

Time Capsule Activity

INTRODUCTION

History is now. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the murder of George Floyd—which launched huge protests against our nation’s longstanding history of racial inequality—mean that Minnesotans live in a moment that will one day go into our history books.

This simple activity invites families, communities, and individuals to reflect, converse, and document this moment in time. By exploring questions like, “*What is happening that future generations will want to know about?*”, “*What objects do I have that can tell a story?*”, and “*What am I doing right now that should be remembered?*”, you can create something that documents your experiences.

We hope the following information gives you an opportunity to reflect on your experiences and to create something meaningful during this moment.

TIME CAPSULE 101

What is a time capsule? It’s a record of a moment in time. Think of it as a story you will tell to your future self about your current self. Creating this time capsule is a way to examine what you’re feeling, what is important to you today, and what you hope to remember.

For the sake of this activity, there is no need to get overwhelmed with details about preservation. Your items can be preserved in living areas and closets where temperature and humidity are relatively stable—avoid attics, basements, and backyards, or places that are right next to water sources (like bathrooms and kitchens).



PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Pick a container. Your container can be any shape and size. A cardboard box can serve as a capsule, as can a large tin can or a plastic bin. Alternately, you can create a digital version of your time capsule by taking photos of your items and archiving social media posts into a folder on your computer.

WHAT TO INCLUDE?

Think about your life. Think about events happening that are affecting you. Think about the people around you. What is important? Feel free to include anything that answers this question. You can even include the story of creating this time capsule! Who, what, where, when, and how are all good questions to consider as you begin to tell a story to your future self.

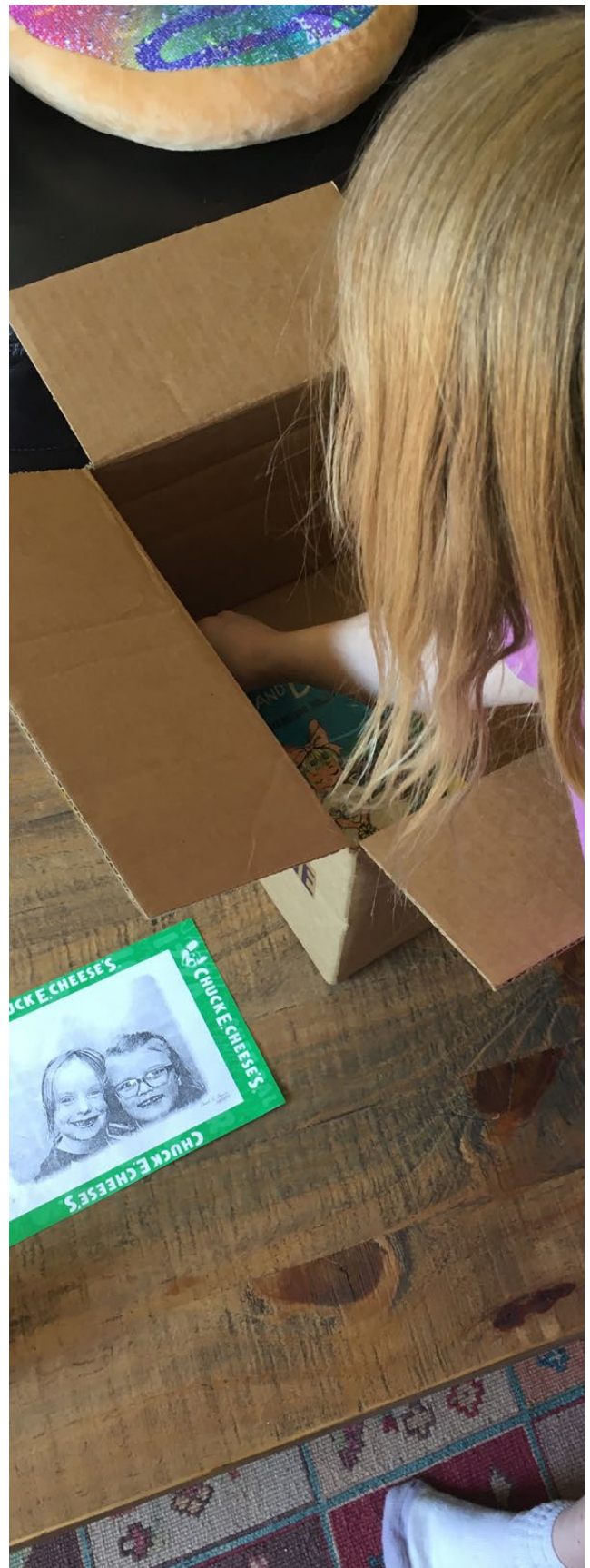
Here are some ideas for things to include:

