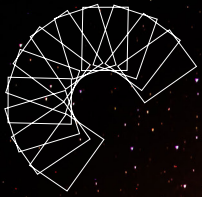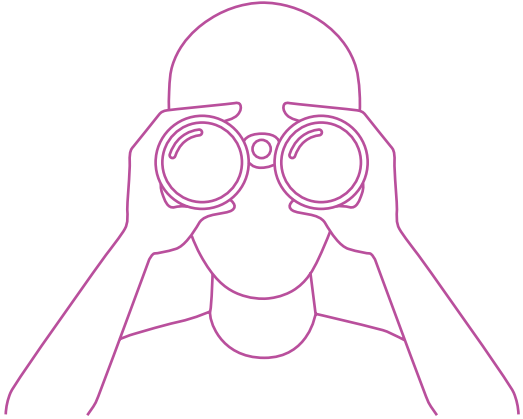# 100 WAYS

anything
can be different
in the future

IFTF FAST FUTURES

Game Facilitation Guide

100 ways anything could be different in the future

Let's play a quick game.

This game is a mental icebreaker. It's designed to wake up the imagination and develop the mental habits that help you anticipate hard-to-predict futures, and avoid being blindsided by surprising events.

It can be played as an individual or with a team.

Use it to "unstick" your mind about what can and cannot be different in the future. Challenge your assumptions, and discover evidence that surprising changes are already underway.

The outputs of this game:

- You will have a clearer idea of what assumptions you have about how things work today.

- You'll generate 100 new ways to challenge those assumptions going forward.

- Pick a few of your favorite ideas to explore further as real risks you may want to mitigate, or future innovation opportunities you may wish to pursue.
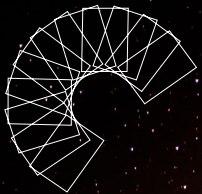
1. **Pick a topic.** *Example: The future of shoes.*

2. **List 100 things that are true* about it today.** *Example: Shoes aren't free, people have to buy them. Most people own more than one pair of shoes, different types of shoes for different occasions. People take their shoes off when they go to sleep at night.* That's 3 facts, only 97 more to go!

3. **Now, "flip" these true facts for the future:** Rewrite each fact to be the opposite of what it is today, or offer a new alternative. *Example: 10 years in the future, shoes are free. In the future, most people only own one pair of shoes. In the future, people sleep with their shoes on.* Do this for all 100 facts.

   Imagine the world in which any one or more of these "flipped" facts is now true. Why did this change happen? What's it like to live in this future? Use what you know about how the world is already changing to support this story, no matter how strange or unlikely it seems.

   Example: 10 years in the future, most shoes have location and health tracking sensors in them, and they are provided to customers for free by health insurance companies who want the data.

   Climate action has created a new culture of minimalism in fashion—it is considered unseemly to own more than one pair of shoes at a time. Shoe-shaming, similar to flight-shaming.

   Increases in extreme weather (wildfires, flooding) leads many people in climate-threatened environments to sleep with their shoes on, to aid evacuation, just in case.
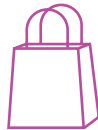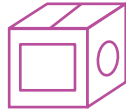   *This is a new kind of climate-change PTSD.*
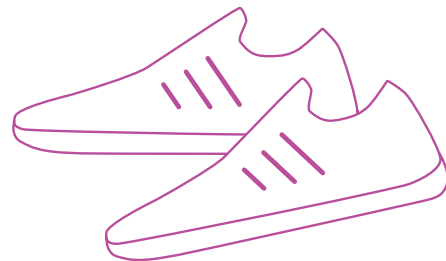
**generally true is fine, it doesn't have to be 100% true for 100% of people and places*
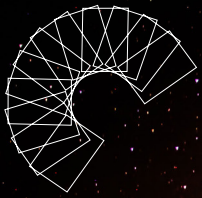
Pick a topic

If you just want to warm up your foresight muscles, pick a topic that feels big and universal, something everyone has at least a little experience with. Perhaps: the future of meat, high school, sleep, mobile phones, dating, religion, pet ownership? Anything is fair game!

Or, use this game to kick off a new strategic foresight process with a team. Pick a topic in an area your organization is currently developing new products, services or preparedness plans for.
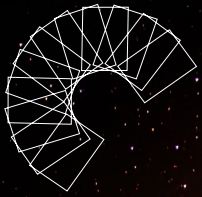
List 100 things that are true today
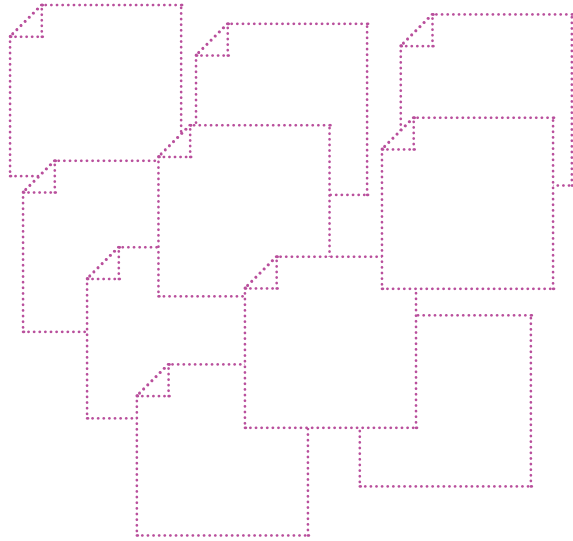
It's challenging to list 100 different facts. You can try it on your own, but this game works best with a group!

Try writing each fact on a sticky note and covering a wall with them. Make a 10 x 10 grid you can see how close you are to 100.

Or, work together online in a collaborative spreadsheet.

