bottle



3. Hoodie



4. iPhone



5. iPad



6. Television



7. Wi-Fi



8. Earbuds / headphones



9. Spotify



10. Roblox account



11. Books



12. Graphic T-shirt



13. Nike sneakers



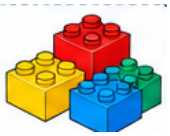
14. A pet



15. Comic books



16. Barbie



17. LEGO



18. Pokémon cards



19. Selfie



20. A bicycle



21. A scooter



22. A skateboard



23. Sports equipment



24. Stuffie



25. Bento box



26. Charger



27. Gaming console



28. Smartwatch



29. Laptop



30. GPS



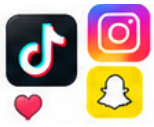
31. Credit / debit card



32. Fast food



33. Streaming service



34. TikTok / social media



35. Venmo / Cash App

My Survival Kit

Paste your chosen pictures in the squares below. Choose 10 items in all.
You may draw an item that is not on the list in one of the squares.

Full name: _____ Age: _____ Year: 2026

1 2 3 4 5

6 7 8 9 10

A message to children in 2076

Choose one item. Why is it important to you? Write or draw your answer.

What does your kit show about your life in 2026?

A Message to My Future Self



Full name: _____ Age: ____ Date: _____

Create a message to your future self. You can choose to write about your life today, share more about your predictions for the future, and/or let us know what you hope your life and the world will be like in 50 years.

HEAR US!

THE CHILDREN'S TIME CAPSULE



A MESSAGE THROUGH TIME

Imagine someone your age opens this paper in 2076.
What do **YOU** want them to know about being a kid in 2026?



Full name: _____ I am _____ years old.

CHOOSE ONE THING TO DRAW!

Need an idea? Pick one!



Your favorite place



Your favorite game or hobby



Your family or friends



What makes you feel safe



An invention for 2076



Your neighborhood



Your favorite place at Smith



Something that makes you happy



What the world looks like today



This drawing will be sealed in the Smith Playground Time Capsule on November 7, 2026 — and opened again in 2076.

YOU JUST MADE HISTORY!



WRITE A MESSAGE TO KIDS IN 2076!

Need an idea? Choose **ONE** question from the list below.

- What's your biggest dream?
- What do you hope the world is like in 2076?
- What should kids in the future know about life today?
- What makes someone a good friend?
- What is your favorite thing to do for fun?
- Teach future kids something you know.
- What advice would you give kids in 2076?
- What is a funny word, slang, or joke everyone says today?
- Is there anything else you want kids in the future to know?

TODAY IN MY WORLD

- Today's date _____
- My age _____
- Favorite game _____
- Favorite song _____
- Favorite food _____
- One word that describes me _____
- Something I'm really good at _____
- One thing I hope never changes _____

THANK YOU! Your words and art will be a gift to kids in 2076.
Keep dreaming, keep being YOU, and keep making the world better!

Full name: _____