- Artwork/signs
- Books/pamphlets
- Objects/toys
- Clothing
- Diaries
- Maps
- Music
- Family stories
- Photographs
- Video
- Wrappers from food or favorite items (clean first)
- Newspapers

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AS YOU CHOOSE ITEMS

Who are you living with today? Do you have a picture of them or can you draw one?

What are you doing during this time? Do you have mementos such as a calendar, a copy of your online learning plans, a piece of clothing (for example the PJ shirt you wore for a week straight or a work uniform you wore in your role as an essential worker), newspapers, a mask, protest signs, or a piece of art? [Please note: newspapers will crumble over time so if you have the ability to, make a copy or print the news story on printer paper.]



Do you have photos from this moment? We know that digital capacities will continue to change so if you can, print your images and LABEL, LABEL, and LABEL—who, what, where, and when. If you cannot print, add notes to your digital files so you remember details. As much as it may feel like you'll never forget this moment, 20 years from now memories will shift. Try to write as much as you can to remind your future self of your current experience.

Set the scene: what is the weather today? How does it feel? In the future as you try to bring yourself back to this moment, ask yourself—what do I smell? Am I hot or cold? Was it sunny, cloudy, or rainy?

What is around you? What does your space look/feel like? What objects might bring back a memory in the future? Perhaps you can't place your toaster, for instance, in your time capsule, but can you describe it or document it with a photo? What is happening in your neighborhood? Are there signs in windows or chalk on the sidewalk?

What do you hear? What is the music of this moment for you? Write down your playlists. Have you participated in social actions—are there songs or chants you can write down and include? Are there unfamiliar sounds in your neighborhood due to quarantine—quieter than usual or more bird song? Are there unfamiliar sounds in your neighborhood due to protests—song, poetry, helicopters, or police action?

What do you want to remember and tell your future self about this moment? What was important to you? What, if anything, changed for you as a person, as a family, as a neighborhood?



TIPS FROM MNHS PROFESSIONALS

Be aware of what you put in the capsule:

- **Food items will attract pests.** Consider including clean food packaging instead of food. Be aware that some items will degrade.
- **Newspapers will crumble.** Cut out a specific article instead of putting in an entire paper. Keep the paper flat or unfolded where possible, and remember to include the paper title and date.
- **Fold textiles as little as possible.**
- **If possible, avoid using tape and glue.** Consider taking digital images of each item so you have a digital version of your time capsule (and label your digital files so you can find and identify them).
- **Dates are important!** Include dates, full names, and birthdates.
- **Objects can trigger memories.** But if you include an object, include a story about it so people know why it matters. What did that object mean to you? Why does it matter to you?
- **Describe what you see.** If you include art, include an artist's statement about what the piece is.
- **Keep it dry, keep it dark, keep it sealed.**
- **Be aware of water.** Try to put your time capsule in a stable environment away from anything that could get it wet.

ALL DONE?

Great work! Now find a spot to store it away—a closet shelf or dry corner will work just fine! If you would like to share what you have created, take some photos of the process and show others your time capsule story.

