



# DECODE THE FUTURE

INSTRUCTIONS



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**In 2020, we learned that the world can change quickly in ways that are difficult to predict. Speculative stories became our reality. Surviving and thriving meant adapting to a new world and a new set of conditions. Many of us were unprepared and caught off guard.**

**What did being unprepared cost your organization? Wouldn't it be nice to think about and plan for unexpected scenarios before they happen?**

Welcome to **DECODE THE FUTURE**, a game that helps you think about what might happen next. We help you rapidly imagine what's possible in the future and how those possibilities might impact you. The goal is to take productive, creative tangents!

We want you to think about unexpected scenarios, disruptive technologies, and how people might respond when they find themselves in not so ordinary situations. We can also use the futures we imagine to create new ideas and generate new insights about the present.

**DECODE THE FUTURE** will help you develop your capacity to think about alternative futures.

# THE CARDS

Your deck contains three types of cards:



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## STAKEHOLDER

The people who could interact with or influence your future. Some stakeholders may be more relevant than others. Challenge yourself to consider their points of view or think of how you could work with them.



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## TECH

The established, emerging, and speculative technologies that might disrupt your organization, industry, or society at large.



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## SITUATION

The real and speculative contexts that might change our way of life and how we operate. Similar to a pandemic, these are situations that might change the world as we currently know it.

Together, these cards create a scenario. Think of them as your future playgrounds.

There are  
**15,625 futures** for  
you to play in!

# Each Deck Has 3 Types of Cards



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## STAKEHOLDER

The people who could interact with or influence your future. Some stakeholders may be more relevant than others. Some will seem unrelated. Consider their points of view.

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## TECH

The established, emerging, and speculative technologies that might disrupt your organization, industry, or society-at-large.

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## SITUATION

The real and speculative contexts that might change our way of life and how we operate. Similar to a pandemic, these are situations that might change the world.



# **WHY YOU SHOULD PLAY**

## **Practice Thinking About the Future**

Train and build your foresight muscles by learning to make unusual connections and thinking about next-order impacts.

## **Gain Fresh Perspectives**

Generate new and interesting ideas that kick-start your thinking and trigger new insights.

## **Imagine Alternative Futures**

Imagine the many ways in which the future might be different from the present. The future is a spectrum of possibilities, not a single destination.

## **Change Your Perspective**

Play around with different concepts, environments, and perspectives to challenge your assumptions and cherished beliefs. Empathize with how others might see the world, as well as their actions, needs, and behaviors.

## **Build Team Dynamics**

Play together to work better together.

# YOUR OBJECTIVE

Your objective is to explore the scenarios you create with the cards, and use those scenarios to unlock new opportunities and thinking for your organization.

## We want you to:

- Play with the scenarios you generate and capture your insights on the Ideation Worksheet. Explain what's happening in the scenario, describe the situation, who is doing what, and what's getting disrupted and how.
- Use your mini-scenarios to think about how your organization might respond if the world changed. What opportunities and threats do you see? What could your organization do in that scenario that you couldn't before? What needs might you address? What problems might you solve?

There is no such thing as a bad idea! Generate as many ideas as you can and get the conversation going.

# HOW TO PLAY

## Ready?

In teams of 4-6 people, follow each step in order until you're comfortable playing without the rules or are ready to invent your own.

Let's go through the instructions with an example.

# STEP 1

Choose a facilitator for the first round. This person will be responsible for writing down the team's ideas, prompting team members to share their thoughts, and keeping the conversation on track. You can change your facilitator with each round to give everyone different ways to participate.