If you can't get to 100 facts, that's okay… even 20 or 30 flipped facts can generate fascinating future possibilities. But the closer you get to 100, the more surprising ideas you're likely to uncover.
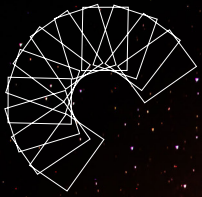
# How to imagine a future where the flipped facts are true
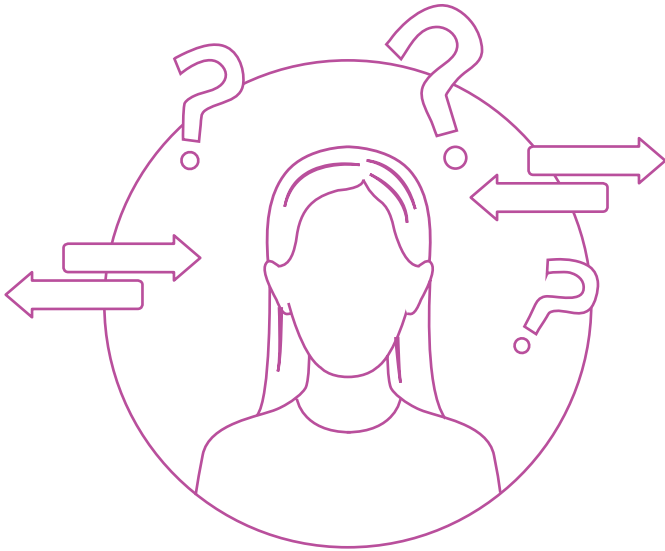
Make a list of the biggest "drivers of change", or disruptive forces and trends, that are currently affecting your topic. Think: climate change, sensors in everything, pandemics, automation of work, etc. How might these forces lead to the strange new possibility you've described?

If you're stumped, try doing a Google search for the new "fact" about the future. You may discover "signals of change", or real examples of the seemingly impossible future already happening today, to inspire your story.

You can also let the possibilities simmer for awhile. Leave your 100 flipped facts on the wall, or in a shared spreadsheet, and see what comes up. This can be a slow-burn activity, done by a team over a week or longer.

Different people may come up with different explanations for the same future—that's fine and useful!
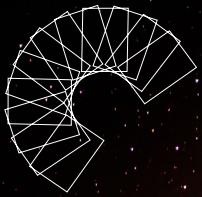
Here are some "drivers of change" to inspire your futures. What else would you add to this list?
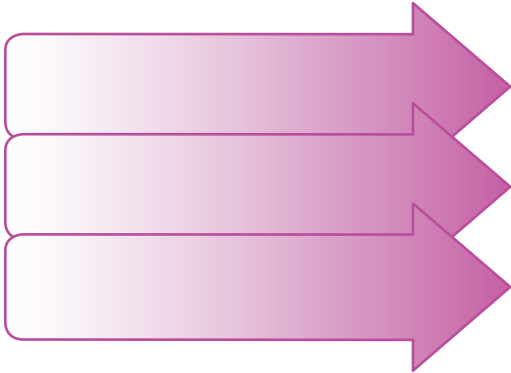
- Climate change
- The current pandemic
- Automation of work
- Increase in facial recognition and surveillance technologies
- Data regulatory efforts
- Increasing economic inequality
- Virtual Reality
- Shift to clean energy sources

- Computational disinformation, bots and deepfakes
- Smart cities infrastructure
- Decreasing birth rates
- Rise of eSports
- Cryptocurrencies
- Lifelong learning, upskilling, reskilling
- Universal basic income
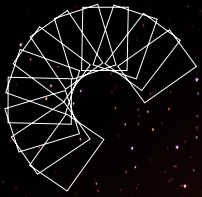
How to analyze your results
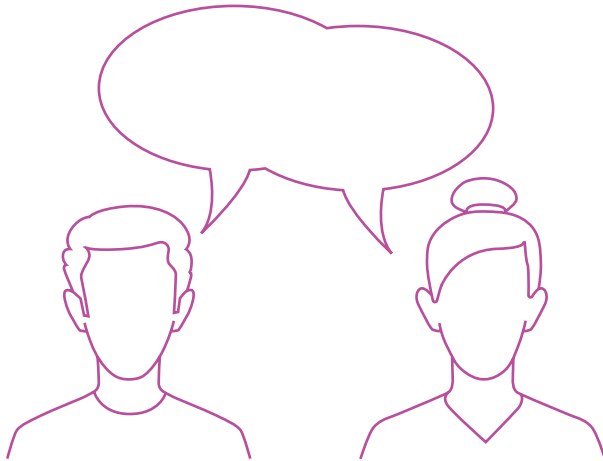
Here are some questions to consider and discuss as a group:

What assumptions did you uncover (true facts about today) that you now would say are most important to be challenged or questioned as you design for the future?

What reasons for change were most compelling, or came up most frequently, as you crafted your stories about how anything could be different in the future?

Which of the 100 possible futures would you most want to wake up in? Why?

Which of the 100 possible futures would you most want to avoid? Why?

10 years from now, what actions would you be proud to have taken today to make these "top two" futures more or less likely?

Any useful statement about the **future** should at first seem ridiculous.

JIM DATOR

About IFTF Foresight Essentials

Institute for the Future (IFTF) is the world's leading futures organization. Its training program, IFTF Foresight Essentials, is a comprehensive portfolio of strategic foresight trainings and tools based upon 50 years of IFTF best practices. IFTF Foresight Essentials cultivates the mindset and skillsets that enable individuals and organizations to foresee future forces, identify emerging imperatives, and develop world-ready strategies. To learn more about IFTF Foresight Essentials and its unique, customizable offerings for businesses, government agencies, and social impact organizations, visit iftf.org/foresightessentials.

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