

Put Time in a Bottle

Kindergarten - Grade 3

Collecting things from their lifetimes and putting them in a time capsule is a history lesson that children will never forget.

What You Need

Magazines or newspapers

Sealable container

Camera

Tape or other sealant

What to Do

* Talk with your child about time capsules. Explain that when buildings such as schools, courthouses and churches are built, people often include a time capsule—a special container into which they place items that can tell about their lives and times to future generations who open the container.

—Tell your child that you want to help him make his own personal time capsule. Talk with him about what he might want to put in it. Ask, for example, what things he might include to give people of the distant future a good idea of what he was like and what the time he lives in was like.

—Have him use a simple camera to take pictures of a few important objects in his life—a favorite CD, poster or pair of shoes; a baseball bat, football jersey or basketball; his computer, music player or cell phone. Have him locate and add magazine pictures of games and toys; cars, airplanes and other types of transportation; different kinds of sporting events; and clothes. Next have him locate examples of slang, ads for movies and TV shows, and selections from important speeches, poetry and stories or novels. Also help him find stories about current heroes and local, national and world events; and accounts of current issues and crises. Finally have him write a letter to someone in the future that describes life today.

—Call the family together and have your child do a “show and tell” of the items he’s collected.

—Once everyone is satisfied with the collection, help your child label the items with his name and with any other information that will help those who find them understand how they are significant to the history of our time.

—Have him place the items in a container, seal the container and find a place to store it.

—Have him write in his history log a short description of what he has done and record the date. Encourage him to draw a map that shows the location of the time capsule and to use the correct directional words to label it.

* Try to find news stories (your local newspaper, library or local historical society or museum can often direct you to such stories) about the opening of such a capsule in your area and what was in it. If possible, take your child to look at the contents of an opened time capsule—perhaps at your local historical society or museum. Also try to locate buildings in your area that contain unopened time capsules. Take your child to see the buildings and point out the cornerstones—the places in which most capsules are placed. Talk with him about the information on the cornerstone.

Let's Talk About It

Ask your child:

What did the collection of items tell you about the period in which we live?

Did the items tend to be of a certain type?