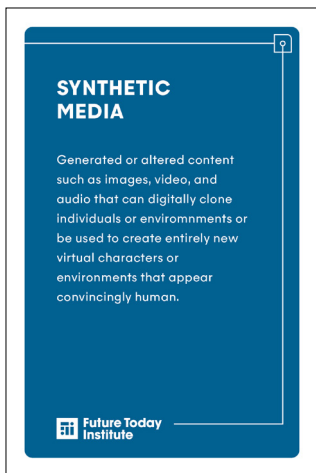
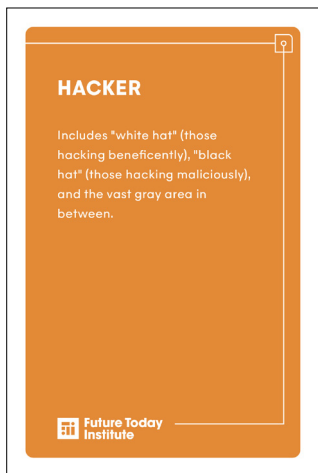
## **Choose a Time Horizon:**

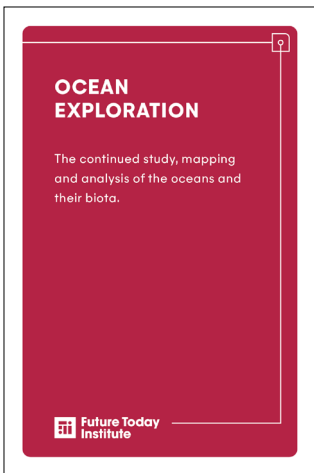
Do you want to think 5, 10, 20, or more years into the future? You can challenge yourself to think short-term or long-term.

## STEP 2

Choose 1 card from each category (stakeholder, tech, and situation) to create your scenario.

Let's work with an example:





## Our cards:

Hacker card

*STAKEHOLDER*

Synthetic Media card

*TECH*

Ocean Exploration card

*SITUATION*

## STEP 3

Write the cards down on the Ideation Worksheet in the first column.



<b>Capture Your Cards</b>	<b>Describe Your Scenario</b> <i>Create the story. Share what's happening.</i>	<b>Explore Your Scenario as an Organization</b> <i>What would you do if the scenario was real?</i>
<b>Stakeholder:</b> Hacker  <b>Tech:</b> Synthetic Media  <b>Situation:</b> Ocean Exploration		

## **STEP 4**

### **Set the clock!**

**Use the timer on your phone and give yourself 5 minutes to generate ideas that might exist if your scenario came to life.**



## **STEP 5**

Explore this future scenario. Using the questions in column 2 of the Ideation Worksheet, come up with as many ideas as you can.

Start with your bad ideas first: what are some not so great ideas or things you've heard before that you can share with the group?

Consider the expected versus unexpected, usual versus unusual, and the normal versus the weird. Use the questions on the worksheet as prompts.

## Example

Combine two of the cards and ask a question, like “How might a hacker use synthetic media?” Here’s what we came up with:

- **Our expected/bad idea:** A hacker makes a Deepfake video.
- Using a fake voice or the voice of someone you might know.
- Recreating your likeness in a video (e.g. a Deepfake).
- Creating people or entities that don't exist.



## **STEP 5 (cont.)**

Once we gave some thought to our stakeholder and tech, we applied our ideas during an ocean exploration situation. Record your ideas on the Ideation Sheet.

Our ideas:



<b>Capture Your Cards</b>	<b>Describe Your Scenario</b> <i>Create the story. Share what's happening.</i>	<b>Explore Your Scenario as an Organization</b> <i>What would you do if the scenario was real?</i>
<b>Stakeholder:</b> Hacker  <b>Tech:</b> Synthetic Media  <b>Situation:</b> Ocean Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Our expected/ bad idea:</b> A hacker makes a Deepfake video with an ocean background</li><li>▪ A black hat hacker might try to confuse cargo ships and/or the navy with fake commands</li><li>▪ A white hat hacker might use synthetic whale sounds to direct a pod to safety</li></ul>	

## **STEP 6**

**After you have thought about the scenarios that might emerge from your cards, think about what it means for your organization. You can think about opportunities and risks for your scenarios overall or work with a specific scenario you came up with.**

**If you're playing with friends, you can choose an existing organization you'd like to take the perspective of or create an imaginary one.**

**Write your ideas down! Use the questions on the sheet as prompts to help think about your ideas.**

Let's say you're an insurance company, what are the implications of a hacker using synthetic media during an ocean exploration?

Some ideas we came up with include:



<b>Capture Your Cards</b>	<b>Describe Your Scenario</b> <i>Create the story. Share what's happening.</i>	<b>Explore Your Scenario as an Organization</b> <i>What would you do if the scenario was real?</i>
<b>Stakeholder:</b> Hacker  <b>Tech:</b> Synthetic Media  <b>Situation:</b> Ocean Exploration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Our expected/ bad idea:</b> A hacker makes a Deepfake video with an ocean background</li><li>▪ A black hat hacker might try to confuse cargo ships and/or the navy with fake commands</li><li>▪ A white hat hacker might use synthetic whale sounds to direct a pod to safety</li></ul>	<b>Opportunity:</b> Can we create insurance products that cover synthetic media hacks?  <b>Risk:</b> What happens if an organization we insure is hacked or led astray in international waters?

## **STEP 7**

### **Change it up!**

**Draw new cards to reveal a new scenario. Repeat steps 5 and 6 every 5-10 minutes to generate new ideas with new scenarios.**

**We recommend 30-45 minutes of play.**

## **STEP 8**

### **Ready to switch gears? Debrief!**

**Set aside 15-30 minutes to explore new signals or change or to take action on an idea you've generated with the DE-CODE worksheet.**

**You might want to start by allowing everyone 2 minutes to write down their ideas individually before sharing them with the group. That might help the group identify patterns and differences.**

**If you're playing with friends or acquaintances, you can use the worksheet or simply talk about what captured your attention.**



# DECODE THE FUTURE WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet to explore signals of change.

<b>Discoveries</b>	What did we discover that we hadn't thought about before?
<b>Explorations</b>	What excited or enlightened us?
<b>Challenges</b>	What challenged our beliefs, assumptions, and ideas?

<b>Opportunities</b>	What opportunities should we look into?
<b>Disruptions</b>	What might disrupt our organization?
<b>Endeavors</b>	What actions should we consider taking next?

# TIPS AND TRICKS

## Make the most of **DECODE THE FUTURE!**

- Each deck comes with blank cards you can use to customize the game for your organization. Consider which stakeholders and technologies matter most to you and include those when you play. Use the latest FTI Tech Trends Report as inspiration for more ideas.
- Feel free to shuffle the cards for more challenging gameplay – or select a few cards from each category in advance that you feel most comfortable with if you're just starting out.
- Rapid idea generation takes some getting used to but practice will help you get better over time. The important thing is to get the conversation going with whatever idea pops in your head.
- There is no such thing as a bad idea! Throw out as many as you can and see what conversation it triggers in others. Aim for quantity first, quality second.

- Some card configurations will be more challenging than others. We encourage you to push yourself out of your comfort zone. If a particular card or scenario is proving too challenging, you can swap one or more cards out.
- We recommend you play this game with a group of other people. It's easier to generate great ideas together.
- Take turns being in charge of writing the ideas down. You can switch facilitators or appoint scribes so that everyone has an opportunity to contribute in different ways.
- You can also play this game by yourself to stretch your imagination and develop your capacity to think about how the future might be different from what you expect.
- How long you play is up to you. You can use it at the beginning of meetings as a fun 5-minute icebreaker or schedule a longer session to get your imagination racing. We recommend playing for an hour to give your brain a real workout.

**That's it!**

**The more often you play, the easier it will become to generate scenarios and think about their strategic implications.**

# RESOURCES

**Download the latest Tech Trends Report**

[www.futuretodayinstitute.com/trends](http://www.futuretodayinstitute.com/trends)

**Download print files for DECODE THE FUTURE**

[www.futuretodayinstitute.com/decodegame](http://www.futuretodayinstitute.com/decodegame)







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